PHANTASMS AND THE FAMILY



Jamie Kirkpatrick

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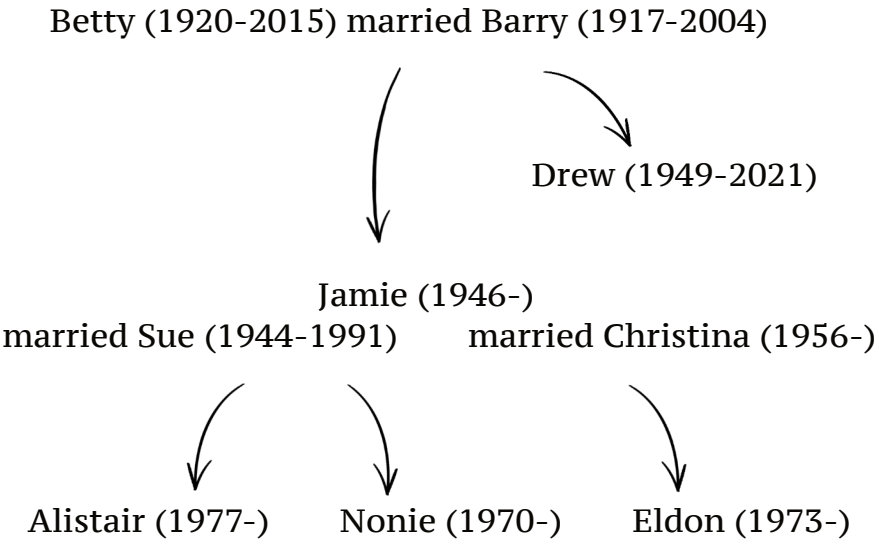
Phantasms and the Family

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Cover Image: The late Ferdie, Jamie and deceased car at deceased picnic spot, now under Cardinia Creek Dam (1958). Any atom of this past Jamie that survives in 2022 has been reabsorbed from the outside.

This book is dedicated to my wife of many decades, Christina. Her contribution to whatever intellectual and moral development I have experienced has been huge, as has her contribution to my longevity. Our love is a garden.

RELATIONSHIPS OF MAIN HUMAN *DRAMATIS PERSONAE*



CONTENTS

About the Author 4

Preface 5

Betty 7

Barry 23

Drew 41

Sue 53

Death in Sandy Bay 69

Old Jamie 89

The supernatural at work 103

Acknowledgements 105

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Given that this book says a lot about the author, it may seem extraneous to have this section, but there needs to be somewhere to advertise his previous books, which, he hopes, will someday emerge from being out of print (some of them are available for downloading in electronic form from the Tasmanian Geographic site).

The prime focus of the 53 years of the working life of the author at the University of Melbourne (1971) and the University of Tasmania (1972 onwards) has been on conserving the rest of nature. His research, writings and advocacy possibly helped a little, as described in Conservation Worrier (De Press Inc 2017). His books directed towards conserving the rest of nature include: The Disappearing Heath (Tasmanian Conservation Trust 1977), A Continent Transformed (Oxford University press 1994, revised edition 1999), Alpine Tasmania (Oxford University Press 1997) and People, Sheep and Nature (CSIRO Press 2007 with Kerry Bridle). Other relevant books and hundreds of relevant papers, book chapters and reports are listed on his Google Scholar page along with some mysterious and probably misleading statistics.

Outside of work he has lived a somewhat sedate and happy family life once the relational turmoil of his younger adult years passed. In both times of turmoil and times of calm, the author has been always extremely fond of the processes and outcomes of gardening. His personal gardening history and the scientific and cultural ecology of gardens are the subjects of The Ecologies of Paradise (Pandani Press 2006).

He has indulged his sense of humour by writing The Tasmanian Development Calendar (De Press Inc 2016), Mr Caterpillar and the Special Timbers Incident (Bright South 2019) and Art by Nature (Bright South 2019).

PREFACE

My godmother, Aunty Tony, took her role seriously, contacting me regularly for long conversations until her death at the age of ninety-two. These conversations were sometimes designed to get me to do something that she felt I was neglecting, like ensuring my mother, Betty, had a mobile phone on her long trips to Bowen with Barry, her husband (she did not want a phone!). Other times they were a rewarding exchange of information about our two very separate lives. In one of our conversations in her later years she expressed the desire to visit Melbourne again, where she lived as a child and young adult but, she said in an elegant hiss, it was a city 'full of ghosts'.

I heard this statement as a metaphor, but maybe it was not. In the poorly understood intertwining of matter, energy, time and space there may be lots of manifestations we do not understand, so we rationalise them away as delusions created by our perception and cognition systems. After all, our minds fill in the central blank spot in our vision without us even noticing. Surely, they could create convincing ghosts?

For most of my life I have been the sort of worker who other people perceive as a 'scientist'. One of the enjoyable things about being engaged in scientific inquiry is that it is an endeavour to prove wrong your best ideas about reality. It is amazing how often one is wrong, opening up new exciting avenues of inquiry. Science does not appear to have adequately invalidated the 'ghost hypothesis', it being regarded as flaky and quasi-religious, not worthy of serious attention. Yet, the scientific work that has been done on extrasensory phenomena indicates connections independent of time and space that express themselves most strongly between the emotionally related.

There comes a stage in life, if one is fortunate enough to live more than seven decades, when most of the people, animals and places you have known are either nothing, or ghosts. I have been tested by apparently supernatural manifestations many times. While being agnostic on their source, I attest to their reality as illusions or otherwise. I wrote this book to document these manifestations and their context, which is largely the lives of my mother, father, brother, first wife and some recent animal friends; members of my families. Some of the ghosts are ways of life and places and societies now lost, except in memory. Some are phantasms of people and animals. All are from lost worlds.

Jamie Kirkpatrick

February 1 2024



Betty and granddaughter Alice in Tucker Road garden 2010

BETTY

The last time Jamie sees his mother, Betty, she tells him that Koi, Jamie's mother-in-law, visited her soon after Koi died. Two weeks later Betty is also dead. In the days following, an invisible force violently pushes Jamie down the stairs at work. Sprawling head-down at a forty-five degree angle, he escapes without physical injury.

In her late eighties, Betty works out at a gym, does daily exercises for flexibility and gardens most of the day. She still has her own teeth. She eats healthily, takes blood pressure and hormone pills, a glass of whisky and a glass of red wine a day. She has a wide social circle and gives much more than she gets. She is an inspiring model of vigorous and generous old age.

Her cat, Jazzy, is the beginning of the end. When Betty is 89 years old, she unconsciously does something in the bed they share that makes Jazzy panic and bite her. Betadine does not heal the wound. The arm swells purple. She is in hospital for weeks, progressively less near death from blood poisoning. Jazzy is apologetic and forgiven.

Despite a lot of pressure to do otherwise, Jamie delays his visit to help her manage when she returns home for a few weeks. He discovers the well-matured archaeological deposits in her grocery cupboard. The reams of papers, the trinkets and medals from charities and the constant phone calls soliciting for money are also a surprise. Jamie tries to organise her chaotic bills and papers. A certain previously unnoticed lack of attention to detail must have preceded the fanging, perhaps presaged by Barry's attempted teasing of her on his death bed in September 2004: 'You are repeating yourself again Crom'.



Betty in her kitchen-living room with Alistair and Nonie 2014

Jazzy dies peacefully in a patch of sun in the living room several years before Betty dies peacefully in Epworth Hospital at 7.35 pm, missing death back home by a day and Jamie's farewell by half a day.

Jazzy is Betty's last personal cat in a long line of much-loved felines. Barry adopts Jazzy from a tenant, who, before leaving, cuts a hole in a bathroom cupboard so the cat can get in and out.

In the early years of Jazzy, Woozle is the senior cat of the many that frequent the three block garden on Tucker Road that Betty has created. Drew, her second son, rescues Woozle, who was abandoned to die on a road. He moves to the cat paradise of Tucker Road from Drew's tiny flat when Drew drifts away from it. Woozle is understandably a bit nervy to start off, with a propensity to eat, eat and eat. When Jazzy moves in with Betty and Barry, Woozle is spherical.

In his late teens, the sphericity of Woozle deflates, his coat hanging like a sack on his large frame. Betty repeatedly tells Jamie the story of Woozle's death in their weekly totally regular phone calls in which she always says 'It was my turn to ring' and he says 'My calls are free'. The cats Woozle reigns over surround him respectfully and say goodbye as he receives the terminating injection. They visit his grave near the compost heap to gain spiritual wisdom.

The death of Woozle rocks Betty more than the losses of previous cats and her husband Barry, or even the later loss of Jazzy. After Jazzy goes in her sleep, Betty does not want to die on another cat, out of consideration for the cat.

Her Dad, Jim Crombie, is an officer in the Australian Army who fought on the Western Front, seeing the Red Baron plunge to his death, and having most of his men killed in a single day of futile battle. Her Mum, Flora, is game and strong-willed. A few days after eloping, she follows Jim to Europe. Both are from families with a dozen or more children, living on farms near Buninyong. Betty is conceived in Spring 1919, becoming their second child after Jock. She is christened Margaret but seems to have always been called Betty.

Her younger years are in Brisbane, where her father runs the army base and is in the upper echelons of society. Betty, sharp-faced and thin-limbed, enjoys sliding energetically down mud into the Brisbane River, climbing trees, participating in school plays and visiting seriously damaged victims of war in the local military hospital. In the 1950s she could climb further up the big manna gum in Tucker Road than either of her sons, and with greater joy.

Her brother Jock suffers from asthma in Brisbane, so Flora takes him and Betty to stay with various relatives in Victoria for protracted periods. At one of these times, Betty is lodged with some of her

churchy relatives in Preston for a few months. The last time Jamie sees Betty, two weeks before her death, just after she is moved into hospital, she talks lucidly of playing in the Merri Creek Valley with her cousins. She cannot get her bruised and blotched legs to move from bed to toilet. She does not want to eat. She asks ‘why am I here’. Jamie says pneumonia, which is true, but she also has a large cancer that is eating her body. The radiation treatment designed to dull her cancer pain ceases only a few days before she dies.

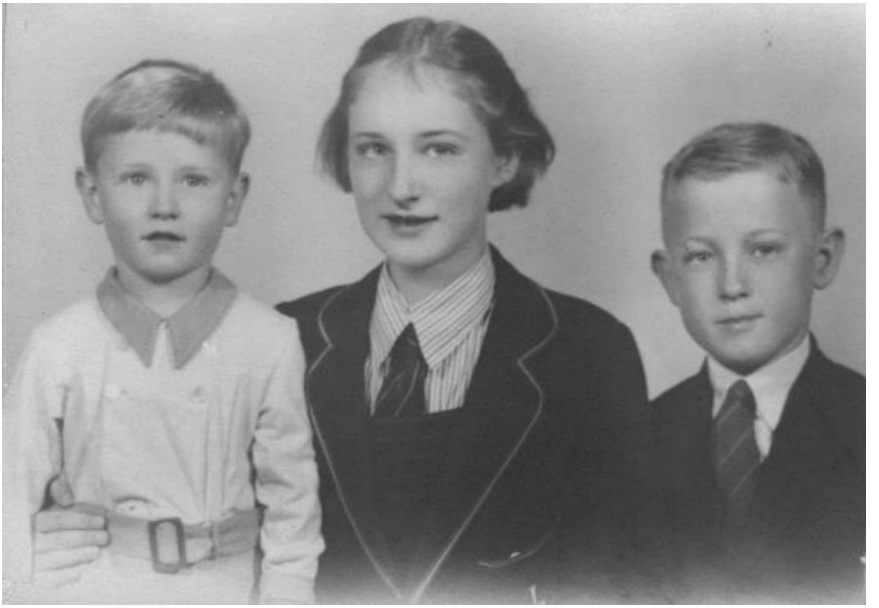


At Bebe Cresswell’s wedding, 1943, with (left to right) Flora, Captain Kirkpatrick, Betty, Jim (Colonel Crombie) and handbag



Young Betty in Brisbane

The final move from Brisbane to Melbourne is in the colder part of the year. Betty shivers at her private school, St Michaels, and at her home in East St Kilda. The girls in her class cannot place her in their very nicely defined social categories, although the fact that she comes from a State School in Queensland makes her dubious. Nevertheless, she makes strong friendships with an American, Daphne, and Joy Hesper, who, Betty later reports with relish, in the light of Joy's fame, enjoys behaving badly with her aunt, the art teacher.



Don, Betty, Jock 1935

It is the Great Depression. Betty walks everywhere, especially to the beach in summer, where she is adopted as pet tomboy by a group of boys. No alcohol, no smokes, no drugs, no cars, no fast food.

In her teen years she looks after Don, a brother born with a club foot and 12 years younger than her. Don sees her as his real mother. When Don lives in the same State, he rings her every day. At her wedding he says ‘Take a picture of me. I am the bride’s son’. Barry also rings her daily from work until he retires at 60. After Barry dies and Jazzy fangs, it is Don who sees that Betty needs a higher level of care, eventually provided by Jane, who is a friend of Drew’s, and by Betty’s granddaughter, Nonie.

The photographs from the late 1930s to the early 1950s show a beautiful vivacious young woman with a high degree of apparent

self-confidence, whether on the beach or at Government House, whether holding koala or handbag. This young woman attracts the attention of many young men, including Zelman Cowan, a future governor-general. This young woman is good at mathematics and works on calculating machines during the war, while Barry works at St Kilda Barracks under Jim Crombie, who he thereafter calls the Colonel.

Betty is enraged with her father when war is declared in 1939, but loves him deeply, without saying anything. Betty watches, keeps her own counsel and always tries, and usually succeeds, in avoiding emotional revelation. She does not like people saying that they love her and never declares love herself, but love is undoubtedly received and given.



Tony (left) and Betty (right) at Government House Victoria (1950)

Betty and Tony, Barry's sister, become close. Tony, raised as an atheist, is persuaded to take up religion by the example of Betty. Unlike her mother-in law, Muriel, Betty sees horse-racing as cruel and loves socialising with blokes. However, it is 'Betty's garden', including all the birds and animals that inhabit it, that is the centre of her life. It is a six decade creation of extraordinary beauty, which begins to disintegrate when Betty can no longer weed or plant, although some of those who love her pile up orchids and other exotica in her view field from couch and bed. When Jamie rings and manages to get through to her, she waxes lyrical about the flowers, the clouds in the sky and the ducks on the pool outside her window and says how she looks forward to gardening again when she gets over the current health impediment.

Her passion for gardening is passed down from her father. Betty and Jim take great pleasure in inspecting their beautiful and productive gardens together. She, in turn passes down a love of gardening to her oldest son, Jamie. Some of Jamie's happiest memories consist of wandering around her half acre with her, seeing what nature or Betty had changed since his last visit, and walking with her through the half acre garden in Hobart, created by Christina, himself and the rest of nature, doing the same. Jamie's children, Alistair, Nonie and Eldon, all catch the gardening bug from Betty and Jamie, Alistair to the degree to which he is a garden artist of great originality. The rest are idiosyncratically good at it in a less interventionist way. Alistair creates a lovely small rock path for Betty in her last years and persuades her to plant species that she probably would not have selected by herself but is willing to give a go. Nonie tries to ensure that Betty can see the flowers she loves from her sick bed.

The many people who love Betty dearly, even though they cannot say so, want to make her 90th birthday a special occasion. She



90th birthday with Nonie, Alice, Anna, Jamie, Alistair and Eldon

misses an eightieth celebration, because Barry, sensing the brevity of his remaining years, wants one more trip up north with her. 'She will celebrate her ninetieth, well after I am gone!' he accurately predicts. Tony and Alan, their children and grandchildren, the adults who were once the children Jamie helped a little to look after and their loved ones, Drew and his wife Carole and their relatives, the relatives of Sue, and Reeve and Bambra, Betty's only remaining physically and mentally capable friends from her partying years, all enjoy a lunch and afternoon in Betty's garden, entertained by granddaughter Nonie singing while her partner, Peter, plays the guitar. Little kids dance with the more mobile old. Speeches are made. Mosquitoes bite. People depart to die, strive or procreate, as is their wont. The air quietly settles below an arch of fig and macadamia.

In her early thirties, Betty is one of many housewives with young children in weatherboard 'New Ideal' homes in Tucker Road, Moorabbin. Betty and Barry pinch and save to pay off a generous loan from his employer as fast as is humanly possible. On one side of her house live The Rippers, an old couple with a noisy cockatoo, an orange tree and ferrets. On the other side are The Morrises. Two houses up a weak hill lies the abode of The Gourlays. Edie Morris, Sylvene Gourlay and Betty Kirkpatrick support each other. Edie,

Sylvene and Betty have close friendships, as they are together as people next door, not as couples, for a lot of the time. The children play together and the adults drink, talk and occasionally dance to big band music. The local social circle is later enlarged by the addition of The Manzies and The Carpenters, but by the end of Betty's forties all leave for more salubrious suburbs or better jobs in other cities.

Betty maintains many friends made living in the flat at Elwood and earlier. The Kirkpatricks go on lots of holidays with Frank and Phyllis, The Burgesses, holidays on which fishing and body surfing are the reason to be. The family sees Uncle Kupe and Mare Mare (The Wilsons) a lot. They are older friends made in the Elwood flat. The Rushworths are another couple The Kirkpatricks see a lot as they also barrack for St Kilda. There is a tribal aspect to it all that seems rare today. In the 1950s there is little difference in wealth and income between the factory worker and factory executive in one of the most egalitarian societies the world has seen. Unemployment is zero. The export of iron ore is banned in case there is another war. Industry is protected. Pity about prospective atomic doom.

Holidays are important in Australia in the 1950s. The land of the long weekend is also the land of the two weeks away. As at home, Betty does all the domestic work. Holidays may have been a necessary evil to keep Barry happy. Jamie sometimes gains the impression that Betty would prefer to be home, with garden, cats, friends and family, although she never fails to gain enjoyment from different places and meeting different people. She particularly enjoys visiting Europe and China, often talking about her experiences.

Barry and Betty do not hesitate to leave Drew and Jamie with Flora and Jim, or, later, a housekeeper when they want a holiday with just

each other. After Barry retires, they travel north to the beaches of Bowen and Noosa during the Melbourne winter, making a new group of friends in ‘God’s Waiting Room’, a small granite beach at Bowen.

Betty is never close to her mother. Barry seems to hate his. Yet, every weekend one or two of them are visited or fed. His mother, Muriel, is often driven by Barry for a Sunday roast at Moongalong, the Macedon abode of Jim and Flora. Betty gratefully leaves Muriel and Flora to their sherry and walks in the forest with the rest of the family.

Betty looks after Muriel in her dying of leukaemia. She finds her brave, and comments that she was better suited to life in the present, when women were accepted in the workforce, than the domestic life into which circumstances forced her. There is no funeral.

When Flora and Jim become as frail as Betty is in her last half decade, they move from Moongalong to Bentleigh. The Colonel starts to lose his memory, spending his days counting the number of matches in boxes, which is less than is claimed, on average. They totter to the nearby shops, supported by their trolley. They are conned into paying too much money for domestic repairs. The predators also scent the frail old Betty but are fought off by Drew who lives in the house in front of hers. The Colonel dies in hospital in his early eighties. There is no funeral. Flora exerts a long-denied control over her garden by cutting down the tree in the front garden and planting a Virgilia. She stops cooking for others, has sherry evenings with neighbours, and reads large print books on a giant reclining chair.

Flora becomes more and more dependent on Betty, not least to remove the empty flagons of sherry so that they cannot be seen by

her rubbish people. Betty and Barry do not sacrifice their annual transhumance to Queensland, despite pressure from Flora. They wire her up to alarm systems instead.

They are in town when Flora, at the age of 92, has a severe stroke. Betty tells Jamie that Flora decided not to eat, rather than go into a nursing home. There is no funeral.

Betty's older brother Jock becomes a serious alcoholic. Eventually, he renounces the grog, returns to his wife, Norma, and becomes a recluse. The only emergence from his locked down home is to walk his dog in the streets all day. Betty occasionally sights him outside her house, more than an hour's walk away from his. Eventually, heartbroken, he has to put down his dog. He dies soon after. If there is a funeral, Jamie does not hear of it.

After Jock dies, only Don is left on Betty's side and Tony on Barry's. Don and his wife, Gwen, move from Canberra to Wonthagi, so Betty has a lot more contact within him than before. After Barry dies, Betty flies to Sydney and Hobart a lot to see Tony and Alan, a long-term friend, Joy Abrahams, and Jamie and Christina. She and Joy fly to Adelaide together. Barry had hated flying.

Betty takes great pleasure in Eldon and Anna's daughter Alice, and Alice reciprocates. Betty and Barry, then Betty alone, ease the passage of Eldon and Anna into life in Melbourne, where they have no other family. She also takes pleasure in the worldly success of Jamie and Isobel Crombie, her niece. She attends most of Jamie's gong-receiving ceremonies and displays the books written by Isobel and Jamie prominently around her house. In her later ill years especially, she appreciates the frequent company of Nonie and Alistair, and the gruff presence of Drew.

In the 1950s Betty does most of her shopping in a small shopping centre at the top of the gentle Tucker Rd hill. There is a

greengrocer, a butcher, a hairdresser, a chemist, a fish and chips shop, a newsagent and two milk bars. If she needs to go further afield, it is by bus, then train, as Barry takes their only car to his company secretary work in MacRobertson's Chocolates in Fitzroy.

The evening meals she cooks for the family consist of either steak, chops or sausages with mashed potato and a boiled green vegetable. She sits in the late afternoon sun with the cat shelling peas. At six thirty, after Barry and Betty have a sherry and the children listen to radio serials, all sit down at the drop-down sky blue laminex table and have a family dinner. She makes her own ice cream to save money. It is horribly icy.

In later years Betty is allowed to become a more adventurous cook, gradually introducing Barry to international cuisine. On their international trip, both Betty and Barry love Italy and Italian food. When they get back from Europe they are regulars in the restaurants in Lygon Street and start consuming red and white, rather than sparkling, wine to complement their six o'clock Corio whisky with soda water and ice.

Barry blames Betty's cooking and general care for living so long and is probably right. She manages to persuade him to stop drinking the deadly milk shakes that took him to twenty stone and always makes sure that he has a balanced diet consisting of fresh food. They both love walking in the bush and swimming. In her late eighties, Betty goes on some quite daunting day walks with Alistair, Nonie and Jamie, including an expedition with Alistair to Bushranger Bay near Cape Schanck.

When Jamie is a baby, Betty talks him into intelligence and later works hard to ameliorate his asthma. She supports him through his many life mistakes and does not overtly pressure him to do anything. That does not mean that she does not influence his life-

making decisions. She prefers subtlety to directness in managing her men.

Jamie observes her getting her way with Barry, who automatically resists any suggestion from family members. She drops her positive persona with her elder son a few times and speaks from the depths. Once is in the middle of the long progress of her deterioration, when she expresses her tiredness with ongoing infirmity. Another time she expresses that guilty joy in having a life free of children, apart from Barry of course. Tragically, her freedom is soon to be disrupted by caring for parents. The day before Jamie's first marriage, she tells him that he does not have to do it. Still feeling trapped, he does. After he leaves his first marriage she is impatient with his problems: 'What did you expect?' But sympathetic about his decision 'I could see that you were unhappy'.

She is uncharacteristically grumpy with herself after she turns her foot backwards leaping over a stream in thongs. She does not enjoy being in plaster. She tells Jamie that she had no self-confidence until after Muriel died. She tells him that she came close



Betty, happy being hospitable in her garden, early 1980s.

to leaving Barry before he retired and that she needed her external friendships and outside activities afterwards. She laments to Jamie the retreat of Barry from a social life in his last decade, as she loves partying. Jamie wonders if she felt trapped with Barry and then in her home but is kinder than Jamie. Certainly, exhibiting joy in life and positivity about the future when suffering both the slings and arrows of outrageous body performance and declining social networks is a great service to the many of us who will go through the same process.

While she dances about Barry and Jamie, on most occasions successfully pulling their strings, she has less success in guiding her second son, Drew, until her last years. He grows into more or less effectively caring for her and her property as she declines, while, in Tasmania, Jamie uselessly worries about her and finds it more and more difficult to connect. Jamie is that object of disappointment in times of need, harried by his brother to visit more, do more, ring more, move! Jamie learns from Betty and does as much as he can, given his life as a whole (demanding full-time job, prostate cancer treatment, mother-in-law with pretty average health), with as good grace as he can muster; which is not as much as her.

Betty has strong political and social engagement in her middle years. She is the sort of person who can be relied upon to a make a major contribution to Mothers Clubs from primary to university level. She is socially caring and green in her political stances, although apparently a loyal Liberal voter, but who knows? Jamie suspects that she might have flirted with communism when young and passionate, perhaps with Barry, who frequently talks about ‘being chained to the capitalist’s desk’.

She thinks through her attitudes to some major social issues that affect her life. She sees it as fair that she does most of the work at

home because Barry has a highly stressful job that supports the whole family when all he wants to do is to be a beach bum. Her fondness for animals does not stop her from eating them. She erroneously believes that they have a better life than wild animals and would not be alive anyway without us.

Before Rachel Carson, she is suspicious of the use of chemicals in farming and gardening. She talks about the warming climate before scientists notice. She grows vegetables and herbs and uses them well on the plate. She hates the profusion of toys as a waste of resources. When Alice is young, Betty says to Jamie ‘I have just given her a jar and a lid. It will keep her happy for hours’. She strongly dislikes advertising. She is totally tolerant, without prejudices related to class, sexual orientation, age, race or degree of artiness, but she hates the acts of injustice, cruelty and environmental destruction that are so prevalent in the world. In her middle age, she berates police who are violently arresting people outside a pub where she is having dinner, probably one of the cheap specials beloved by Barry.

Betty helps so many people and so many other beings, starting with her family. She supports her two boys many times when they need help after leaving home and her grandchildren throughout. She is a good supportive friend to many. She has favourite charities, supporting children and rainforest, to which she makes regular large contributions. She cares about the birds in her garden, the visiting cats, and even the possums nesting in the macadamia tree. She cares strongly about the giant angophora at her gate, a tree much loved in her part of Bentleigh nee Moorabbin. And she definitely cares for the clouds, where her spirit now plays.

BARRY

Soon after Barry dies, Christina and Jamie obtain a companion animal, Beau, an overlarge ruby King Charles spaniel. Beau develops a remarkable set of expressions and actions that bring back memories of Jamie's father: the 'Betty where is my treat expression'; the explosion when not getting his way; the teasing expression; the total relaxation expression; the lovely smile of enjoyment. Like Barry he loves sun-baking, every day on the verandah at 11 am, and the water. Jamie looks at some photos of Betty while sitting on the couch. Beau comes up to him in a distressed way until he is shown. He seems satisfied.

Jamie visits his father three times in this year of his dying. The first time they sit awkwardly trying to talk in one of the sunny gardens created by Betty. Jamie cannot help crying from his love for Barry. Barry says 'It happens to us all. We better go back to the house.' He throws away his frame and walks steadily to the door. He does not use the walking frame for the remainder of Jamie's visit.

Some months later when Jamie visits again, Barry can barely walk with the frame, is falling over, even with the frame, and sleeps most of the time. Barry seems to enjoy having dinner with Betty, Eldon, Anna and Jamie around the antique oval table. The next night he does not arise for dinner, taking exception to the presence of a friend of Jamie's brother and his wife. The following morning Barry is furious, accusing Betty of starving him and excluding him from dinner. On Jamie's final night, Barry, Betty and Jamie have a quiet meal away from the antique table. They talk of past holidays. He seems happy. When Jamie leaves, early the next morning, Barry uncharacteristically presents his mouth for a kiss. Jamie kisses his cheek.

When Jamie last speaks with his father, Barry says ‘there is nothing left to say’. Jamie replies, with the emphasis on the ‘is’ ‘there is nothing left to say’. At the time Jamie thought that he might prefer that this is their last discourse, to squib the potential horror of a sudden death bed bluster, the expression of one remaining power, when he could not stand, or clean or feed himself. As his father erratically slides towards the nothingness he is convinced is his fate, his blusters became more frequent, his wife the main victim. Had he made the erroneous judgement that bad temper would ease her loss? Was he a hurt child desperate to be saved by his mother? Or, perhaps, was he desperately trying to maintain his long held domestic dominance?

Speak to Jamie he could, or would, not on Jamie’s last visit to a Melbourne with his father still alive. His bruised shrunken flesh accentuates his giant aching bones. He gasps for breath with his mouth wide open, can only just move his hands, his eyes open whitely. The only words Jamie hears elicited during four long visits to his bedside are an exclamation of delight when his sister, Tony, arrives on the Thursday. While not speaking, Barry responds to the conversations around his bed in a way that suggests that he has not lost his sense of humour. On Friday, Betty tells a story he had heard many times. He struggles, but totally fails, to produce his usual teasing response to such repetition. When Betty asks him whether that is what he is trying to say, he almost smiles. On Saturday afternoon his family sits around his bed engaging in amusing conversation in this strange reunion of the diaspora. His breath labours and stops for a moment. All fall silent, only to resume the chatter with his breath. Occasionally, Jamie leaves the room to cry in private.

By Sunday, Barry is apparently unconscious and highly distressed. His visitors find it impossible to bear too much time in his company.

Jamie wants him dead. He obliges at 4.05 am, the Monday after Fathers Day. The phone call comes soon after. Jamie answers the phone. They want ‘Margaret’, the legal name of Betty. Betty comes to the phone, hears the news, feels relief, at the end of the torture of his last long days. At 5.45 am Betty, Jamie and Drew sit around his body. The room is peaceful, the light maroon vertical blinds still clashing with the aqua walls. His dentures do not create a great effect. His pyjamas look as good as pyjamas can. His hair and eyebrows are still largely black and obviously combed, and his skin is still tanned from almost nine decades of sun-bathing. Jamie caresses his dead hand. Betty kisses him and rubs his lower arm. At 6.15 they leave him forever, carrying blue plastic bags full of buttonless shorty pyjamas.



Barry and Betty at Seaford 1938

Even at the time of his death Betty is less than half the size of Barry. She is two years younger than him, married since the early days of the Second World War. They appear a gregarious, happy couple from the summer days of their youth and young adulthood on St Kilda Beach to the retirement days of transhumantly travelling north from wintry Melbourne to Queensland. In the 1930s they play cricket on the beach in Noel Coward clothes, using branches of coast ti-tree for stumps. In the 1980s and 1990s they are members of Gods Waiting Room, an annual gathering of transhumant septuagenerians and octogenerians on the south corner of the small granite horseshoe beach at Bowen. In sets of small beach photographs people lie curved, heads up, somehow cheeky among the timelessness of sun, sand and sea.

Barry keeps a daily diary between 1944 and 1947. Emotions are never as much as half-revealed, except for the ‘rotten night’ after his father’s death when he feels he has to be stoic in front of his mother and sister. He lets his difficulty in doing so slip out in private prose. Although he is highly successful in his work, it is difficult not to sense from his diaries that it is the purgatory that facilitates the heaven of beach, sport, films, dancing and partying with friends. ‘Work as usual.’ ‘Lots of work today.’ are the prevailing work-related entries. The films that Crom and he see are religiously listed, as are the rather less religious late hours they sink into bed after partying, and the ensuing hangovers. His cricket scores also feature in some detail. In one year he calculates that he has an average of 44. Every swim at the beach seems to be noted, as is the weather on the day. He is a good competitive swimmer at school, plays lacrosse and cricket, the latter game into his forties, and becomes a dedicated average golfer at Southern until his shoulders protest some time in his fifties. He also loves watching sport.

When Jamie is a child and young adolescent Barry takes him to almost every football match played by St Kilda, the team that loves



Muriel and Jim and their car

partying more than winning. He persuades Jamie that St Kilda winning a quarter is the same as another side winning a premiership.

It is good that Jamie is convinced. In one of St Kilda's many wooden spoon years, Jamie attends all games except the one they win against the top side, probably a fix. Jamie remembers Eric Guy, who seems to delight in 'shirtfronting' opponents and the sylphic Billy Young who sneaks two goals a game because none of the thigh-blessed opposition monsters seem to take him seriously. He also remembers being hit in the back by the false teeth of an overexcited Richmond fan and being spat on by Magpie fans as the family leaves Victoria Park after yet another drubbing by

Collingwood. Being always a sook, Jamie daydreams about being a footballer who magically avoids physical contact, while kicking goals from 80 m out. He misses the point of the great Australian game. Jamie thinks that he is a bit of a sporting disappointment to his father. He is not particularly good at cricket, even ‘tippety run’, and is not prepared to risk his life playing football. His swimming is competent, but not competitive.

Barry is at the Melbourne Cricket Ground when St Kilda wins their only premiership ever, in 1966, having returned in time from a three month trip to Europe with Betty. Barry and Betty had a seat in the members. Jamie stands with his wife, Sue, packed in the Outer. Fans piss in beer bottles, it being impossible to move. After the match urine flows two inches deep out from the Men’s. A riotous party at home and appropriate hangovers ensue.

In Jamie’s memory, his father always seems happiest lying or sitting in the sun with friends and family, rising occasionally to surf, swim or immerse. This is the relaxation therapy that preceded meditation and saunas for British Australians. As he ages there is more meditation and less talking, although still some desire for company. This desire seemed to largely evaporate after he suffers a stroke in his late seventies. He recovers quickly, but thereafter prefers to lie on a couch, or sit in a chair, in the sun and reflections from the pool he loves deeply and cleans frequently and assiduously.

Barry has a fine collection of slightly tarnished cups with brown bakelite bases, won for prowess in swimming at University High. These are progressively given as rewards to the many children he teaches to swim. He is a patient and considerate teacher. He teaches Jamie to swim at Half Moon Bay, where calm water maintains its shallowness some distance from the shore. His technique is simple. He gets Jamie to support himself on his hands

in water just sufficiently shallow to keep his head above water. He then places his own hands beneath Jamie's stomach and gets Jamie to move his hands, releasing them more and more frequently as Jamie gains confidence. He also holds him as he floats, face up. Jamie has absolute confidence that Barry is not going to let him sink or swim, but is there. He is there to support Jamie throughout his life, using his golf connections to prevent him being charged for driving violations, getting him his first car, finding his first house, and organising loans in desperate situations.

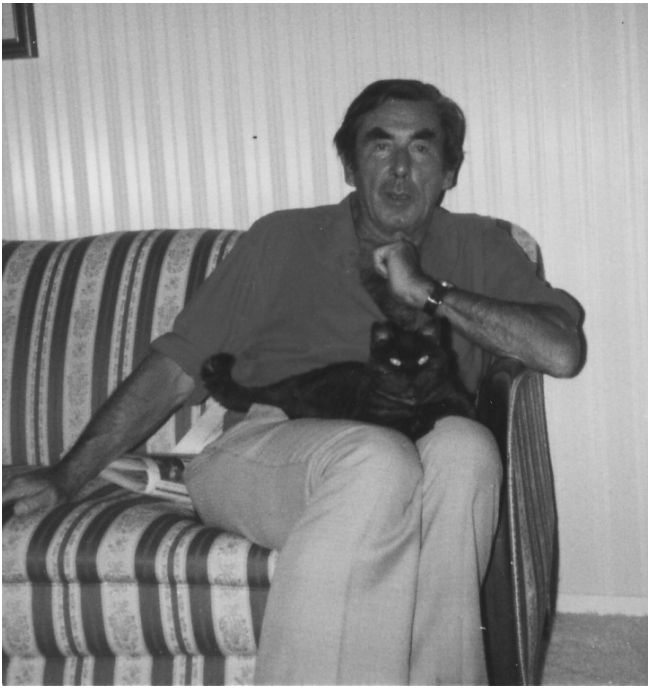
Just before Barry's precipitous decline, Jamie dreams of walking with Barry along a Queensland beach, the hinterland of which gradually transmogrifies into high rise as they progress. They sit on concrete in a construction site overlooking the sand, sea and headland. Barry puts his arm around Jamie, who clings to that feeling of warmth and security that permeates his dream self.

Jamie does not believe Barry when he tells him that he would not have children if he lived his life again. This is a man who obviously delights in children, playing crocodiles with those who like it, such



Cricket team, University high

as Alistair and Tania, and model trains, cricket and mini golf with all. The children reciprocate his affection. It is not often that they can play like a child with an adult. Perhaps he is disappointed in the ways in which Drew and Jamie turned out, although a dispassionate observer could see that they possess complementary sets of his behaviours, world views and abilities. Jamie gains his desire to put down roots at the one place, a certain cautiousness with money and alcohol, a fondness for swimming, a desire to watch football and cricket, and a tendency to be a party animal. Most importantly, Jamie values the small proportion of his kindness, openness and empathy with others that he might have gained. On the other hand, Jamie has to fight not to be the bad side of Barry when those he most loves baulk at his will or criticize.



Barry with Pixie, 1981

Barry is not always so keen to let Jamie swim by himself. He is the one who set limits, often way beyond their statutory expiry dates. He denies Jamie the profusion of plastic toys enjoyed by the children of the neighbours. He does not let Jamie ride his bicycle on Point Nepean Road. He will not let Jamie spend an inheritance, saying it must be saved for a house deposit. He will not let Jamie buy a motor scooter or motor bike, despite, or because of, having had a Harley-Davidson with side car during the war. These, in retrospect, are life-enhancing limits. Jamie reluctantly accepts them, because he can always sense that they came from love and superior knowledge. Barry's emotions are not totally concealed from his progeny, despite the British Australian male po-faced tradition.

Betty also attempts to maintain proper composure in response to the oft-painful turmoil of life. Jamie does not see or hear her cry even when his brother, Drew, runs away from home and school to Queensland, although her hair turns completely grey in two weeks. She deeply loves her father. When he dies, she does cry, but only when, returning from the funeral, she finds Pixie, a misnamed particularly vicious stray cat she and Barry had adopted, floating dead in the swimming pool. Jamie hears her cry many times in the death year of her spouse. He cannot help but to cry with her, which probably does not help. He has failed his emotional concealment training.

The only other memory Jamie has of his mother losing her cool is the incident of the thrown vase. Jamie suspects that this event must have followed one of the regular Sunday roast visits of Muriel, his father's mother. Muriel, dressed in navy blue, blue rinse hair, elephantiasically fleshed, judgemental, critical, snobbish, probing for emotional weaknesses, makes Drew and Jamie sleep between prickly blankets the one time they stay at her house, which smells

of the slow rot of sea grass matting. Muriel also helps Barry establish during the depression, pushes and pulls to get Barry and Tony into the world as a widow and survives many decades alone by judiciously buying and selling houses. A house is the one substantial thing she inherits from Jim, finally felled by his failing heart in autumn 1944.

Muriel pushes the delayed expression ‘rage’ button on Barry. His family dread her visits and their aftermaths.

Aunty Tony often laughs to Jamie that ‘Betty is a saint’. ‘Crom, where are my socks?’ ‘Crom, there’s no clean shirt.’ ‘Bets, his helping is bigger than mine.’ ‘Crom, my coffee is cold.’ ‘Bets, my soup is too hot.’ Kirka, as Crom/Bets calls him, traditionally indulges



Tony, Gwen, Betty, Barry
Isobel, Sari, Tania, London 1965

in an almost ritual domestic petulance. When Jamie desperately wants something out of the ordinary, his first response is always ‘no’. If Jamie persists he gets defensively aggressive. More often than not, he accedes, once getting used to the idea, often setting up a reverse argument, in that Jamie is convinced of the veracity of Barry’s case. His teasing is better than his bluster and petulance. It is slightly more judiciously targeted and is a well-accepted form of Australian affection. The J. Wright cartoon in which Jimbo spews on Blueys boots, and Bluey says ‘I didn’t know you cared’ captures something essential and perversely attractive about Aussie maleness.

Jamie’s Aunty Tony is an artist, and was a model, when being on the cover of the Australian Womans Weekly was regarded by some as something slightly dubious. She is nine years younger than Barry, who helps support her through private school. Muriel has great plans for Tony. They do not include a young geologist and ex commando from Tasmania, Alan Russell. Muriel is hoping for one of THE Borthwicks, or the scion of another rich family. The Russells are also less than rapt. Jamie’s parents collude in the secret courting of Tony and Alan. Perhaps as a reward, Tony and Alan’s first daughter, Tania, gets the sport genes that are also expressed in Barry, but are totally absent in Tony. Muriel rapidly changes her mind about Alan, being profuse in her praise of him in later years. After all, he accumulates respectable wealth, possibly more than a random offspring of THE Borthwicks. Jamie likes Alan best for his tall stories, which ornament a life partly lived in dangerous and exotic places. For a long while there is a cupboard in Jamie’s house full of Melanesian artefacts, most of the more violent type, abstracted by Alan from one of the wilder parts of Niugini, where he and Tony live for a while in their early married days.

Betty and Barry are generous with waifs and strays. They are interested in people. When on their many holidays and trips, Barry

initiates conversations with perfect strangers, embarrassing his more reticent son. They accumulate new friends at a steady rate. Their old friends progressively hand in their dinner pails, Ian, the pilot with an alarming tic in his face, being the first to go. Many of the new friendships are from Gods Waiting Room, but probably the strongest late friendship is with the most unlikely of couples, the husband, Hiener, having fought with the Nazi SS in World War II and the wife, Maree, having been a doctor in the Soviet army.

Maree, is a radical doctor in Melbourne, one of the principals in the fight for abortion on demand. She saves Drew's life by diagnosing a rare disease he is unfortunate enough to possess, but which is controllable once recognized. She, like many in her, and ensuing, generations is irrationally obsessed by weight. One thing that Barry particularly likes about getting old is that he loses weight. He is



In the second millenium, in the garden

proud of being thirteen stone after being twenty stone at the height of his consumption of chocolate milkshakes. Barry believes that being overweight is unhealthy, despite the facts that the fattest in his family lived the longest, and most of his thin friends died early.

Barry's kindness and generosity persist into his last years. His daily ritual, while he still walks, includes a shuffle around the block on which he provides company for at least two people who had mislaid their spouses. He fights legal battles for his daughter in law, Carole, of whom he is very fond. One could be in no doubt that he loves women as well as children. He has a nurse of whom he is very fond when a young child. Her departure after a contretemps with Muriel may have been one of the causes of his difficulties with his mother.

There are daily rituals other than the shuffle. A typical day in the late life of Barry starts with the blare of the morning ABC news from his bedside radio. Bets, in the kitchen, prepares his fresh orange juice and toast for his breakfast in bed. Eventually there comes the cry 'Bets, I want my coffee.' The coffee is made in a large plunger, then reheated on the gas stove during the day at both morning tea and eaten with a digestive biscuit. After a day largely sitting at his sunny work desk in the living room, or outside in the sun on chair or lounge, the first of two whiskies is prepared for Barry by Crom at 6 pm, just in time to catch the execrable Channel Nine News. The mute on the remote control is used to silence the many advertisements. The television is turned off, and dinner taken. The radio and the tv are the source of most news of the outside world. Papers and magazines are not normally purchased. Barry criticizes Jamie heavily for buying the paper, then feels honour bound to read it from front to last page. He loves junk mail and the free local newspaper. He is always in search for the best price for anything they use and gets upset if anyone in the family buys something that he knows is more expensive than it could be. He brings home prized items discarded by others on nature strips.











SEAFORD · SUMMER 1939-40 . A STUDY BY BOB WILLIS OF BARRY AND AN ICE CREAM

While at his desk, he manages all their investments, income and bills. As could be expected from his pre-retirement position as the company secretary of Cadbury-Fry-Pascals Pty Ltd in Australia, he is good at making money, as well as conserving it.

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, Barry is fortunate that his father retains a job as a travelling salesman. However, money is tight. As an adolescent he attends government schools and has to compete for entrance and scholarships to attend high school and university. He wants to be an architect but has to do a commerce degree to gain a scholarship. He walks to most places and cannot afford to access such temptations of youth as alcohol and tobacco. Squeezing the last out of a toothpaste tube becomes subconscious behaviour.



Executive at MacRobertsons, 1950

Barry is always good-looking. He meets Bets, because one of her friends wants a decoy to divert another friend away from Peter Cook, who the first friend wants. It does not work. Barry is struck by Betty, who is also present at this strategic meeting, and loves her for 68 years. Betty obviously has reciprocal feelings. However, nothing is said. It does not seem proper to say such things in their social group and generation. Perhaps, expressions of love tempt fate, which is pretty capricious at most times, and the American romance myth obviously did not penetrate the Australian cultural filter in the 1930s.

In the fifties, Barry slicks down his short back and sides hair with Brylcreme. In the nineteen-seventies he temporarily grows



Barry on his graduation day

sideboards. His bathing togs progressively grow smaller, until, finally, in the pool, they disappear.

Barry is a ‘wet’ Liberal voter. He distrusts unionists and the Labor Party. His dislike of the Labor Party seems largely based on his perception that they are hopeless economic managers, and his dislike for unions seems based on his experiences with Scottish shop stewards. However, he is socially and environmentally progressive in most of his views, and highly egalitarian in his behaviour. His mother could never understand why he keeps living in Moorabbin, when his income and status justify living in Brighton. Barry just does not want to spend money in the cause of snobbishness.

Barry does not believe in life after death and does not want to have a funeral. He strongly dislikes the misinformed sanctimony that people pile on the newly dead. He would have hated this piece of writing as he hated Jamie’s speech on his 80th birthday. No-one knows anyone else as they know themselves, which is not very well either.

By now, well after the cremation, some of the atoms that made up the recent corporeal being of Barry should be rolling into the Bowen and Seaford shores while his spirit, if only in Jamie’s mind, lies quiet on the sand or on a disintegrating banana lounge by the pool, soaking up the sun.



Drew in back yard of 41 Tucker Rd 1951

DREW

The last time Jamie sees his younger brother Drew, years before his death, Drew transmogrifies into the bent shape of the very old Barry, as he heads into the house that used to be that of his parents but is now triumphantly his.

Every Sunday at noon, Drew breaks a barrel for the blokes who come for 'Dominoes'. Jamie has smelled and sighted the aftermath, as the weekly ritual of Dominoes has shifted to the carport through which Jamie has to walk to gain access to his mother. Jamie often arrives in Melbourne late on Sunday. The rubbish and recycling bins sit malodorously next to the greasy barbecue and shiny empty barrel, the hop pungency not quite stale. Jamie does not want to know whether Dominoes is illegal gambling and sale of alcohol but wonders where the money that Drew says is given to charity comes from, and why one charity refused it.

Jamie loves his extended Melbourne family of Alice, Alistair, Anna, Betty, Eldon, Henry and Nonie, but hates being in Melbourne. More specifically, he hates being at his mother's house while his brother is around, and his brother is always around, drunk with tinny in hand, smoking a menthol chop chop cigarette indoors while pontificating partly digested prejudice and abusing the unenlightened in the room. Jamie sometimes wonders if he behaves thus just to annoy him, but he knows that he also behaves offensively with other members of his family when Jamie is absent, so suspects not. Jamie has adopted the habit of reciprocally annoying Drew by keeping his cool and not taking any of the highly attractive bait, enduring the boredom of the never-ending monologue emerging from a cloud of tobacco smoke flavoured by VB and menthol.

Drew and his mum have been seldom parted for long physically, and never emotionally. He cries a lot as a baby, runs away from home and school when a teenager, crashes his first car, has trouble hanging on to any job, becomes an alcoholic, makes his first wife flee from him in secret, hangs out with petty criminals, is jailed as a drunk-driving recidivist, is diagnosed with a genetic deficiency, is dosed up with testosterone, and ends up moving back to the ancestral hearth, first in the hell hole, a sleep out bedroom for Drew and Jamie in the fifties, then in the Ripper's House, one of three that Betty and Barry purchase around them after Barry's retirement from Cadburys. Firmly ensconced, Drew launches into a program to be Lord of the Manor, as his dad, then his mum, decline into infirmity.

Jamie suspects that Barry only puts up with Drew living at Tucker Road because of Betty. He does not appear to trust Drew to tell the truth or do anything reliably and is duly rewarded by the accuracy of his predictions. In contrast, Betty perceives Drew to be basically good, but genetically handicapped. She is unfailingly optimistic and positive about him. For the brief period in which Drew is mercifully in jail, Jamie politely listens to the wonders of the place in which his brother is incarcerated, and how it is reforming him. The only consolation is the name of the place, which sounds like 'Wrong-Wrong'.

After Barry dies, Betty tells Jamie, many times, that Drew has changed, is now responsible and capable. In the early stages of dementia, she gives Drew enduring power of attorney, with Drew's wife as the fall back rather than Jamie. Jamie does not want the power, as he cannot manage Betty's affairs from Hobart, but is desperately worried about what will happen.

Before she becomes demented Betty organises a conference in her garden with her two sons, to talk about her will. Drew wants the

four houses, and, unknown to Jamie, draws up an alternative will which gives them all to him, effectively disinheriting Jamie. Jamie suggests to Betty and Drew a convoluted arrangement that would give equal ownership, with Drew given the right to live there as long as he wants. That night Drew sits triumphantly at the head of the table, in the position formerly occupied by Barry.

Betty consults with her brother Don and decides to persist with the will drawn up by Barry, because she does not want her grandchildren, Nonie and Alistair, to be disadvantaged in favour of Drew's wife's family, and trusts Barry's judgement.

This will says that assets are to be liquidated and equally split, although offering the option to beneficiaries of keeping assets after independent valuation establishes their worth. It creates some difficulty for the Lord of the Manor scenario, as the properties are worth a fortune if sold together. It is also difficult for Jamie, as Drew and he are co-executors as well as sole beneficiaries, and Jamie discovers too late that he does not have to accept co-executorship. Jamie suspects that Drew might not have known that Betty had stuck with the old will until she was obviously about to die, given his panicked attempts to empty all her liquid accounts that is obvious from her bank records.

In the last few years of Betty's life, her communication breaks down with Jamie, who can only speak to her through one of the carers who Drew is forced to organise for her by pressure from Don, who is shocked at Betty's state under Drew's care. Drew appoints Jane, the wife of a friend, although Nonie, Jamie's daughter, does it one day a week, then, later, most days. Jane says nothing and quickly passes on the phone to a Betty who has little to say to Jamie. Nonie chats a bit, but Betty just wants to get off the phone after the obligatory mention of the delights of ducks and clouds.

Jamie's relationship with Drew is even more strained than before. There is a large time between visits when Jamie is being treated for prostate cancer. When he finally visits Tucker Road, Drew drags him aside from the family gathering, shows Jamie his new expensive sound system, and launches into a tirade against Jamie's daughter, who has been looking after Betty, accusing her of taking financial advantage. Pots, kettles and blackness come to Jamie's mind. Severely unsettled, he leaves for Hobart. There is another time when Drew grabs the phone and launches a tirade of abuse against Jamie for not dropping all to come under his command and look after Betty. For the first time, Jamie loses his cool, shouting back.

Jamie's interpretation of his implicit contract with Betty is to be successful, someone she and Barry could be proud of, someone who is not expected to be at her beck and call but who enjoys her company. Nevertheless, he would have found her high quality care accommodation near him if Drew had dropped dead and visits her assiduously. Jamie imagines that her implicit contract with Drew is 'I have looked after you and loved you all your life, help a bit when I am weak through old age and illness. I am willing to have the same abusive relationship as with my husband to make it easier for you'.

As Betty lays dying, Jamie gets threatening 'or else' phone calls from his brother. After she dies, Drew becomes placatory. Jamie and Drew go through Betty's papers to get the documents needed for probate, which Drew insists go through the lawyer that his mother and he use. Jamie foolishly signs up for an Estate of Margaret Kirkpatrick account in which signatories can be joint or separate and thinks about an arrangement whereby the houses are jointly owned, so that Drew can fulfil his manorial fantasies until he becomes incapable of doing so. He figures out that Jamie's

children are going to inherit it anyway after a few decades or sooner and that it must be possible to have a lease arrangement that eliminates risk. No-one else Jamie talks to thinks that this is a good idea, not Drew's genetic relatives, not lawyer, not accountant, but they are not on the frontline coping with an alcoholic who hates them by ringing him regularly early enough in the morning to avoid a drunken tirade.

It may well be that the best solution for Drew and his wife, neither in the peak of condition, would be to sell up, buy an expensive house in the area they know and keep just enough money to continue feeding off the public teat, but this is not how Drew sees it. He is not a logic or satisficing machine. He hates the hideous small slab houses filling surrounding blocks, replacing trees, lawns and weatherboard houses. He gets much of his life meaning managing the run-down houses, getting special deals from his mates and distributing largesse as a 'big man'. He perceives himself continuing the work of his mother, although the truth of the matter is that he has destroyed the garden she created and loved and the interior of the house she created with Barry. Drew has not inherited the gardening or interior decorating genes.

Jamie's delusion about leasing persists until he is told by his brother that the $50,000 Drew took out of Betty's accounts just before she died to pay the bills had been swindled from him and that the $20,000 in rent that should also have been accruing to pay the bills of the estate had been placed in his personal account and spent. Drew also casually mentions his success at betting on the horses and has purchased an expensive new car, with a top that opens. However, he complains that he does not have enough money to pay for the paint and carpet he needs to refurbish the Rippers for rental and complains that he paid for the funeral expenses. He sends all the bills he gets, including personal ones,

to the probate lawyer and tells Jamie that the lawyer will pay them from his trust account.

Jamie contacts the lawyer who says that the bills were just dropped off and that he has no money to pay them. He eventually sends them on to Jamie who waits fruitlessly for word of input to the trust account. Jamie knows that there is an insurance bill due, so pays it from the Estate account that miraculously had just enough money in it. This is only after Drew refuses to tell him the name of the insurance company, forcing Jamie to do detective work. At this point, Jamie concludes that nothing his brother says can be trusted to be true, even his boasts of illegality. He resolves to make sure that his brother cannot implicate him in any dubious actions to do with tax or social service payments, or neglect to have insurance just for the fun of it.

Jamie refuses to sign a blank bank account transfer document that came with the probate application, telling Drew that he wanted assets to go into a cosignatory only account. The probate lawyer offers his trust account as Drew will not change the original one.

For a while Jamie avoids answering his phone in case it is Drew. Eventually, Jamie thinks he better let Drew know that Jamie's lawyer would be contacting him to ask him if he wanted to keep any of the assets so that a valuer could be appointed, as required by the will. Drew says 'all the houses'. Jamie asks 'who is going to lend you one and half million dollars?' Drew assures Jamie that he has four witnesses who will attest to the fact that Betty said that she wanted Drew to stay with the houses. Jamie says the opposite. The irrelevant conversation goes on, solving nothing. Betty wants the best for Drew, but not totally at the expense of everyone else. She also agrees to anything for a quiet time with her bullying men. She knows that her house and garden will not last and says so many times.

Before the death of both parents, Jamie goes alone to Melbourne once or twice a year, for the one or two days he can bear. Jamie struggles to escape Moorabbin and the control of his parents. He succeeds to the extent that he loves them with all their virtues and deficiencies, as long as he is not with them for too long.

Jamie stays in the spare room. On the eastern wall, opposite one of the two walls of windows, there is a map of Australia with the grey nomad routes of his parents marked in biro, his father's degrees and certificates beside. Until his mother becomes frail in her late eighties, there is a family dinner around the large antique table. While Sue, Jamie's first wife, is alive, Jamie's visits are one of the few times that Betty and Barry see Nonie and Alistair, their grandchildren. Drew is at the table, glowering, with his knife and fork held upright, as Barry ritually complains to Betty that his food is cold. Drew does not like the centre of parental attention shifting to his brother and progeny.

Jamie is a much-loved baby, the centre of attention of all, until Drew arrives. The tiny screaming banshee can only be pacified by the splutter of the engine of Barry's first car. Yet, Drew becomes a happy, carefree, generous, social child, unlike his asthmatic, reserved and ungenerous brother, who never regards Drew as part of his responsibility, which is large enough with just his parents.

Jamie feels that he has to please his parents but cannot work out exactly what they want. It is ok to be told by his externally non-judgemental parents that 'they just want you to be happy', but what is happy? He would definitely be very unhappy if they did not approve of him. He did not want to just copy his compassionate, but dominating and explosive, father, who seems to live for sport and socialising. His mum wisely keeps her own counsel on most matters, preferring deference to defiance, subtle manipulation to

straight-forwardness. It is as if their nightly ritualised conversation with a glass of whisky or two skates on the surface of a silver sea, adroitly avoiding the occasional emergent gaping jaw. As Laozi might have aphorised: ‘when nothing is said, nothing is left unsaid’.

Finally, Jamie notices that his parents are upset when one of his marks at school is bad. He thinks that it is strange that they want academic performance, as the intellectual content of their conversations is zero, and Barry does not like books to accumulate in the house, rather borrowing trashy novels from the Moorabbin Lending Library. However, Barry did get a scholarship to undertake a Commerce degree at the University of Melbourne during the Great Depression and Betty is proud of doing well at Mathematics at her school. Jamie is pleased to have worked out his main responsibility. Performing well academically is easy, especially when one can abandon difficult subjects as one progresses through the education obstacle course. Sport and socialising are more difficult.

With a lack of an ability to concentrate and wanting to please all his peers, Drew trails three classes behind academically successful Jamie. He is near the bottom of his years academically and just moderate at sport. Despite running away from home and school, Drew plays in old boy teams and maintains his school social connections. He lives at home until he marries Anne. They purchase a flat, then a house, in Cheltenham, a suburb near Moorabbin. Jamie visits once, noticing that his grandfathers’ furniture and books, which Jamie fondly remembered from Macedon, have somehow ended up with Drew. The garden is obviously just an open space in which to drink and smoke. Drew proudly shows Jamie a shrub he had planted, a weedy broom. Jamie silently hopes he did not pay for it.

It will take more than four years after Betty's death before Jamie can disentangle himself from Drew. He abandons any attempt to enforce the provisions of the will, as it promises to be a process that would take up most of the rest of his life. He agrees to sell or transfer anything just to be able to never visit Tucker Road again.

Drew suggests that they sell one house and take one block each, making sure that he has the big one with the less composting dwellings. In 2019, Jamie sells his childhood home at 41 Tucker Road as the housing market collapses, fully aware that the pitiful remnants of Betty's beautiful garden, including the macadamia tree, will be destroyed along with the house. He feels no regret, just triumph as he manages to sell it, despite Drew's attempts at blocking. The estate tax return for 2018/2019 is the last one. In 2020, he will be free of the curse of Tucker Road.

The horrors of sorting out the estate with his brother induces negative feelings about his parents, who, Jamie thought in his pain, should have realised the outcome of making their sons co-executors. As the end of the process is in sight, Jamie begins to understand why they may have done it. Perhaps Betty hoped that Jamie would be forced into looking after his brother, or at least be reconciled with him. Or perhaps Barry just wanted to save his progeny the cost of a lawyer, not realising that one co-executor can block the realisation of a will. Whatever, Jamie's love for them, and grief for their loss, returns. He makes certain that his executor will be a lawyer.

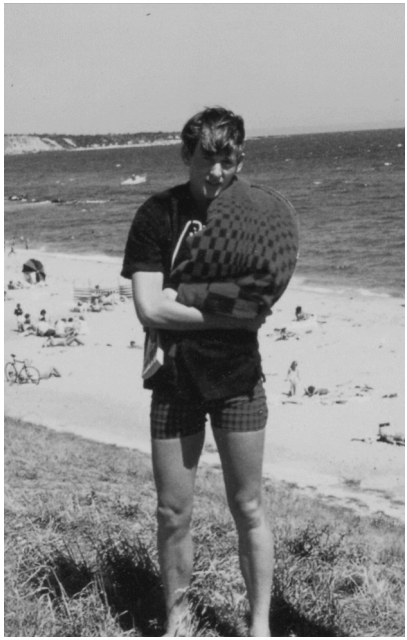
The last day of 2021 is a Friday. Jamie has been away from his computer for almost two weeks, unsuccessfully trying to alleviate back pain that prevents him from sitting or walking. Even before his back pain started a month or so ago in a professional development session, he has found himself looking at the obituary notices in the physical copy of Age, wondering what has happened to his brother.

In the Age he comes across notices of the death of Stuart McIntyre, the historian who replaced Jamie as the best friend of Barry Taylor when Barry moved into Ormond College. Jamie did not realistically expect any of Drew's remaining friends and relatives to lodge such an expensive statement of regret. He still looked.

The first email he opens on his return to quasi-normal life is from Chrissee and labelled 'Drew'. Chrissee is one of the daughters of Carole, Drew's second wife. Chrissee tells Jamie that her mother died two weeks ago and that Drew is about to do so as well, having not been able to recover from an infection while under chemo. He dies that afternoon. Jamie surprises himself by bursting out into tears. For the wake that Chrissie is going to hold for Carole and Drew, he writes a piece about Drew's life pre-Carole:

'Andrew Donald Kirkpatrick (Drew) is born to Betty and Barry Kirkpatrick of Elwood Melbourne in November 1949. He cries a lot as a baby, only pacified by the splutter of the engine of Barry's first car. The family moves to 41 Tucker Road, Moorabbin in 1952, where Drew and his brother, Jamie, attend the Tucker Road State School. Drew is a happy, carefree, generous, social child, enjoying running in the local baby boomer pack. In the early sixties, Drew is sent for secondary schooling to Haileybury College in Brighton, where he makes many friends and gets by in both the all important sport and, less so, in academic pursuits.

In fourth form, he suddenly disappears, to be later found in Queensland. He returns home, but not to school. His abrupt unilateral declaration of independence from the career path wanted by his parents appears not to have been a rejection of them, as their lives remained closely intertwined, nor of the school, which he supported as an 'old boy'. It seems more likely to have been a product of a genetic problem that is discovered and treated a few



Drew at Sandringham 1965

decades later, a problem that was associated with impulsiveness and a lack of concentration.

Drew is always more interested in the practical work of painting and carpentry than in the constraints of the office, so does not last long in the clerical jobs that Barry organised for him. He lives at home until he moved to Cheltenham with his first wife, Anne. When their marriage breaks up, he moves into a flat, then, as his life falls further apart before treatment of his disease, into the ‘hell hole’, his old bedroom back home with Betty and Barry. He never leaves Tucker Road again.

His love and care of cats and generosity with people were markers of both his early and later years. He built a life in the place of his

childhood, intimately intertwined with his family, friends, neighbourhood and his neighbours; a good life that would have made his loving mother proud.'

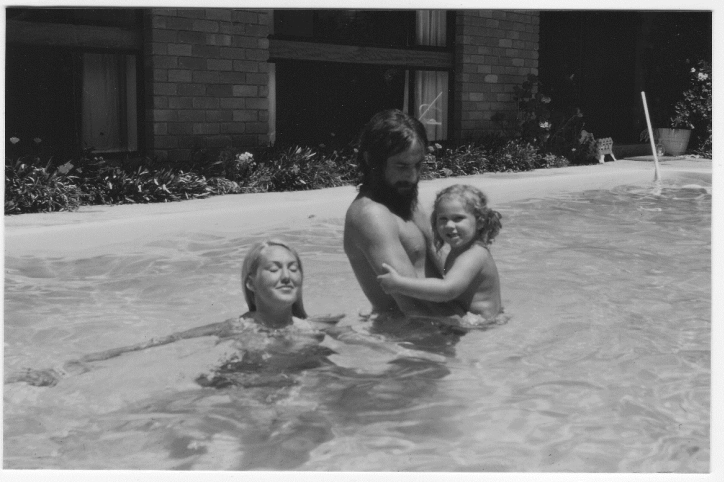
Chrissee responds indicating that the writing and early photographs provided her with a new perspective on her 'cantankerous' father-in-law. Jamie thinks that there are different truths in different contexts. He also thinks that the disease is a poor excuse for a whole lot of actions and words that hurt others, but it is better than his own non-existent excuses for doing the same.

SUE

The first strong indication of a more than material world comes to Jamie as Sue, his first lover and first wife, manifests herself in her prime, as he tries to sleep on the floor in her lounge room, the night after viewing the painted face of her corpse in a hospice called ‘Bethlehem’. Potatoes will not cook and the bathroom drains clog, as if a spirit without much leverage is exerting force wherever they can.

Jamie is in a meeting of the Biological Diversity Advisory Council in University House in Canberra when he is told that Sue is near death. His grief surprises him. A month earlier he receives a brief phone call in which her voice exudes her early love for him. She has decided she should forgive him. Nonie suggests to her she needs to do it. Sue says ‘I know darling’.

Jamie first suspects that Sue is seriously ill in the foyer of the Performing Arts Centre in St Kilda Rd, Melbourne, where Alistair,



Sue, Jamie and Nonie at Tucker Road 1976

the teenage son of their defunct marriage, is about to dance in Death in Venice. The area under half her chin is swollen. Looking around the crowded foyer, Jamie sees a man with one leg, his body covered with a biblical era coarse brown single garment. ‘What is Ian Gawler doing here?’ he thinks. ‘Dressed like that in Melbourne?’ automatically follows.

Ian Gawler is of no use, an uncomprehended sign. Sue cannot still the storms in her brain. Meditation is beyond her. The closest she can get to it is sitting in the fragrant perennial flower garden created by Alistair, her mind still seething in the background of the chemotherapy fog.

Jamie rationalises his ghostly experience as an half-dream hallucination caused by emotional distress, as he tries to help Nonie and Alistair through the aftermath of the unexpected death of their mother while maintaining a job and marriage in another state.

In Jamie’s teens, Betty and Barry settle on Merimbula as the destination for their summer holidays. The Merimbula of the 1960s is a small town with lots of luxuriant native vegetation on cliff and slope and masses of blue-carapaced crabs on its estuarine mud flat. These crabs satisfactorily disappear down holes as one walks across the glistening mud. Pippies are retrieved from intertidal sand by engaging in a movement made famous by Chubby Checker. Once Twist-located, their fate is to be flathead bait; dangled from Barry’s blue boat in which the family venture out in calm, oily conditions, the small outboard motor chug-chugging away.

Down the hill from the small flat in which the family resides is a surf beach, gained by walking through the trees. To the north of the beach, there is dense bush as far as one can see. Bluebottles occasionally make beach and water hazardous, but mostly the crashing waves and rips are open to the thalassotherapy of body surfing.

One year, Jamie gains a girlfriend, tall, thin, pretty and smiling. They kiss, walk in the bush, hold hands and play beach cricket. The next year, he explores Merimbula with two girls and a boy from a family staying across the road. He has no romantic interaction although much attracted to one of the girls. From the second floor flat, he sees a curvaceous older girl, even more attractive to him, long auburn hair flowing in the wind as she laughs gaily in the passenger seat of a sports car driven by a handsome young man. She belongs to the same house as Jamie's friends but is obviously inaccessible to a callow young man who does not even get a chance to say a word to her.

Somehow, the first Merimbula holiday after Jamie turns 17, the unattainably desirable Sue Jackson is his girlfriend, singing 'cigarettes and whisky and wild, wild women' and allowing him to share new sensual pleasures. In the following year, Jamie often stays overnight at Sue's parent's house. Sue and Jamie think, almost certainly erroneously, that they are secretly making love



Beach cricket with girlfriend, Merimbula

with each other after Bill and Fay go to bed. Sue's bedroom is unrelievedly pink, full of soft toys. It smells of cigarettes and talcum powder. Sue has green eyes, a small nose, auburn hair, soon to become blonde, and a voluptuous body. She collects shoes and dresses highly fashionably. She once belonged to the Young Liberals. She is strong-willed and volatile. She confides in Jamie that she suffers occasional 'storms', hallucinatory events, which make her avoid any psychotropic drugs.

Her parents live in Burwood, a 20-minute drive from Jamie's parent's house in Tucker Rd Moorabbin. Bill is a self-educated laundry executive with a choleric, sentimental, nature and a devotion to classical music and modern art. He and Sue sometimes fight. Fay is the attractive, shy younger sister of Darryl Wicks, a cricketing friend of Betty and Barry in the 1930s. She smokes continuously, but does not drink alcohol, even at the 'Beery Bates', gatherings of their friends at which beer and Beethoven are pleasurably intermixed. She is very close to Sue, whom she attempts, mostly successfully, to control through intimacy and positive feedback. Fay, a mother of her times, sees Jamie as a definite marriage prospect for Sue.

Barry and Betty think Bill is a 'pseud'. Bill calls Barry 'Mr 10%' because of his reputation of driving a hard deal in business and is contemptuous of the lack of books and classical music in the Kirkpatrick house. Despite these parental differences, the strength of mutually addictive desire carries Sue and Jamie through their year of geographic remoteness.

Jamie gets to meet Sue's friends, some of whom are gay men. Sue enjoys the theatricality, conversational skills and wit so lacking in most straight Australian men. She attends gay balls, where, she tells Jamie, the balling occasionally takes place on the stage. The fashion world in which she works in Flinders Lane is in the

vanguard of sexual freedom. The gay friends instinctively dislike Jamie, perspicaciously fearing for the future of their vivacious friend. Her girlfriends are more tolerant, either having worse catches, or lacking one at all, in a time when pairing off was normality, even for teenagers, and women were expected to marry by their mid-twenties. One friend is spurned after she flirts with Jamie at a dance, the stealing of partners being common enough to be widely celebrated in song.

When he turns eighteen, Jamie gains a drivers license, a losing ticket in the Vietnam War raffle and an FC Holden. A 'No Conscripts for Vietnam' sticker decorates the back window. Lay back seats are installed at great cost, allowing Sue and Jamie to escape from home bedrooms. They travel together in the car, pretending to be married so they can stay in motels. On one of these trips they buy strong cheese and bread in Bega, and settle down to a meal in the park. A stray dog begs for food. When offered the cheese he runs off yipping. That night, the motel room is almost unliveable because of cheese farts. On another trip they drive to the very top of Mt Kosciusko, where there is a parking area and food van.

When Jamie is only 19 and Sue only 21, Sue tells Jamie, that, unless they get married, she will start looking for another life partner. When he agrees to marry, she finally allows full intimacy. Jamie's addiction deepens, as does Sue's. It is a pity that they argue so much, both being used to getting their own way. Their personalities also inhibit communication, Sue being by nature passionate with no hesitation in revealing her emotions, while Jamie is reserved, trained by his family not to reveal his feelings. Sue is impulsive, while Jamie is cautious, especially with money. Their value systems are also in a state of divergence. Jamie's brain is yet to settle into adulthood. He is in a social world at the University that rejects convention, at the same time as falling into a

prospectively conventional marriage. He separates the two worlds. He prefers the university one, except for Sue.

To complicate matters further, it is almost the ‘summer of love’. In the brief intermission between the widespread adoption of the contraception pill and the advent of AIDS, sexual activity is perceived by many of the young to lose the gravitas that created morals and marriage.

In the summer of 1965/66 in which he is to be married, Jamie works in the fire tower at Anglesea. He and a friend from university, staying with other friends in the nearby town, become close. Jamie sleepwalks towards marriage, too embarrassed and afraid of discord to pull out, even when his mother tells him he can do it. His friends from university briefly turn up to the reception at Bill and Fay’s house after the formal church wedding.

Sue and Jamie return from their honeymoon in Merimbula to a small flat adjacent to the Tullamarine Freeway and close to the Zoo. Sue is working full time, competently managing a department in Myers. Jamie is still an undergraduate student. Neither have any domestic skills or much inclination to develop them. One night they cook a chicken still encased in protective plastic. Jamie behaves as if he is not married when not with Sue.

They move to a house they buy in Black Rock near Half Moon Bay. In 1968, the year of revolutions, Jamie has enough of the conventional suburban life with its weekly family gatherings and couples holding dinner parties. He moves into an upstairs room above a typewriter shop in Lygon Street, a share house at last. His close friend from Anglesea, lives a few blocks away. She is kind to him but has other friends to whom she is more attached than to Jamie. Jamie, as befits the times, has other friends too but has for them neither the deep affection he has for her nor the strong mixed feelings he has for Sue.



Sue and Jamie, married

Jamie moves with a larger group of his friends to occupy a house in Drummond Street, North Carlton. Of the 8-10 people living in the house, most are paired off, but not Jamie. The household home bonding activity is to play a card game called Solo, while drinking beer. The external source of meaning lies in anarchist activities, like opening a free shop or throwing monopoly money into the stock exchange.

Jamie manages to get a postgraduate scholarship to work on blue gums rather than going on to become a teacher. He occasionally visits Sue, who is living in their house and having a good time in her now free life. Somehow, they decide that she will accompany him on his several months of field trips, and that they will move together into Carlton.

Not knowing where one will be at night, or when your car will break down, the life of the free traveller, suits them as a couple. They are

happier with each other than they ever have been or will be in the future. There is lightness and acceptance between them as they engage in a timeless adventure. Jamie remembers Sue pissing on a campfire to put it out at night, huddling terrified together in their tent as shots are fired from a passing car, being smuggled as a couple into the single men's quarters at Renison Bell in Roseberry to get away from foul west coast weather and seeing a UFO together in the Snowy Mountains as the car breaks down again.

The house they rent in Carlton is only a few doors from the group house still occupied by Jamie's friends, who they see often. Sue and Jamie's domestic skills are unimproved. They pile all their dirty dishes in the bath until they run out of anything to eat from or with. They party a lot, but do not dinner party. Both are more or less happy with their lives.

When Sue becomes pregnant with Nonie in 1970, Jamie and Sue move back to the Black Rock house. Jamie again lives in two discrete worlds. To avoid the traffic, he leaves home before 7 and returns after 6, not a recipe for togetherness. He stays later on Friday nights, when he parties and dines with his university friends. He also disappears on many a field trip. Sue and Jamie spend much of their remnant time together fighting with each other about things the old Jamie writing this paragraph cannot remember. They both want their own way and both resist compromise. They make up in bed, an unfortunate positive feedback.

Sue has outstanding emotional intelligence. She is capable of selling anything to almost anybody. She is passionate to the degree to which Jamie is reserved. She uses her skills to make Jamie feel guilty for his behaviour as a husband, without noticeably affecting it. Jamie starts to feel trapped in a world not of his own making, nor of his desire. He fantasises about being able to go back and reverse his most stupid life decision, to marry at 20, and imagines

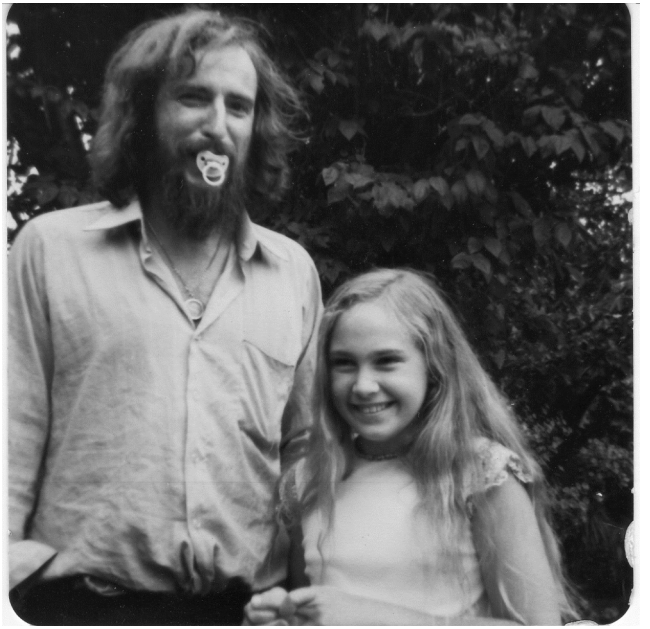


Sue in field 1969

an alternative life. He seeks out lovers, not for the sex, but for convivial relationships, and the possibility of escape. At the same time, he is distressed by the pain he is obviously visiting upon Sue.

When Sue and Jamie move to Hobart in 1972, they buy a large stone mansion in North Hobart, and fill it with peripatetic actors and students. They are together more than in Melbourne because of the small size of Hobart. Their tensions are dissipated by the presence of many others in their house. There is no alternative social scene for Jamie, who mostly just works to complete his PhD and write a whole lot of lectures.

Sue, with her long straight dyed blonde hair, fashionable Melbourne clothes and outstanding social skills soon becomes enmeshed in a social group that includes Roger Jennings who is the Solicitor-General, many outstanding young medical specialists, young lawyers, including a future governor, hairdressers and actors. It is



Life wasn't all misery

basically the creative, racy arm of the Sandy Bay social set. Jamie goes to these gatherings as Sue's handbag. Jamie likes the actors, who are diversely eccentric, but dislikes yet another round of dinner parties with people playing at couples. He has few interests in common with most of the people he and Sue eat with and feels he cannot be himself. He feels more relaxed home in Warwick St, living with a succession of boarders, even though some of them prove to be a strain.

At Warwick St., Sue spends money they do not have on antiques, wallpaper and renovations. She cooks on a wood stove. The fires in the house are all open in high-ceilinged rooms. The inhabitants huddle around them watching television, except Jamie who sits in a heavy coat reading books next to the window, from which one can see the bush and the Derwent Estuary.

Sue makes some good friends at Warwick St, Kim who lives in the house behind and has a child the same age as Nonie, and Max, a surfy student with a Stalin moustache and a pot supply line, who boards for quite a while after Sue and Jamie move into the house. Jamie is a shit of a husband in lots of ways, but he does do the 5 am nappy shift and she love/hates him intensely.

Jamie and Sue leave Warwick St for his first study leave, which will be six months in Riverside, California. They live in an apartment, one of many around an empty pool. This dwelling consists of a living room/kitchen, bathroom and bedroom, all looking like a motel. They are shocked that they have to buy drinking water, by helicoptors and gunfire at night, and by the rubbish grinder in their sink. They get on pretty well. When Fay visits they all set off on a tour, which includes Las Vegas and the Grand Canyon. Sue and Nonie leave with Fay for a world tour, two months before Jamie returns to Hobart. Jamie moves in with a postgraduate student couple and has a pleasantly social two months smoking large amounts of pot.

After he returns, Sue tells Jamie that she is surprised he came back to her. They resume the Warwick Street life. A first year student related to someone Jamie knew in Melbourne moves in with them. He is tall and aesthetically thin with curly hair. Jamie only realises that he and Sue are having an affair when the student asks him to give the house to Sue and him. Jamie refuses. Jamie is not upset by the affair. At the time, he feels that sexual relationships are the business of those having them and that adult people should be free to have them unrestricted by rules. He definitely does not believe in the sanctity of marriage.

Sue has to decide whether to break up with Jamie and live with an immature youth who is more compatible with her than her husband and is desperately in love with her, or to persist with her marriage

to an unreliable man who has an income and who shares the ownership of her house. The youth is harassed and threatened by Sue's father and brother. Sue chooses Jamie.

Shortly after the youth leaves heartbroken, Sue commits to buy a house in Ferntree, without asking Jamie, at a cost that seems impossible to raise through loans and the sale of Warwick St. Jamie is devastated. He loves the life at Warwick St which it seems he is now doomed to lose both ways. If Sue cannot sell Warwick St for a sufficient sum, the 10% deposit of Ferntree will be lost, forcing them to sell Warwick St anyway. While ruminating continuously and having nightmares on the subject, Jamie passively endures.

When Sue eventually persuades a dentist to buy Warwick St for sufficient money and Jamie's father manages to get a large bank loan for them, they move to Ferntree, to a large house on a three acre block with tall trees and rhododendrons. Sue is pregnant with Alistair.

Sue loves Ferntree. She goes all country in her dress and gives up on makeup, no more 'putting on her face'. Sue and Jamie go macrobiotic for a while. They get a Labrador, Flossy, who collects empty flower pots from around the neighbourhood. Their friend, Shani, comes around to play scrabble and drink with Jamie while Sue cooks or does other rustic things. Shani's dog kills a local sheep. Their cat hates the cold, pissing inside in protest. It actually snows once or twice.

Jamie loves a lot about Ferntree as well. The view from the bedroom into the tops of mountain ash trees, the view from his study into a mature myrtle, the walks on the mountain outside their back door, tidying up the neglected garden. However, it is a bad sign that his fantasies of an alternative life become more frequent. He has an increased perception of entrapment. He hates constantly running out of money.

Although Ferntree is only ten minutes by car from Hobart, this is a long way. Jamie begins to lead two lives again, drinking with students and other young uni staff, like Peter Hay in Politics, at the Traveller's Rest on Friday nights.

One of the areas of fashion that particularly interests Sue is the interaction of food and weight. The macrobiotic flirtation with 'zuki' beans and brown rice is abandoned for a low to no carbohydrate diet in 1978. This diet is doomed to fail like all others, succumbing to the joys of roti and basmati rice on study leave in Suva.

When Jamie takes his second study leave in Suva, Flossie, the family dog, is left in the care of a female friend of his. Jamie joins Flossie on his return from Suva, living in a half house in Sandy Bay with his friend. Months later, Flossie is returned to Sue, Nonie and Alistair, who have moved to Beaumaris in Melbourne, Sue using the sale of the Ferntree house to buy a house in Cherbourg Avenue. In the absence of the influence of Flossie, his friend falls out of love with Jamie, leaving him for England and marriage. Jamie survives emotionally through a group of rather disparate friends. He eventually ends up living with and marrying Christina.

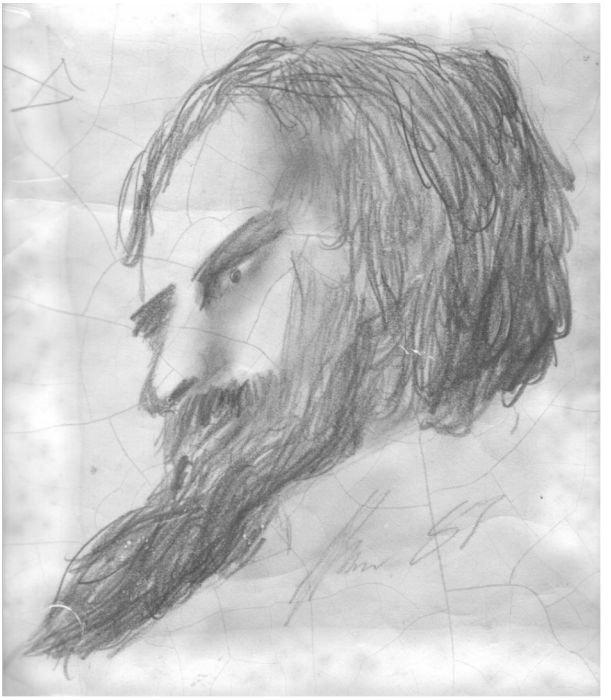


Flossie

Surprisingly, given both of their histories, they continue to be in love after 44 years of cohabitation.

Sue and Jamie are tied together for life by their love for their children, irrespective of their complex, now largely negative, feelings for each other. Jamie gets to know Sue's new house and garden, filled with the lives of Nonie and Alistair, and the antiques and books of his dissolved marriage, not to mention the animals of it, Flossie and Mishi. Sue gets him to do things, including planting coastal ti-trees in the garden.

Sue is a wonderful mother to Nonie and Alistair, working with Fay and Bill to help them become good people. She becomes an



Jamie by Eldon 1980

environmental activist to save the small park next to her house from being sold by the Sandringham Council. The small reserve is named after her. She also maintains and builds up extensive social networks and uses her persuasive skills to earn an income. She is loved by many as a loyal friend.

Jamie is heavily conflicted by being a proxy father to another's child, while his biological children miss him in Melbourne. Eldon copes with his third dad in his brief six years of life. Eldon draws Jamie staring darkly at the dirt. As Jamie and Eldon get to know each other they develop an ongoing mutual affection. It helps that Eldon is born empathetic. Eldon redraws Jamie with a round friendly face. Jamie prefers the lean and hungry look but is gratified.

In 1990, Sue asks to meet Jamie at his parent's place. Jamie suspects that she might have a fatal disease but does not know for certain. In the garage, Sue tells Jamie about her sickness and the lack of beneficial effect of the treatment. Jamie says 'You are very brave'. Sue replies dully 'Do you think so?'

Sue pressures Jamie to let Nonie and Alistair be looked after by Fay and Bill. Jamie refuses. He weeps as he flies over Cherbourg Avenue as he returns to Hobart. Sue realises that she needs to allow Jamie to re-establish relationships with his children. They visit Jamie in Hobart. Jamie passively hopes all will be well if Sue dies.

Sue has not told Nonie and Alistair that she might die from her illness. They just assume that she will get better. Her death is a terrible shock. At the funeral Alistair hugs Jamie tightly, asking 'what will become of me?'

Jamie and Christina build an extra bedroom while Alistair completes his current school year at the College of the Arts, living



Nonie, Jazzy and Alistair at Tucker Road in the 21st century

with Nonie in Cherbourg Avenue. Jamie stays with them often, while Bill and Fay help them a lot. Nonie is depressed. Alistair is worried.

Alistair wants to attend Friends, a private school, because he is worried that he will be victimised at Taroona High, the school that Eldon attended. Alistair is gay but is scared to let his relatives know. When he does tell them no-one is upset to any degree whatsoever, except perhaps for Barry, who says nothing to Alistair. Alistair tells Jamie that he did not tell his mum. Jamie says that his mum probably knew, and, anyway, used to hang out in gay circles when younger. She would be the last person to be upset.

It is sad that Sue died prematurely as she would love the people her children have become and she is missed.

DEATH IN SANDY BAY

At the funeral of Koi, Jamie's mother-in-law, human family and dog family sit around her coffin. It is not a religious service as Koi is not a member of a church, an agnostic rather than an atheist. Poems are read and music played in harmony with Koi's refined tastes. The two dogs lie prostrate on the floor, apparently asleep, heads pointed to the coffin. As the requiem plays, Mr Pippin's head rises slowly from the floor, his eyes following the essence of Koi as she disappears through the ceiling.

Jamie hears the sound of claws scrabbling at the closed cat flap. It is just before midnight. He dresses and open the back door for Pooh, who staggers to the end of the verandah, then sits, as if gathering her strength. She stands up, sniffs at the gutter, where there is often water, but there are only wet leaves. She heads down the path towards the drive. Jamie lifts her limp, frail body and place her in the dry loose dirt under the Norfolk pine, thinking that she wants to pee. She does not. He takes her back to the verandah. She heads back down the path and turns right up the short brick path, where a ceramic bowl, often filled with water, lays beneath the flowering plumbago. It is empty. She staggers to the closed front gate, making motions as if to go beneath; once a trivial task causing little change in her rate of progress. She seems serious about leaving the block. Jamie decides otherwise, picking her up, taking her inside, running the shower, and placing her in it to lick the globules of water suspended by human fats. She starts licking. It is there he sees her for the last time.

At four in the morning, on the day twenty-five years after Christina and Jamie married, scrabbling wakes Jamie again. He unlocks the cat flap as on other nights during Pooh's illness. Pooh likes to lie in the ferns, awaiting dawn and the birds she is no longer capable of



Plan of Pooh, relaxed in front of the fire

ambushing. Jamie arises to go to the toilet, then looks for Pooh down the path. There is no sign of her, even in the ferns. He opens the front gate in case she has raised enough energy to squeeze under it but could not get back. A pademelon must have hopped in through the opening, as, when the sun rises and Jamie feeds the chooks, some more of his potato plants are nibbled and fresh scats lie on the lawn, but Pooh is still not there.Jamie assumes that she has gone somewhere private to die, in one of the many dry patches that lay beneath the thickets in the neighbouring gardens, or under the chalet or a neighbouring house. Jamie thinks he sees her on the steps of the empty house behind his. The black and white cat that flees from him is a younger Pooh with pointy ears who Jamie never sees again.

The night the Mother Cat dies she comes into the lounge room to say goodbye. She is found dead in the morning, on an old armchair in the garage of the house next door. Her daughter, The Mouth, has an unhappier demise. Having survived absences from home



The Mouth in her prime

caused by fish hook impalement, and maggot-ridden wounds from fighting with other cats, at the age of fourteen, she disappears again. She retreats to the half bush, half building site behind the garden, where Jamie finds her three days after her disappearance, lying limply in the sun, just alive, this time with no sign of really gross external injuries. Jamie gently carries her to the laundry where he makes her a bed and provides her with water and food, in which she evinces little interest. He then calls a vet, who while progressing to the laundry, looks up at the garden and presciently says 'cat paradise'.

The verdict is advanced kidney failure. There is little hope of long term survival, although expensive interventions could possibly postpone her demise. Jamie makes the terrible decision to put her down. The Mouth is on his lap; she is a good lap cat and a good smoocher. The vet said that a lap location is not a good idea, so Jamie holds The Mouth out to be injected. Her whole body goes rigid and superalive, then collapses into death. As, crying, Jamie carries her body from the laundry to bury deep in the vegetable



Pooh with sculpture

garden, Pooh, still a young cat, looks intently on. She has been outside the laundry all that time.

Not that Pooh is all that fond of The Mouth, or vice-versa, but she is a good learner. The Mouth ambushes Pooh as she emerges from the cat flap. More than a decade after The Mouth is compost, Pooh only uses the flap for exit in extreme desperation and with admirable caution, pushing it out a little so she sees on both sides, before propelling herself at great speed on to the verandah. If the Mouth could do it, one of the other neighbourhood cats could do the same, thinks Pooh. Such is the power of her memory, Pooh might have left her home on that rainy anniversary night to avoid the possibility of the fate of The Mouth. It is her kidneys too, and her misery is getting greater, her purrs weaker, her tail fluffing up in angry pain, her familiars bursting out in tears. Christina and Jamie send her for three days at the vet, to remove abscesses from her teeth and get her kidneys flushed, only a couple of weeks before she disappears. Although she would not have survived to seventeen without several major veterinary interventions, her perceptions of vets are not positive. The last episode almost kills

her spirit, although the kidney flushing did lead to an all too brief remission of symptoms.

Vets find it hard not to reciprocate Pooh's intense dislike of their ministrations. Even her familiars do not dare to try to force pills down her throat. It is too dangerous. She performs miracles to avoid vets or lacerate their flesh. The vet used in her early days has a reception room with a platform at waist height occupying the centre of the room. In the corner of the street wall near the tall ceiling there is a small window with an internal ledge. Pooh is taken out of the cat carrier while we talk to the vet. Suddenly there is no cat. She is searched for around the room, while she watches from the window sill above. Finally spotted, Jamie stands on a chair to retrieve her. On her later visits to the room she, in a self-satisfied manner, looks meaningfully towards the window. The vets soon adopt the cat bag stratagem when doing anything to her mouth and head.

One vet has her revenge on Pooh. She misinterprets some sores on the tips of her ears as cancer, giving the verdict that the only way to save her life is partial ear amputation. The Pooh that comes home has round ears.

A change in ear shape does not shift her from her projects. She is strongly interested in herpetofauna with a secondary passing interest in small Rodenta, baby lagomorphs and avifauna. She ignores the possums, potoroos, bandicoots, bettongs and pademelons. They are out of her size range. She feels that it is her duty to train her familiars in the zoological arts. There is a constantly renewed collection of tail-less skinks hiding under the fridge. The occasional live whip snake is contributed to the training program. Pooh is puzzled when Christina uses a soft broom to sweep lizards and snakes out on to the verandah. The baby rats are more challenging. They are too fast to sweep out the door.

Jamie develops a technique that involves a large cardboard box held up on one end by a stick and a broom. The baby rat is swept in the general direction of the large box, which is on an angle, and hides under it. Jamie drops the box and push it over the floor to the door and on to the verandah. The box is lifted and the baby rat flees.

Although Pooh likes to roll over, showing her shark mouth, as she is praised in front of the fire, and puts up with the occasional pat, she is definitely not a lap cat, or a house cat. She is the shy one of the litter at the Cat's Home, in fact all that is left.

At the time when Pooh is brought home by Christina, Nonie and Alistair are on one of the rare visits allowed by Jamie's first wife, who at the time is getting close to death from leukaemia. The children spend the day under the bed with the tiny 'shy one'. Initial shyness conceals the strongest of wills.

She does not accept being confined to the house at night, or any time. She yowls at a window or door until released. She goes on hunger strike when away from her familiars. She is hard to persuade to eat any food she is offered. Eventually her family are adequately trained to service her needs and not demand too much. A little bit of unpredictable affectionate ankle-wrapping does wonders in keeping them on track.

Betty and Barry are cat people. Jamie grew up with the protective Rusty Coo-Coo, replaced after a long life by the affectionate and equally long-lived Fuzz-Buzz the Bully Wasp, who is replaced in turn by Ginger George. Sue and Jamie as newlyweds soon adopted Mishi, a Siamese cat. The one time Jamie ever subjects himself to a hallucinogen, Mishi is the only living or dead thing that retains normal form, colour and movement.



Ferdie and Betty (1963)

Cat is the opposite of dog, which spells God, in which case dogs are ‘tac’ky angels. There is a dog at Betty and Barry’s, Ferdie The Pest. He is adopted for Drew and Jamie but ends up living a long time with Betty and Barry after the boys leave home. Despite having the short legs of his dachshund mother and the torso and head of his border collie father, Ferdie can climb six foot paling fences. It is fortunate for Ferdie that wandering un-neutered dogs were tolerated in those days. Betty and Barry spot him once a long way from home as they drive home from a party. Barry says “Ferdie’ in a rebuking tone. Ferdie lays on his back waving his legs while making submissive noises. He does not stop wandering. Betty says that, well after he dies quietly in his kennel below the orange tree, she sees many dogs that look a lot like him.

Jamie is deeply affected by some deaths, but not others. His father’s had distressed him deeply as had those of his maternal grandmother, Nan-Nans, Sue, The Mouth, Pooh and Betty. Heaps of other relatives, friends and animal companions hand in their dinner pails without grave effect, or even troubling the scorers. The

loss of Beau and Pippin, two Cavalier King Charles spaniels lacerated his soul.

At night before Jamie and Christina read, Jamie plays with the puppy Beau. Together Beau and Jamie develop games involving the various toy misters, such as Mr Wupper, Mr Rope, Mr Toucan, Mr Blue Dog, Mr Caterpillar. Each has their own voice and distinct behavioural patterns, which Jamie channels. Soon, Beau is Mr Beau. Jamie, who thought himself a cat person, falls in love with a smelly, farting, cushion-fucking dog who greets him with joy no matter how long he is absent: ‘Where have you been? It has been at least ten seconds!’

Beau is definitely an enthusiast. Late in his first year, he is taken to check out a dog show, held at the Show Grounds, where Beau’s brothers and sisters, not handicapped by white specks and gigantism, are being displayed. The dogs are all inside a giant shed, next to which there is a tiny arena. People and dogs are packed together in little square enclosures. Beau is so excited that he spews up his breakfast of chicken wings in the aisle, much to the disgust of an adjacent dog exhibitor. Beau’s siblings are packed together in what seems a very little crate. They are pygmies compared to Beau. Hostile barks emanate from the crate – maybe Beau hogged all the food when with them. The breeder of Beau is acting as a judge. She looks puzzled, at the ecstatic leaping Beau and says ‘He IS a big one’.

Mr Beau develops a sixth sense for prospective departures of one or other of Christina and Jamie, or, indeed, any visitors. Anticipated or actual departures precipitate an episode of painfully loud barking.

Jamie can still feel Beau pushing his body between his legs, sitting up so that he can scratch and pat his ears and head, rubbing the



The young Beau



Older Beau with weeping eye 2009

indentation between his eyes. Sighing, Beau subsides to the floor. In his later years, when his various diseases made him too hot for prolonged contact with humans, he moves off Jamie's feet to lie under an adjacent chair. He is so distressed on his last day that he has to abandon his attempt at this ritual.

There are many rituals. When setting off for the morning walk with Mr Pippin, the black and tan Christina obtained so that Beau would have company, he barks at Jamie to join them, which he is only able to do on one or two days of the week. When Jamie joins the walk he holds Beau's leash. Beau grabs it in his mouth, shakes it and drags Jamie part of the way to the car, until distracted by the desire to eat some grass, always from the same place. When he leaps into the back seat of the car he barks until Jamie gets into the front seat. He lays his head between the two front seats, expecting a pat, and in a position to bark if Jamie seems to him to want to get out of the car without him. There is always the chance that Jamie is being transported somewhere, rather than being about to walk with him.

Cavaliers walk in a horizontal sine wave. On the favourite walk, which starts under the black gums below the Hutchins Oval on Churchill Avenue, Beau drags Jamie back and forth on the spoor of rabbits and pees on anything upright, followed by Mr Pippin who pees too. Beau knows to turn left at Mount Nelson Road, then turn right into a path between two houses that, in turn, leads into the University at which Jamie works. Smell, drag, pee, back foot dig, drag, poo, drag, dig, drag, smell, drag, pee, dig, drag, smell. Mr Pippin has a hole, down which disappears a large metal pipe, which he approaches cautiously from downwind every time, only to shake when looking down it. Mr Beau is more interested in poking his head under nearby prickly grevilleas, hoping for a rabbit. When Jamie walks him, he sees himself as a hunting dog.

On the Crawford Trail through the lovely blue gums and pinkwoods, he tries to rush up the paths created by native animals as they move from the stream to the college lawns. The next highlight of the walk for both Pippin and Beau is the viewing of the chooks in the orchard at Source. They miss the home chooks, who all died of diseases of old age. Not that they would not have torn them apart

if given half a chance. The walk proceeds behind the refectory avoiding the metal bridge over the stream to which both dogs are averse. If Pippin is lucky his party will go down to the oval where, still on the leash, he can pretend he can catch swallows. They taunt him by flying close to his head. On the way back to Churchill Avenue the party stops at a particular tap from which Beau drinks copiously. Pippin drinks the spray from Beau's mouth. Beau spews some of the water on the path. The party returns to the car, examining the occasional grate.

Beau first develops an interest in grates when being caught in a deluge on a walk in Lower Sandy Bay. He chases the water cascading down the gutters and barks as standing waves disappear down grates. For a long time this interest is diverted to sea waves. He sticks his head through the fence on the promenade near the Casino and barks at the breaks. Sometimes he is taken down to the sea on the rocks between Long Beach and Blinking Billy Point. He barks at waves, then stands in the water drinking them. When Jamie finally drags him away he spews.

His passion for grates is resurrected in his last year. Jamie suspects that this is because grates accidentally intersected with another of his great passions – blackbirds. The incident of the blackbird flying out of a grate happens not once, but twice, much to the astonishment of the walking party. For a while, Beau and Pippin insist on inspecting the particular grates from which the blackbirds emerged, but Pippin soon loses interest and Beau begins to generalise. Beau thinks that a slow approach to a grate along the gutter might put him in a position to snap the bird dead as it emerges. It never happens, but his enthusiasm does not wane. Jamie indulges him, secretly interested in the wildlife of the subterranean world.



Is that a liver treat? Mr Beau and Mr Pippin

Beau is not particularly interested in blackbird hunting until the lesser member of the dog pack arrives. Mr Pippin is adopted a year after Beau. Pippin is tiny when he arrives compared to the almost fully grown Beau. Pippin is a black and tan, except for the white that allows him to be saved from showing. Although not eventually being small for a black and tan, he is always small compared to giant ruby Beau. Beau is very tolerant of the new boy. Pippin arrives, sees Beau, falls in love. This love physically expresses itself in dangling off Beau's silky ears, then, in adolescence, in humping. Pippin finds Beau particularly attractive after he has been all perfumed up by his dog groomer, his rare absence for his haircut stoking the fires of longing. Beau's ears are insanely licked until they became a soggy mess or Pippin is forced away. Beau sits down to truncate the humping.

Some blackbirds make the mistake of nesting in tangles of low bushes in the garden in the year in which Beau and Pippin decide that they are a hunting team. Beau barks incessantly at the nests, tries to dislodge them by pushing against the bushes, and even succeeds in climbing to some of them. He does not get down

without help. Either he dislodges some baby blackbirds or something else does, because several flightless small birds end up hiding in the woodland garden, where, despite the resistance of the local humans, the team eventually catches all, utilising their new pincer movement strategy.

The blackbird hunting frenzies probably do not help Beau with his manifold health problems. In his first year he has bad pain that requires him to be put on to a drip. He recovers. The vets are uncertain what caused it, but note that Beau has a luxating patella, that is, his knee dislodges easily. The operation for it does not attract because of his sensitivity to pain. Beau gets frequent fungal infections in his ears that require treatment. He perforates his eyeball, requiring antibiotics. Eventually he has to have antibiotic drops in his eyes every two days for the rest of his life. He has more pain episodes. He gets an MRI, sneaked in after the people, but is badly handled; leading to pain. Tests show that he has stones in his kidney and bladder and an expanding prostate gland. He has an operation to castrate him and remove the stones from his bladder. Nothing can be done about the kidney stones. The operation does not cause any major pain because of excellent handling by the best vets in Hobart, who have now realised that Beau suffers from syringo-myelitis. He is frequently in low level pain, obvious from the way he lies and an inability to touch him except on head or rump. But he so obviously enjoys eating and walking and socialising and hunting that his companions ignore it.

Although a reluctant eater when a puppy, having to be hand fed, Beau becomes an enthusiast after Pippin arrives. Every night about six he tells Christina that it is time for food by barking and scratching at the cupboard in which supplies are kept. He keeps barking then sits in his ‘good’ frog position before being fed on the verandah. Pippin is then fed in the hall. Pippin gets a special treat

of bread crumbs after he eats his meat and vegetables, at which stage it is time to give Beau some extra biscuits. Finally, they both have a special treat, apple slices, and are asked to go out into the 'fresh air'. One needs to throw Beau's apple slices on the floor or into his mouth, as food makes him snap. Pippin politely takes food from hands. The elaborate feeding procedure is largely designed to be able to retrieve Beau's bowl, which he defends to the death.

Both dogs are given rawhide bones after dinner. Beau consumes one a night while Pippin only eats those pre-chewed by Beau. Beau becomes more and more possessive of his bones until he becomes impossibly defensive.

Beau and Pippin divide up the domestic duties. It is Beau's job to bark at the vacuum cleaner and rescue his favourite toys. Mr Pippin barks at the broom. Mr Pippin barks to warn off dogs and people. Beau barks in an attempt to stop them leaving.

While Beau can be difficult at home, he is a dream in public. He is friendly to all other dogs and people. Blonde females and Asian students particularly love him. An expensive car screams to a halt. An immaculate blonde emerges to embrace Beau. Tail and snout sniffs are de rigeur with other dogs. He becomes especially friendly with Freddy, a smaller ruby from the same breeder, who is walked at the same time as Beau. Mr Pippin, a dream at home, is a ball of jealousy and prejudice outside. The jealousy pertains to any dog or person that Beau is friendly with. He hates street sweepers, people in fluoros, coloured people and children, as well as almost all other dogs.

Pippin is bereft at Beau's death, never ceasing to miss him. The arrival of a small ruby puppy, Mr Tor, a few months after Beau dies is initially no compensation at all; he wants Beau back, but Pippin grows to love Tor. They do the play dance that Beau could not do and compete in chasing kibble at lunch. Tor can handle dry

humping better than Beau. Pippin and Tor greet joyously when back together after infrequent separation.

Koi, after initially expressing reservations about a second dog and nick-naming him Pip-Squeak, becomes one of Mr Pippin's best friends. When visiting every Thursday, she sits reading at the table, or out on the porch in the sun, constantly scratching Mr Pippins chest. If she ever has a lapse in attention, Mr Pippin gently bats her arm with his right paw.

After Koi's funeral, Mr Pippin always looks for Koi where she met with Christina near the bank in Magnet Court, even after the bank is closed. Any older woman with a beige gabardine coat draws his attention, anywhere. He is visibly disappointed when she proves not to be Koi.

Pippin is an assiduous student of his humans, who he deeply loves and cares for. He wags his tail when they hug. When one of them is not there, he has to be consoled with liver treats, biscuit treats, porky puffs or, preferably, wholemeal bread.

Interactions with Mr Pippin add to the family vocabulary. Pippin has a short tongue and long palate, a combination that makes it difficult to breath at times and which induces loud snoring. His head is at the right angle for easy breathing when it rests on Jamie's ankle, a process labelled 'legging'. It is only Jamie and Alice who can master this arcane art.

As Pippin ages, he loses most of his teeth to his bread habit and develops arthritis. It is painful for him to jump up on to or off couch, bed or the back seat of the car. Jamie invents 'superdogging' which is the dramatic act of picking up Pippin and transporting him up or down. When Jamie wants to superdog he lets Pippin know and he braces for flight. Mr Tor soon joins in the fun, despite his lack of arthritis.

In his later years, Mr Pippin loses his desire to walk, at least at any speed. He prolongs the walk away from the car by insisting on protractedly sniffing everything, then peeing on it. Once the pack turns back, he races for the car, sniffing at nothing, peed out. In response, Christina reduces the joint walk with Tor and Pippin to once a day, usually in the afternoon. On the weekends, Jamie joins in. He holds Pippin's lead. Pippin likes that as he gets away with more dallying with Jamie than Christina. The pre-dawn walk is now reduced to a party of Tor and Christina.

When Tor and Christina leave, Mr Pippin expects his first bread treat of the day. He looks meaningfully at Jamie, who raises himself from his breakfast, gets the bread from the bench and breaks off bits, one at a time, to place on the floor. The pieces are promptly devoured by Pippin, who dislikes being handfed bread, despite being happy to be handfed chicken and kibble. Jamie goes back to his breakfast. Pippin goes to the door. He bangs on it with his paw, the signal that he wants to go out. Jamie gets up and opens the door. Pippin does not move, his signal that he wants more bread. Jamie accedes, but not to the second round. Mr Pippin eventually goes out to drink from his water bowl. There is a perfectly good water bowl inside, but Pippin seldom drinks from it.

Pippin likes to lie on the porch looking at the drive and Sandy Bay Road while waiting for Tor and Christina to return. Tor is greeted joyously, then Christina. If Christina goes out again without Tor, which happens a lot during Covid, Jamie gives both Pippin and Tor another treat, because of an 'unauthorised departure'. He does not treat with bread, because Tor only eats it to annoy Pippin.

Pippin likes being in the garden, whereas Tor prefers the inside. Tor will go out on the veranda and bark in his deepest little dog voice, hoping to set off a chorus of the neighbouring dogs, which occasionally happens, making it addictive. Pippin is highly fond of



A very young Mr Tor

garden wallaby and possum poo which he harvests assiduously. Tor is less food-oriented.

The lunchtime routine is that both Pippin and Tor receive a chew, one of the highlights of the day. Sometimes Pippin's needs some prechewing by Tor. The chews finished, they have a treat, followed by a kibble chase on the carpet, the best way to get something healthy into them.

At dinner time Tor and Pippin are cajoled into eating their mains, then become enthusiastic. Pippin needs no encouragement to devour his sweets, which just happen to be more bread, but resists eating the apple he once loved. Tor eats a little bit of apple after much encouragement.

In his last months, Mr Pippin takes to giving a succession of strangled barks just before dinner is due, perhaps to demonstrate how useful he is, despite age and infirmity. If this is his motive, it is misguided, as he could not be loved more deeply.



In memorium: Pippin and Tor sharing

After feeding, Pippin visits Jamie in the lounge room for a ‘docking’, which consists of him placing his head between Jamie’s ankles while Jamie massages his chest and releases tension on his ‘chakra’ points.

Two days before his twelfth birthday, he develops breathing problems, a symptom of the impending heart failure that suddenly kills him in mid afternoon on the day after, lying in his favourite spot on Christina’s bed. His severe distress is short, as he seemed to be getting better in the morning and ate dinner the night before.

The day after his death, the body of Mr Pippin is buried in a part of the back yard he loved, accompanied by his favourite toy and a slice of wholemeal bread.



An older Mr Pippin after being superdogged



‘Thank you’ speech for a half century celebration of working at UTAS 2022

OLD JAMIE

Jamie lies totally still on his back as a giant shiny machine menacingly whirls in slow motion around him, arms flailing rhythmically. There is an occasional grinding sound. He assumes that the sound denotes a beam of destructive radiation directed at the neoliberal part of himself, his cancer on the left sacrum, but does not know. The long silences between whirling may be when his cancer is zapped.

The roof of the radiation room is divided into panes defined by faux wood, behind which lies a static image of blue sky, fluffy white clouds and cherry blossom. Jamie's meditative state is disrupted by the buzz of an untidy black blowfly, trapped in the room. It finally settles on an image of a cherry leaf. Jamie is relieved that it does not explore his face.

In his second treatment, two days later, Jamie expects a deceased or absent blowfly. It is still there, very alive. Perhaps, the radiation has not hit it. Perhaps, it is a different blowfly. Perhaps, Jamie is lying under a placebo machine. Perhaps, it is a ghost of the blowfly.

If it were not for Christina, Jamie would be a ghost several times over. She spots the first melanoma on his back and, many years later, the second on his front, removed at noon on New Year's Eve 2018 by Steve Wilkinson in his rooms. She helps him give up smoking and daily drinking, not soon enough for him to avoid the indignity of prostate cancer, but possibly soon enough to allow him to survive it.

In February 2019, Jamie is strangely unhappy, fading. Between mid-2012 and late-2018, the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune are manifold, not least the prostate cancer that demanded

treatment, the decline and death of his mother, the death of his uncle and the death of Christina's mother.

Being chemically castrated and radiated in the most undignified way one could imagine, while loved ones were successively departing, would seem to be a recipe for depression, but worked the other way. Jamie is impulsive, creative and socially and politically effective in good causes throughout. He helps prevent mining and logging in the world heritage area. He also helps the university turn away a bit from a toxic managerial culture. He helps many students and colleagues, writes four funny books and makes some great new friends.

His non-domestic life absorbs him to an unseemly extent. He loses his self in his interactions with students and colleagues, most of whom he is very fond, and the process of creation and dissemination of knowledge puts him into the flow. He finds speaking out for the rest of nature and a convivial university sufficiently worthwhile in its outcomes to compensate for the discomfort of the process. He does not expect his views to necessarily prevail but has sufficient success to persist. So, why does he think he is fading?

It may be that he is fading pre-emptively because he can see the end of most of the activities that consume him. It seems unlikely that the current government will want to reappoint him to the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council given his critiques of most of their favourite projects. He has been continuously a member of advisory bodies related to parks and world heritage since 1987, when he replaced Dick Jones on the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Advisory Committee, after Dick dies from the effects of falling off a ladder.

He is elected to the governing body of the university as the academic staff representative for a second and third time after helping create a transition to a more convivial executive. He will be seventy-six at the end of his third term. Will his health be good enough for him to still work? He has assumed that it will be, starting supervising new PhD students and committing to long term research projects. However, his prostate cancer may resurge, requiring more chemical castration to stave off death. The chance that the painful 2017 Brisbane treatment will eliminate the disease is only moderate, but it is a chance.

The visibly old are treated with contempt by most Australians, and Jamie is moving into this class, albeit more slowly than most. Jamie is fitter than most of his students. Nevertheless, he can see his skin gradually becoming more blotched and crepey and his hair thinner and greyer, the latter alleviated by the colourful dyes applied by his hairdresser. His eyesight is becoming more impeded. He has occasional problems swallowing. He pees a lot.

A possible salvation from ageist prejudice lies in the promotion of diversity in the staff of the university. Jamie might be the token oldie with rainbow hair, if his physical and mental states allow him to continue to perform academic tasks at the outstanding level of 2018.

Another possible salvation lies in the fondness of many for their image of Jamie, reinforced by a widely accessed ABC Off Track radio report on him and occasional positive mentions of him elsewhere in the media. Australians mind age less in people who are famous for doing good things or are amusing. However, fame creates concomitant exposure to revenge wreaked by the Australian tall poppy syndrome.

One potential problem is that Jamie is less and less prepared to do meaningless administrative tasks at all, much less with good grace. He hopes that they will be abolished in the cause of the new VCs efficiency program called ‘lean’ before anyone notices his failure to fill in forms. This is a case of extreme optimism, as most of middle management has not got the message. Jamie acerbically replies to an email imposing a new and onerous bureaucratic procedure on academic staff in the name of ‘lean’. He notes that an imposition of a new process that achieves nothing is hardly ‘lean’. He adds it the long list of administrative tasks to remain undone. Jamie suspects that the whole idea of this administrative deluge is to make anything he does as part of his job impossible to do without contravening a policy or rule. He, and other academics have the choice of losing their job by following rules that prevent them from doing it or being subject to losing their job by not following the rules.

His new school, labelled Technology, Environments and Design bombards him with detailed instructions on how to do the job he has been doing for more than fifty years. He bins or trashes most of them without perusal. When he does read a missive on the qualities of leaders, he is impressed by its logical inconsistencies and exceedingly poor English expression. Those who create such documents in the university of the 21st century are seldom any good at anything else than attaining and keeping power. Jamie sends his comments back into the vacuum of power.

Power is more complex than Jamie has yet suspected. The previous regime that he had helped a little to eliminate left toxic legacies. Each of these are programs that are put in place without any attempt to determine if they could work within their terms of advertisement in ‘business plans’.

Jamie had been the only one to speak out against the irrationality of the ‘Degrees of Difference’ program, which, as he predicted in

the ‘consultation’ meeting, failed disastrously within a year or two, causing much disruption and pain between, and causing the loss of the many students who did not want to enrol in four year degrees.

Jamie is not in a position to try to prevent the program to transfer the Launceston campuses to a frequently flooded plain behind the North Esk River levee. Arguments full of puff, but with no underlying substance, managed to convince the Commonwealth Government to pay for it as an election promise to a marginal electorate. As part of the puff, thousands of new students are promised by the university, to be delivered through two year ‘skills’-oriented associate degrees. The students proved not to be there and a detailed investigation of the site indicated a likelihood of flooding each century. The move continues to be implemented, hundreds of millions of dollars for buildings trumping rationality. The associate degrees seem likely to quietly die, sliding into the same unmarked grave as ‘Degrees of Difference’.

Toxic legacy number three is a program to move the Hobart operations of the university into the CBD, rather than having activities divided between the Sandy Bay campus and the city, as had been the case for many years. The previous executive failed to get Commonwealth funding for their STEM building in the city thought bubble, but push hard anyway, buying ‘investment’ properties all over the CBD in anticipation that the council of the university would agree to the move, and pushing hard to make the council come to that decision. Jamie is the only person on council arguing against the executives. His resistance to their programs creates space for other members to think. The other members laugh at a presentation that showed unanimous green traffic lights for the urban option. They realise that all criteria on the desirability of a move to the city were judged in the absence of anything but assertions. The execs are sent back to collect data.

Jamie realizes too late that the new Vice-Chancellor, as nice as he appears to be, is somehow motivated to make the city move a reality. Some research is done, but the conclusions that are reached are highly arguable, even when presented by the VC. The rest of the council may have been impressed by the research and the outcomes of the consultation or may have wished to go along with the VC. Jamie is outvoted thirteen to one, his arguments for the status quo rejected by all; a true fade. He hopes he is wrong about the impending disaster but suspects not.

Those with prostate cancer past or present, not only have to endure embarrassing and painful treatment and the loss of their sex lives, but also the pain of anticipating the potentially life-threatening implications of the results of the occasional prostate-specific-antigen (PSA) test. After the effects of the hormone treatment Jamie is given during and after his second radiation treatment in Brisbane start to wear off, Jamie's PSA gradually rises from zero. His oncologist Marketa, and urologist, Michael, with whom he has trusting and friendly relations, simultaneously decide to abandon ship, or, more accurately, board their yachts, Marketa for just one year, Michael forever. Jamie is to have a PSA test before seeing Marketa's temporary replacement, who turns out to be a snappily dressed young man with shiny black shoes, who is of negative use in helping Jamie to cope with the facts that his PSA is still rising and is now above the level at which Marketa suggested another CT scan.

Jamie goes home and graphs the data, which indicate a very slightly declining linear rise. He resolves to test again after three months in the hope that the decline in the rate of decrease continues, indicating an eventual equilibrium at a non-threatening level and no need for a CT scan. He is severely disappointed, with a surge over the three months. The best regression curve is still

linear, with the recent measure a positive outlier from the general trend. Jamie had cut back fat, sugar and alcohol during the three months, so feels doubly dispirited, especially as he knows the options for further effective treatment are limited, although he enjoys all three of fat, sugar and alcohol, so is pleased on being released from this particular hair shirt.

Jamie reads an article that shows a positive relationship between dark chocolate consumption and longevity, so eats more of it, and still treasures the articles about the good done by red wine, even though he does not quite believe them, so ingests very occasionally. He loves eating fruit, vegetables and whole grains, avoids eggs, dairy and dead animals. He dances in the house when Christina is out, too embarrassed to seek out public dancing, but needing movement to music both physically and emotionally. Gardening, walking and working in the bush, swimming, reading and writing get him in the flow. He also wants to do good for others and the earth, but not at the expense of a life of misery.

Jamie is about to get a CT scan. Radioactive substances that stick to places where there are prostate-specific antigens are to be injected into him for the third time. He is wondering why he is doing it, given that the two earlier scans found nothing, even though a biopsy showed that cancer lingered in his prostate gland. Jamie wonders if he would be better off just forgetting about his prostate problems until they inhibit his life, then going on to more hormone treatment or whatever is available at the time. The only reason he is doing it is the outside possibility that his gland is clear and that the cancer has located somewhere else it is easy to eliminate. If his gland is not clear, he intends to hope that his well-looked-after body-mind system will confine the cancer until he dies of other causes, possibly consumption by the skin fungi that infest his face and scalp.

The best scenario eventuates. There is a spot of cancer in the sacral bone but none in his destroyed prostate gland. The oncologist says that usually there are spots everywhere. We can get rid of this one, then see. Dying may have been postponed.

The day between his first two treatments, Jamie helps one of his PhD students, Tom, collect quadrat data for an experiment on deer grazing impact in the hills behind Ross. There is an occasional tree in the grassy woodland that almost certainly looked pretty much the same when the British invaded Tasmania. There is a flow in writing down the scientific names of species on the data sheets.

The summer of 2019 and 2020 is a lethal mixture of conflagration, tempest, flood, prospective plague and hail in Australia, most being the scientifically predicted disastrous effects of climate change.



NPWAC farewell for Jamie

Jamie gets involved in an ‘Independent Science Council’ initiated by Leanne, a director from the Australia Institute. Leanne and her husband run the Ferntree Tavern, now an alternative venue slightly greener than the Republic. Jamie agrees to join after he is rejected for reappointment to the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council. The forces of darkness, in the form of some members of the COALition, argue that the correct response to the fire disaster is logging in national parks. Jamie, Leanne and Jen Sanger put together a scientifically signed advertisement arguing that logging needs to be shut down completely in native forests, partly to reduce fire hazard in the short and longer terms. Leanne wants Jamie to recruit people to sign it, and suggests lobbying Peter Gutwein, the new premier. Jamie rejects both suggestions, seeing his role as a researcher and publicist not an organiser or lobbyist, activities he hates as much as leadership.

The problems with voluntary organisations that Jamie observed in the Tasmanian Conservation Trust in the 1970s have obviously not been resolved. Luckily, Jamie has a sufficient sense of self-preservation not to self-sacrifice for the public good, but rather to concentrate on those things he enjoys that are congruent with the public good.

Jessie, a bush guide and student, and Jamie survey the putatively alpine vegetation of a low elevation granite mountain near Trial Harbour, five hours drive from Hobart. Jamie remembers Trial Harbour from the 1970s, a seemingly organically grown collection of rusty, decaying shacks juxtaposed to the wildest of seas. Mt Agnew is surely an easy day trip, less than 2 km from the road and a 600 m climb. Jessie and Jamie camp at Trial Harbour the night before their walk. The camp site lies between a tall, stranded cliff covered with impenetrable scrub and a booming turf-shaking sea. A toilet is convenient, but excessively malodorous. There are some

interesting plants, including a ti-tree that looks very different to most Jamie has seen. The camp soon fills up with four-wheel drive enthusiasts, pushed out of the Tarkine to tackle the rough track between Trial and Granville Harbours. One group, opposite Jamie and Jessie, erects two storey accommodation incorporating their vehicle. They are friendly and quiet.

Mt Agnew is the most exhausting day walk of Jamie's life. The track is an occasional red tape in boulder-ridden terrain in which passage is further impeded by tangled rainforest vegetation and fallen trees. Drizzle and drips soak everything. After four hours, Jessie and Jamie stop for lunch, very close to the summit in vegetation only a metre or so tall, but still unpleasantly thick. They shiver as they flick leeches from their clothes, any view denied them by a sleeting mist. Jamie struggles to get over a large boulder blocking access to the summit, but finally succeeds to see the trig point among some mercifully shorter vegetation, the components of which are duly noted on waterproof paper. Jessie and Jamie swing from horizontal trees and slide down boulders on the journey down which, nevertheless, seems to take forever. When Jamie gets home a day after the walk, leeches escape from his clothes, crossing the carpet in search of new victims.

When Jamie expresses concern about the accelerating pace and impact of climate change, Christina advances the opinion that plague is more likely to knock off humanity than bushfires caused by pollution from petrol-powered cars.

The unprecedented fires and precedented floods of the 2019/2020 summer are beginning to recede in the landscape and public consciousness when Covid-19 closes down China. Fang, a PhD student of Jamie's who is finalising the corrections to his thesis, distressedly tells Jamie that his grandmother has died in China because the new virus prevented her from getting treatment for her



Jessie in the rain in the rainforest

heart condition. Travel to and from China is not allowed, so he cannot even attend her funeral.

The University of Tasmania tries to hold on to its many students trapped in China by offering distance alternatives, while planning for a potential shut down of its many campuses if the disease gets established in Australia. Which it does, just as new cases in China decline. By the end of week two of a thirteen week semester it is apparent that Covid-19 is about to exponentially expand its human range in Australia. Yet, the cruise liner Petri dishes continue to pour into Hobart, as do tourists in ferry and plane. Only Chinese students wear face masks. People who are not related drink together, hug and kiss. Two people Jamie talks to in the course of his work are about to depart on overseas trips. In contrast, Jamie withdraws from two conferences on the mainland and a helicopter trip to collect data from southwest mountains.

Jamie feels it is time to move his office home, as do other academics. The University belatedly agrees, setting a timetable for

conversion of units to full distance mode and for migration out of the campus into home offices.

Sitting at home with unfamiliar new technology, Jamie still hopes to be able to collect data in the field with his students, figuring out that travelling and working with one other person is pretty low risk. It is not to be, with fieldwork banned.

At the February 2020 University Council meeting, Rufus, the VC and Jane, the Provost, propose a massive simplification of courses and reduction of professional tasks to adjust the activities of the university to its likely income. The 2020 budget includes a substantial sum for the redundancies necessary to ensure a cash flow for the massive building program that Jamie had previously argued, unsuccessfully, is unnecessary. Jamie futilely cautions against creating the same crushing additional workload in course planning and approval that eventuated from 'Degrees of Difference', a reworking of courses that was finalised a year or two before, and points out that the courses and units that make the University of Tasmania most distinctive would need to be protected in such a process, as they would be among the first to be cut by Schools and Colleges. He is enthusiastic about the proposed new degree structures, which treat students as adults in making choices, instead of forcing them into choices made by executive pedagogues and their academic lackeys.

As the Covid-19 crisis unfolds in early March, creating an enormous additional workload for university staff, the last thing Jamie expects is that the program of simplification will be initiated. It is. The first document he looks at is an 'hypothesis' of the College of Science and Engineering courses that would survive simplification. The course that the Vice-Chancellor is touting as an example of success in bringing in mainland students to something distinctive in the University of Tasmania is absent from the list. This

is Jamie's creation, the Bachelor of Natural Environment and Wilderness Studies. A quick email from Jamie to Rufus seems to reverse the omission, leaving the struggle with obstructive middle managers on courses and units ahead.

A life at home, isolated from social interaction, does not suit either Jamie or Christina. Jamie misses friends, students, fieldwork and colleagues. Mr Pippin and Mr Tor love having both around.

It is the wedding anniversary of Christina and Jamie. They discuss the role of protein in longevity and fecundity before Christina leaves with Mr Tor for their morning walk. Jamie dances to 70s music while Mr Pippin lies there patiently, occasionally putting his head up for a fondle. It is almost a month since there has been a new case in Tasmania. Jamie intends to assume that the Covid-19 is gone as a threat after a month without new cases, then reconsider if the borders to the State are opened. Christina is more cautious.

The University is as cautious as Christina, telling lecturers to go digital during semester two, and only allowing people into buildings after a temperature test. The students and staff are sick to the teeth of digital teaching. Several students tell Jamie that they are going to suspend their studies until face to face teaching returns. Jamie starts video recording his spring and summer unit lectures, just in case of a second or third wave. Karen Johnson and Jamie film the introductions to all the field practicals, one of the few times Jamie leaves home apart from solitary walks in the bush. They end up being amusingly bizarre, gaining a small cult following in Geography.

Cooking the sacrum spot is not enough. The cancer escapes into 77 year old Jamie's bones just as almost everyone pretends that Covid-19 no longer exists. His oncologists play 'whack the mole' with the cancer while Jamie continues to work and play on, fully

cognisant of the diminishing number and desirability of options for staying on the planet in material form. He wonders if he has one, two or five years or more, resolving to try to minimise the stress on others as the process of his life comes to an end, forgiving all, including himself, for their sins, and feeling gratitude for a rewarding life.



Advisory Committee inspecting composting toilet

THE SUPERNATURAL AT WORK

Jamie's brushes with the putatively supernatural are not confined to distressing circumstances with his family, blowflies and companion animals. In the Lower Sandy Bay Newsagency he receives a bright non-verbal greeting from a happy, healthy Peter Murrell, who is engaged in the process of filling out a Tatts ticket. Jamie later finds out that this was the day that Peter died from stomach cancer.

When Jamie is a member of the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council in the 1970s, Peter is the Director, imported from South Africa to develop the organisation. Peter is a canny political operator. He is also a party animal. NPWAC hazardously flies in light planes to inspect parts of his empire, with the highlight for Peter always being the blokey, boozy barbeque. When NPWAC visits Mt William National Park, members and PWS staff eat and drink so much that the planes barely clear the trees on the way out. The NPWAC visit to Flinders Island with its Minister is so boozy that the Minister sleeps while prospective new parks are inspected from the air. The highlight of the whole trip for Peter is Trousers Point, where NPWAC and guests over-successfully trial a new state of the art barbeque site.

Jamie hardly sees Peter after being removed from NPWAC for the crime of not wanting to recommend private huts in national parks. He is never particularly close to him. Yet, he manifests himself to Jamie at his death?

A dignified geologist Jamie barely speaks to beyond a nod when passing in the corridor, is the subject of his next incident, when Jamie sees him uncharacteristically joyously rushing past him in the corridor, heading through the exit from the Physics Building. Jamie later finds out that the dignified geologist was dead at the time.

Jamie wonders how many people he sees, and even talks to, who are not of this world. After teaching for over half a century and being involved with a lot of people attempting to save the rest of nature from development, he does not remember most people who greet him in the street and remember him from the past. They have ghosted out of his brain space, if they are not indeed ghosts.

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