



Waikato Scenarios – Crowded House

Narrative Story – “A Stitch in Time....”

Kim strode purposefully along the footpath towards the Kirikiriroa-Hamilton branch office of Waikato-Tainui. She was almost at the carved front entrance when she was jostled roughly from behind and her kete snatched from her shoulder. “Hey, hey you, give that back now!” she yelled, shocked and stunned that this would happen outside her workplace. A Marshall Islands refugee was sprinting up the road clutching her bag.

Damn, she thought to herself, that’s the last I’ll see of that! And it’s the third time in the last two years I’ve had my bag snatched. Ah well, she consoled herself, there wasn’t anything of real value in there anyway. She was cautious enough these days to keep her roll-up Q-Phone tucked inside her jacket out of harm’s way – her Q-Phone was her one-stop-shop for communication and finance, so it was all that really mattered.

Kim stomped into the office reception and immediately vented her frustration at her colleague Chris. “I’ve just had my kete flogged on the footpath outside” she raged, “Again! This time it was a Marshall Islands refugee. He just grabbed it off my shoulder and bolted. Sure it’s tough when your whole country is swamped by sea level rise but there are better ways to survive here in Aotearoa than petty theft!”

“Chill out Kimiora” said Chris sympathetically. “Just be thankful you don’t live in Tamaki-Auckland, ‘cos it probably wouldn’t be just your kete they’d be after up there.” Kim sighed. Things really were pretty tough for a lot of people these days, she reflected. The tens of thousands of climate change refugees that New Zealand had absorbed from its Pacific neighbours since the 2010s had put considerable pressure on basic services and infrastructure. New Zealand’s export-based economy had also been hit hard by rising

fuel prices and global and domestic carbon taxes, so there wasn’t much spare cash around for the average person, let alone the refugees.



Refugees flee threatened Pacific Islands

Kim turned her attention to work. She was co-ordinator for Tainui’s Kirikiriroa Time Bank, where people donated their time to provide community services in exchange for receiving services they might need. The tag-line for the TB (as the Time Bank was known) translated into English as “connecting unmet needs with untapped resources.” She had co-ordinated several people to start Te Reo lessons for refugees this week, which seemed a bit ironic after her latest brush with refugee crime, but she hoped that these small steps would help bridge the growing cultural gap. She really did feel sorry for the non-Tainui ‘outsiders’ in the Waikato, although she knew many of her whanau didn’t share that opinion.

“I think I should have stayed at home today” Kim muttered under her breath, still smarting from her loss. The expensive slow weekly trip into Kirikiriroa from her home at Whaingaroa-Raglan was a drag but her home was an essential refuge from the city. She lived with her partner, parents and grandparents in a floating GJ Gordiner home in the shelter of Lorenzen Bay. Thanks to climate change, Whaingaroa was wetter today than in her kaumatua’s youth, so her whanau weren’t troubled by the water shortages facing the east

coast. Life was pretty good for them overall, aside from the ever-present risk of dengue fever that came with coastal living.

Kim had friends living in the Coromandel who were having a much tougher time. Aside from constant drought and water shortages, the recent resurgence in gold mining on the Peninsula was leading to all sorts of environmental problems. After decades of relatively peaceful living, the sudden increases in gold prices on the global market had totally changed the Coromandel lifestyle. It seemed like companies today would go to any lengths to secure valuable mineral resources, with no regard for the social and environmental side-effects they might create along the way.

Coal mining was another good example. These days, northern Waikato was just one big open-cast pit in places. Kim's kaumatua often talked about the days at the turn of the century when coal was all but phased out as a fuel source. Talk about making a come-back! The development of effective carbon capture and storage technology in the last ten years meant that coal was suddenly acceptable again, since carbon emissions could be managed. Not only was the north Waikato environment being plundered by rampant coal mining but people across "Greater Auckland" had decided energy efficiency and conservation weren't important any more either. Now we've got coal to generate cheap power again, let's bring back our virtual home theatre systems and flag the solar panels...

At least now that Waikato-Tainui was taking a lead role in resource management in the Waikato, things like water quality were slowly starting to improve. The hope was that one day people would be able to drink from, fish and swim in rivers again like they did last century. If we could just get Tamaki-Auckland to stop taking our water, Kim thought, then our river, Waikato Te Awa, would really have a chance to recover from the brink. Ever since the Waikato had

been officially made part of "Greater Auckland" in 2020, it felt like all their resources had been plundered to support the ever-expanding mega-city.



Roof top vegetable gardens are a common sight in the city

"Kia ora, Waikato-Tainui Time Bank," Kim switched into work mode as she answered her Q-Phone. It was an enquiry from a Hamilton East urban farm, looking for some time to help with the summer harvest of their rooftop permaculture garden. Space was so tight in that part of the city that rooftop gardens were a common feature. Most of them were organic with computer-regulated soil moisture and nutrient systems to maintain productivity. Kim responded enthusiastically, as the over-crowding and health problems in Hamilton East made the area a high priority for Time Bank donations.

Later that afternoon, George, one of the Bank's volunteer Te Reo teachers popped in to the office. "Thought I'd return this for you Kimi" he said, smiling and handing her back the stolen kete. "What do you mean?" she asked, confused. "Let's just say one of my students realised it might be bad form to bite the hand that feeds you" George replied mysteriously, disappearing back out the door.