

Waikato Scenarios – Sleeping In

Narrative Story – “A Good Man Remembered”

Forty-five year old Joe Bryant carefully manoeuvres his small hydrogen car into a space outside the Hamilton church where his father James’ funeral is about to begin. His mother Mary is quiet in the seat beside him, absorbed in memories of a time gone by. Joe helps her out of the car and they make their way, together with his sister Tracey and their Aunt Moana, up the path to the old wooden building where the crowd of mourners are waiting.

“Kia ora and welcome, family and friends. Thank you for coming together today, this second day of July 2050, to celebrate the life of James Wiremu Bryant” begins the celebrant.

“James, or Jimmy as he was known to many of you, is survived by his wife Mary, son Joe, grandson Mark, and daughter Tracey.”

At the mention of his son, Joe scans the room to spot nine year old Mark, sitting stiffly beside his extremely wealthy mother Elisabeth, who he lives with in central Auckland. What a different life he’s had to me, Joe muses. They probably travelled down this morning in a first class carriage on the high speed rail link, on the back of Elisabeth pulling off another one of her 48 hour working stints. It’s alright for those who can afford ‘hyper-productivity’ medication so they can stay alert and work productively for such long periods, thought Joe.

He waves at Mark and refocuses on the main proceedings.

“Jimmy was in his prime as a successful dairy farmer on the Hauraki Plains in the early 2020s when the combination of ‘peak-oil’, several years of year-round flooding and rising sea levels forced most Plains’

farmers off the land. It was a difficult time for him and Mary, but their early decision to leave the farm meant they were amongst the lucky ones who received some compensation from the Government. This allowed Jimmy to retrain in the burgeoning field of bio-energy production, which as we all know, led to a long and successful career.”



All year-round flooding

“Many of you will remember Jimmy well for the key role he played in establishing the Ngatea wetland bio-fuel project, giving new life to a community devastated by frequent flooding and the rural exodus. Where many could only focus on their losses with the demise of the lower Plains’ flood protection systems and a rapid reversion to wetland, Jimmy saw new opportunities. Everyone here will be aware of the success of Harakeke Bio-Fuels, which rose out the ashes of the rye-grass to wetland transition.”

“Jimmy often spoke very fondly of family holidays in the Coromandel, staying with his sister Moana. Fishing, back in the good old days before stocks ran out, was one of his great passions. Most of you here would have had your ear bent once or twice about the travesty of over-fishing and Jimmy’s claim to have been one of the last recreational fishers left in the region back in the 2030s!” Quiet laughter echoes around the church. Joe smiles over at his eccentric Aunt Moana. Back when Joe was a toddler, Moana had run off to the Coromandel to help set up a community of

'survivalists', hell-bent on becoming self-sufficient to weather the impacts of the predicted climate change and 'peak oil' that no-one else had taken seriously. Her quality of life had been better than many when peak oil and climate change eventually did come to fruition in the 2020s. Few people still live right on the coast these days, with the ridiculous insurance premiums bought about by the extreme weather patterns of the last few decades. Moana's distance from the chaos of urban life had given her the headspace to become a positive driving force in the sustainability movement that had flourished over the last 20 years.

"Others of you will remember Jimmy for his leadership on the local Maori Wisdom Council, a form of decision-making preferred by the older generation in particular, over today's virtual democracy system. Together with his daughter Tracey, who is a health facilitator in the poorer suburb of Tamahere in Hamilton, Jimmy made a substantial difference to the growing number of disadvantaged people in parts of our region."

Tracey looks pleased at this acknowledgement but Joe is worried about the bags under her eyes. She works incredibly hard to help improve the health of the growing number of poorer people in the Waikato, many of whom were so deficient in things like iron that their employability was marginal.



Flexible TV Mats

But fatigue was taking its toll. If only she too could afford the 'hyper-productivity' treatments that propped up Elisabeth's monumental business successes.

I musn't be bitter, Joe reminds himself, but he did struggle not to laugh at his ex's latest toy – a 'TV-Mat' television that could be rolled up like a rug and transported almost anywhere. Really!

On his relatively meagre income working as a scientist at an eco-tech agricultural unit, such luxuries seemed absurd. Not that Joe was complaining, as he enjoyed his work. His latest project was the development of a new process for growing onions that would increase their iron levels considerably, sweeten their taste and help rebuild Pukekohe's exhausted top soils. Mind you, he was getting a bit sick of the sight of onions...

A virtual tribute to his father was now underway on the Neutrino screen at the front of the church. Joe peered up at the serene smiling face of Sarah Smith, a Harakeke Bio-Fuels executive who had worked with his father over the years.



Large scale biofuel production

"While coal is still 'king' in the Waikato" she was saying, "Jimmy was a key figure in the practical establishment of bio-energy production processes here to support our more recent focus on emissions reductions." Blah blah blah, thought Joe. Thanks to this post-2020s obsession with the environment, things were getting much better in the natural world but more balance was needed to shore up growing social inequities and take the pressure off people like his sister Tracey.

Joe reached over and squeezed his mother's hand. What a remarkable woman, to still be working successfully at the age of 80, in a world that was so different from those days of fishing trips in the Hauraki Gulf with her beloved Jimmy. Joe could not comprehend what sort of a life his son Mark might be reflecting on when the time for Joe's own funereal farewell eventually came round.