

## **TURTLE CHILD**

Four years ago he jumped to his death.

Each time I hear the muttering-swish of waves upon rocks or sand,  
he sings to me. I did not attend his funereal. I sang his soul away by the  
seaside. Everyone thought I was mad.

We'd shared endless days sitting watching patterns, as the wind kissed the  
ocean. We were calmed by the symphony of the sea.

As a tiny child, when we were on a beach he'd unerringly headed towards  
the water. I called him my Turtle Child.

There is a cave not far from where our little cabin stood, overlooking  
the lake and Gabo Island. We called it our Owl Cave. Coloured layers of  
rock, folded over upon themselves. He said they looked like a wise old owl  
peering into the ocean. Waves caressed, tides swished, singing, echoing in  
the Owl Cave.

Come summertime, my Turtle Child and I would wait until the moon  
was full. We'd take our supper in baskets. Wrapped in soft rugs, we'd listen  
to the sea as it sang the cave. We'd watch the moonlight dancing on the  
waves. At peace, we would sleep on the sand.

His two small four legged friends curled up between us.

Wintertime's, heaving, swirling and crashing waves piled yellow spume onto the sand and into the cave; filling it like a giant's shaving cream.

My Turtle Child his two little dogs beside him, would plunge, laughing and singing, headlong into the foam. His summer-golden limbs covered, turning him into a grotesque parody of a human. His dogs, disappearing, their little tails poking up through the spume, like tadpoles.

Every Sunday we would wander over the rocks, exploring for sea treasures. Shells and coloured stones like jewels, wet & glistening.

We filled our pockets with our treasures of the sea.

As if by magic, every Sunday, a pod of dolphins would always be offshore.

We used to say, they knew we were coming, and wanted us to come play.

He was fourteen when, my Turtle Child jumped into the sea, joining the dolphins. They circled around him, rubbed against him, their noses under him, lifting him. Above the music of the waves, his laughter reached into deep places. He was never the same again.

My Turtle Child became a true sea creature.

When things went wrong at school, I would find him at the rock pools. His sketch book balanced on his knees, and magnifying glass enlarging the seaside creatures he captured so beautifully. His four legged companions would sit patiently by his side.

He would smile and say "Mum this is my school."

The only decorations he permitted in his room were driftwood, seashells, sponges and coloured pebbles. He said they kept him safe while he dreamed.

He took me to his secret place for Mother's Day. Bananas, crunchy red apples, sweet raisins, dark chocolate and fresh crusty bread filled our packs. Wallaby tracks criss-crossed the sandy heath land. I followed as he walked unerringly along the cliff top where we stopped to rest.

Down below the waves and sun created a glistening water-shawl.

It took two hours until we reached a narrow track, winding down to a rocky ledge. Uncomfortable with heights, my heart was pounding.

This was my Mother's Day gift? A potential heart attack!

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Gently, he coaxed me. "Trust this place Mum, it will never harm you". He quietly assured me. Ledges wide enough to accommodate us, led the way down to the golden sand.

It felt like sacrilege to step down and erase the bird prints. Thousands of tiny crabs scuttled, clicking, moving in and out of sandy burrows.

Tiny balls of sand encircling each burrow like a halo as the morning sun kissed the sand. High above, a sea eagle slowly glided.

Waves hishing-swishing, seaweed, swing-swaying around huge rock statues dotted along the sandy shore. Gulls, swooping, were squawking in unison.

Sitting with my Turtle Child, now a beautiful young man, on that pristine seashore, I was drawn by a primitive urge to become one with the ocean.

Stripping off clothes, I walked into the breakers. Seaweed tentacles brushed

my thighs. Diving beneath the waves, I headed far out to where the breeze fashioned patterns on the water. Turning skyward I spied the eagle soaring free, while I drifted free and unafraid. Knowing in some deep sea-cave part of my sea creature soul; this is where all life had begun.

I was never the same again.

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Turning shorewards, I felt like a mother turtle must, the urge to create new life drawing her towards the sandy shore. I knew her struggle.

Body, cumbersome when no longer suspended weightless by the sea.

My Turtle Child, his golden hair a halo in the sunshine, kissed my forehead, gently wrapped me in a sun warm towel. Smiling, he crowned me with a wreath of kelp and shells, "Happy Mother's Day".

My home now, is in the hills. My heart is in the sea.

Twice yearly I make my pilgrimage, along those ledges.

Fearless now, I follow our track.

I sing my Turtle Child by the seaside.

I sing my turtle mother in the sea.

I understand now his deep sea need, to return there.

A need so strong, it left him no choice. He sings to me in the waves.

One day, I will join him. I will allow the sea to carry me.

I will trust my mortal self will feed and nourish ocean creatures.

I am a Turtle Mother. My Turtle Child and I are one with the sea.

When I need nourishing, refreshing, I sit by the seaside.

My soul knows it is home.

**FINIS**