

Dolphin Dreaming

Kimberley, my two-year-old, was singing non-stop in her car seat behind me. I glanced at her in the mirror and saw her 'swimming' her grey dolphin (a soft toy), and every now and then kissing it on the nose. I smiled, a warm feeling suffusing me.

We were driving back south to Perth from Shark Bay, where we had walked among the dolphins. It was a pilgrimage for me, having last seen the dolphins there as a toddler, more than thirty years ago.

"Get fish, Granma," Kimberley sang.

"Why did you call your dolphin 'Granma', Kim?"

"This not Granma," she replied indignantly. "Granma in water."

I felt a chill go down my back. What was she saying? "Where is Granma in the water, Darling?"

Kimberley looked at me and then pointed behind her, out through the back window of the car. "Do you mean where we saw the dolphins?"

She thought for a moment and then nodded enthusiastically. "Granma in water. Granma swim."

I pulled the car over as quickly as I dared and breathed deeply and slowly to calm my body down. I was having a terrible bout of déjà vu – my head swam as I recalled wading into the sea all that time ago and having a baby dolphin come swimming up to me and nuzzling gently against my tiny body. I had called out to my mother, "Look mum, Granny." My mother had laughed dismissively and I'd said no more. I had stroked the shiny, smooth creature and spoken quietly to my grandmother, who had died almost a year earlier.

"We go to Granma?"

"What, Darling?"

"Granma!" She pointed behind her again.

"You want me to turn around and go back to the dolphins?"

Kimberley nodded and held up her toy. This was crazy... and it wasn't.

"Okay Kim. We can spend another night there."

Kimberley laughed and started singing again, as I turned the car around to retrace the last hour's journey. It was more a journey back in time – thirty-three years.

I suddenly realised another implication of this. My young-wise-old daughter was telling me that the dolphin which came to her and allowed her to touch its face and which kept brushing against her, was my mother, who had died before Kimberley was born. Kimberley knew of her as Granma because I talked about her continually.

I breathed deeply again as tears streamed from my eyes. Could it be? How could my daughter know this?

It was as if she heard my thoughts and answered them. "Granma told me."

Shocked, I asked, "What did Granma tell you, Darling?"

"Granma told me."

I tried a different tack. "When did she tell you?"

"Before." She hesitated. "Before you made me."

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