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## "A Different Light"

### **A Different Light - 12 February 2022 - "Dark weekend lifted by Pataua North Light"**

I used to like to describe the Ruakaka Horse Races as a 'Bad Western'. I thought it was a quirky analogy to describe a diverse range of dodgy characters and horses at the same event. I've recently been introduced to a similar but far more descriptive and complex term. A "Dark Western". It's a term that has been used to describe "The Power of the Dog", a film directed by our very own Kiwi Dame Jane Campion. The film leads the nominations for this year's Oscars and Campion is now the first woman nominated twice for best director in the Oscars. She was a contender for her 1993 film The Piano but dipped out that year to Spielberg, who won for Schindler's List.

We recently watched 'The Power of the Dog'. It was so darkly engrossing that we watched it twice. The plot revolved around a nasty, but charismatic, piece of work, Phil. He was one of two brothers who own a cattle ranch in 1925 in Montana. He is tough, mean and bullying to the toe curling extreme. Phil is a ruthless cowboy, mercilessly cruel to his younger brother, George, whom he calls 'fatso' repeatedly. When George marries a widow out of the blue and her medical student son moves into the family ranch, they are both persecuted by Phil's relentless gothic like bullying. The tables subtly and suddenly turn, however, I will not spoil your viewing by revealing these dark details here.

The whole weekend seemed like a Dark Western after that. As the clouds lowered over Northland and the humidity soared into the high 90s we set out to Pataua North for a soiree at Robbie's family bach.

On State Highway One we came across groups of people on the side of the road, families of young and old, hoisting placards, shouting at wildly tooting passing cars. It was the convoy protest. It was feral- another Dark Western. After winding our way through the Pataua North rain forest, we arrived. There had just been a drama. Three Korean children on paddle boards had been ripped 500 meters out to sea. They were screaming in the heavy swell. Dark! Luckily they were rescued via boat by Robbie's cousin. She said they were only just in time, something to do with the bar and the silt and the swell. Robbie's family bach is the middle one of three on the Pataua spit that were originally built by relations, three sisters, generations ago. At the back of the property there are three huge Norfolk pines that represent the three sisters. Apparently, they are starting to block the sun in winter. Dark! We hunkered in for drinks and

a barbeque and sung along to classics like “Show me the way to Amarillo” and “Kokomo”. Another dark incident happened late into that night. It involved a kumara and a stink bug, but that story is far too dark for public digestion.

In the morning a heavy fog hung over Pataua. After a while the sun shone through and there was light.

*Jonny Wilkinson is the CEO of Tiaho Trust - Disability A Matter of Perception, a Whangarei based disability advocacy organisation.*