

## Paddington's Story – Part 1

Suzie Hindmarsh-Knights

First published 1<sup>st</sup> October 2012 on [www.suziehindmarshknights.com](http://www.suziehindmarshknights.com)

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Paddington – Day one in his new home

It was a cold July day, when I arrived at Adelaide airport with my brother Paul, to pick up the newest member of the Hindmarsh-Knights family.

As we waited at the reception desk of the freight office, wrapped in layers against the cold, we heard a high pitched wail from behind closed doors. The noise was enough to lift the roof of the building and those waiting behind me in the queue, wore quizzical expressions on their faces, including us.

One guy finally asked what they'd all been thinking. 'Are they killing whatever that is?'

We all smiled at each other and I wondered if that was my pup making the noise, or one of these other poor unfortunates standing with me. The noise grew louder as a large door swung open and a young guy emerged pushing a trolley with a cage on top. Inside was a black and white fur ball, yelling a temper tantrum like I'd never heard from something so small.

I glanced at the label attached to the side of the cage. It read, Paddington Hindmarsh-Knights. 'Yep.' I nodded to those straining behind me to see. 'He's mine.'

'Good luck tonight,' laughed the guy who'd spoken earlier.

'He'll be fine once I get him home,' I assured him.

On cue, as I lifted the distressed pup from the cage, and held him in my arms, he fell silent and snuggled his body under my chin. The timing couldn't have been better, it not only showed those around me, but it reassured even me, he'd be fine.

'You poor little thing,' I cooed, loving the smell of his puppy breath. 'It's a long trip on a plane, when you're only eight weeks old.' He agreed wholeheartedly slicing his tongue across my chin.

'Where'd he fly in from,' asked a woman behind me.

'A kennel in far north New South Wales,'

'Poor little bugger must have been terrified,' she stroked Paddington's small body and he looked at her through dark brown eyes. By the time I was ready to take my bundle of joy home to the hills, he'd won the hearts of those standing around me.

## Paddington's Story – Part 1

Paddington was our fourth Bearded Collie. Our first, Blue, died at ten with kidney failure, our second, Gromit, also died at ten with leukaemia. We hoped eight week old Paddington would be a good friend to seven year old Lola. We also hoped he'd fill the gap, Gromit had left in our lives, so at the very onset, Paddington had a huge job to do.

My husband Pete came home to a happy puppy, due in large, to him spending a good part of the afternoon in my arms. Every time I tried to put him down he protested. It seemed reasonable to me, he'd be distressed after his journey, and it would, I thought, take a day or two to get over the flight and get used to his new surroundings. So cuddles seemed a good way to go.

At bedtime, we fenced off a section of the kitchen and laid plenty of paper on the floor. In his bed I placed a teddy bear for company and a clock under his bedding. And with a water bowl close by, he looked set. A ticking clock we'd been told helped puppies sleep and since it had been a while since our last pup, the prompting of the clock reawakened a memory of that working when Gromit was young.

We turned off the lights and walked up the stairs to our mezzanine bedroom. It had been a long day and was about to get longer.

Rattling noises emanating from the downstairs kitchen indicated Paddington was testing the fence for a way out. The soft approach with his paw wasn't working and so he attacked it with his body. I knew it wouldn't take too much of that kind of treatment. And sure enough, crash, bang and the fence fell down and Paddington made his way out and towards the stairs to our bedroom. I got out of bed and looked down at him. He looked up at me, wagging his tail with a happy expression of: here I am, I've escaped.

'No Paddington,' I told him picking him up and walking back to the kitchen. Pete joined me and we re-connected the puppy fence and placed him in his bed, turned off the light and went back to bed.

Bang, whack, thump, the fence crashed to the floor again. Paddington stood at the bottom of the stairs wagging his tail, and looked once more, extremely pleased with himself – he liked the game.

'Do you think it would be a good idea to erect the puppy fence in the bedroom?' asked Pete.

'No I don't. Once he gets the idea the kitchen is where he sleeps, he'll be fine,' I said, trying to sound optimistic.

'He's just been separated from his mother and siblings,' insisted Pete. 'If he was up here with us, he'd settle.'

'No. If we give in now, that's it, all over red rover.'

During our conversation we'd been busy erecting the fence again, and once more placed Paddington back in his bed.

'Good boy. Now go to sleep,' I said, stroking his head, while enforcing my authority.

We lay in bed listening to him testing the fence. Pete had done a better job this time and no amount of smashing into it was going to work. A sudden almighty howl frightened the possums from the roof and any other living creature within a kilometre of the house. The howl turned into a shriek, as he realised we weren't running to his aide. The shriek got so loud Pete put the light back on.

'He's scared. Poor little thing.'

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'He's trying it on.'

'How would you feel if you'd been stuck in a crate and shipped halfway around the country?'

I buried my head under the pillow in the hope to muffle the noise.

'How about I do what I suggested earlier, and erect the puppy fence up here. Trust me, it will work.'

What could I say? Half an hour later one puppy fence was positioned in our bedroom with his bedding and bowl of water inside it. Paddington was extremely happy, wandering around with his nose to the floor, checking out new and exciting smells. He was getting very close to where Lola slept in her bed. She lifted her head from her quilt and a low menacing growl with bared teeth rumbled from her body, it meant, come any closer and you lose your life. Needless to say Pete rescued him and popped him over the fence and onto his bed.

Climbing back into bed he turned off the light.

A long drawn out wail erupted from the inside of the puppy fence to be followed by a crash, whack, slam, and a bang as he stepped into the water bowl and upended it, then another crash as he threw himself against the fence. The wailing – crashing – shrieking – yelling – screaming continued until we couldn't take it any more. The light went back on.

During the ten minutes of torture, Pete ran his video camera and filmed into the darkness. He mainly wanted to capture the noise, because to this day we have never heard anything like it.

Once the light went on, we looked at each other, then at Paddington. Granted he did look somewhat stressed, with his paws clambering against the fence trying hard to find a way out. His feet were soaked, as was his bedding.

'So bringing him up here was a good idea?' I asked glaring at my husband.

'I think we need to bring him to bed with us.' Pete was out of bed when he said this and picking up our bundle of joy and drying his feet with my towel! Well it looked like my towel. And then he plonked him on the bed and his little legs buckled under him as he sank into the soft quilt in his quest to reach me. His little body was shaking, he was terribly unhappy.

We cuddled him and reassured him there was nothing to be unhappy about. Once he trusted us again, Pete turned off the light.

The next morning Paddington was curled up in a small ball in the middle of us. He'd slept well. I'm not sure I did, as I'd spent the night worrying I'd roll on him.

Paddington came into our lives with gusto and to this day, five years later, is still demanding and stubborn. He has an awful lot to say, about a whole lot of stuff that is generally none of his business. But he is loving and funny and at times terribly naughty. He passed all his dog obedience classes with flying colours and then is so disobedient I could throttle him. He has travelled the outback with us, loves water and even has his own doggy pool. He lives life to the full and his journal is full of his many adventures, some of which I will share with the reader later.

Nothing has changed from that first day in July 2007. I should have realised then, life was never going to be boring with Paddington Bear in the family.

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**Paddington Bear from Peru – from the Campbell Whalley Collection**