

THE QUEER FISH AND QUEER BABY

Two Kaimera women Wanjallin and Marrura (oldest and youngest sisters) went out fishing one afternoon and Wanjallin caught a very curious looking fish. The Paljeri husbands of the sisters were not far off and the women called to them to come and see the strange fish they had caught. Wanjallin cut it open, and found the inside all brown coloured and "like a baby", so that none of them would cook or eat it, and Wanjallin threw it back into the sea.

When Marrura's man slept the same night he dreamed he was back at the place where the strange fish had been caught, and a ngargalula came to him out of the water and followed him in his dreams to his camp, where it went over to Marrura who carried it till it was born.

When it was born it was not only the same colour as the fish they had thrown back into the water, but it had a cut down along its breast in the same way as the opening had been made in the fish Wanjallin had caught.

The baby was born at Jirngingan, but its own ngargalula booroo was that part of the seacoast and sea where it had come to its father out of the water. It died before it had left its babyhood, for its mother feared it, and its father was ashamed of it, and the little baby was left alone and neglected in the camp and at last it died. But when it died it did not go to Loomurn but went inside its mother again and tugged and tore and bit at her vitals. It had turned into a weerra ngeering neelerr (spirit child with sharp teeth) and its fingers were like sharp claws, and it was thin like a skeleton. The jalnga ngooroo of the mother's tribe was called in to take it out of the mother and burn it, and he tried and tried to do so, but its teeth and claws hung on, and would not let go, and at last the mother died and mother and baby went to Loomurn.

The father could not kill it as it was his ngargalula baby.