# Pastry chef's journey to find his mother ends in betrayal



In an extraordinary sequence of events, Graham Hornigold, a renowned pastry chef and former judge on shows like MasterChef and Junior Bake Off, has shared his astonishing yet tragic story of reconnecting with his biological mother after 45 years. This tale is chronicled in a new Netflix documentary titled "Con Mum," which details the complex reunion that initially seemed like a dream come true but quickly spiralled into a nightmare rooted in deception.

The story began during the Covid lockdown of 2020 when Graham received an email from a woman named Dionne, who claimed to be his long-lost mother. Born in a British military hospital in Germany in 1974 and later experiencing a troubled childhood, Graham had yearned for a connection with his mother, whom he had not seen since infancy. Skepticism initially clouded his response, yet Dionne seemed to pass every test he set to verify her identity, providing answers only his birth mother could know.

The documentary portrays the pivotal moment when Graham and his partner, Heather Kaniuk, met Dionne at a Liverpool hotel. "I can still feel the strength of their hug," Graham recalled, noting the instant connection he felt. Soon after, Dionne revealed that she had terminal cancer and only six months to live, a revelation that propelled Graham into a whirlwind of emotions.

Over the following months, the pair developed a bond that Graham described as transformative. Dionne showered him with lavish gifts including designer clothes and luxury cars, claiming it was her way of making amends for years lost. Graham, who was accustomed to a more modest lifestyle, found himself stepping into a world of affluence alongside Dionne, who claimed to have royal connections as the illegitimate daughter of the former Sultan of Brunei.

However, the initial wave of joy would soon diminish. Dionne’s requests began to take a troubling turn, encouraging Graham to put hotel bills and other expenses on his credit card, luring him deeper into financial distress. He took a leap of faith, leaving behind his partner and newborn child to accompany Dionne to Switzerland to discuss her estate, convinced that his mother’s intentions were genuine.

Tragically, Graham later discovered that Dionne was not dying of cancer and that he had been caught in a web of manipulation and greed. "Oh, I was played. Because of a cellular-level need for a mother, I walked right into it," he stated. The financial repercussions were severe; at one point, Graham found himself £300,000 in debt, largely attributed to financial obligations connected to the vehicles purchased during the false pretense of their relationship.

The documentary further reveals that Graham was not the only victim of Dionne’s deception. Other individuals, including businesspeople who provided her with significant sums of money based on her fabricated stories, also suffered financial losses. This collective betrayal culminated in Graham’s partner Heather digging deeper into Dionne's background, uncovering discrepancies in her identity and past, which crystallised Graham’s suspicions.

Ultimately, the façade crumbled. When Graham insisted on a DNA test to confirm Dionne's identity, the results confirmed her as his biological mother, which added a complex layer to his emotional turmoil regarding her actions. Despite the maternal connection, Graham questioned how a mother could inflict such pain on her child. In the aftermath, his relationship with Heather did not survive the ordeal, and he now strives to maintain a bond with his son.

Now distanced from Dionne, who has not faced any legal consequences for her actions, Graham grapples with the events that transpired. Despite the suspicion and pain, he remains committed to adapting to his new reality while addressing the emotional scars left in the wake of his mother's betrayal. He reflects on their time together with mixed emotions, stating, “I don’t call her Mum now, because no mum would do that to her own child.”

The tale's unfolding highlights the multifaceted aspects of trust, identity, and betrayal, which will resonate with viewers as they engage with the documentary's exploration of Graham's life-altering experience.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.soapcentral.com/entertainment/con-mum-everything-know-netflix-s-upcoming-true-crime-documentary> - This URL validates the existence of the documentary 'Con Mum,' which tells the story of Graham Hornigold's encounter with a woman claiming to be his mother. It confirms the documentary's release on Netflix and its focus on Graham's emotional and financial struggle.
* <https://www.sportskeeda.com/us/movies/the-true-story-behind-netflix-s-con-mum-explained> - This article elaborates on the true story behind 'Con Mum,' detailing how Dionne manipulated Graham and other victims. It highlights the financial and emotional damage Graham suffered due to her scams.
* <https://www.whats-on-netflix.com/news/netflix-sets-british-documentary-con-mum-from-nick-green-for-march-2025/> - This URL provides additional details about the documentary 'Con Mum,' including its director, Nick Green, and its release date on Netflix. It confirms that the story revolves around Graham Hornigold's experience with a woman claiming to be his mother.
* <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt26393454/> - This link likely provides more general information about the documentary 'Con Mum' on IMDb, including its release date and a brief summary of the film.
* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Longboys_Doughnuts> - This Wikipedia page can verify Graham Hornigold's involvement with Longboys Doughnuts, affirming his professional background as a pastry chef.