

Paddington's Story – Part 2
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I was born Bonibraes Bright Eyes in the town of Wilton, New South Wales on the 27th May 2007. My mother and father were both Australian Champions, my father emigrated from the United Kingdom and my mother was Australian with American heritage. This is my story.

Life didn't get any better than this, I thought, as I stalked my brother across the kitchen to the box where my mother lay feeding my other brothers and sisters. He'd not seen me coming; his eyes were focused on a meal, and I was hidden behind a large cylinder, I'd heard my mother's pets call a rubbish bin. My nose wrinkled at the aromas drifting from it and I lingered longer than I intended. I almost forgot my purpose, as my stomach growled. I was, however, having too much fun and when I pounced upon my brother he yelped in surprise.

'Ha ha ha,' I laughed into his face. 'Got ya.' He lay upon his back, and I straddled his body with my front legs. A friendly nip to his neck and he knew who was in command. I left him struggling back to his feet, as I raced to join my brothers and sisters for dinner.

Our mother loved us all equally, but sometimes it seemed she was harder on some than others. Like me, and the time I wandered off to explore, after she'd said I was to stay close to her. I'd had my nose on the scent of what I knew to be the house cat. I'd never managed to get close to the cat, as it always managed to keep one step ahead of me. But that day, its stench was fresh and drew me into the yard. I heard mother calling me by my new name, Paddington, which still sounded foreign to me. How could I leave such a glorious smell? I decided there and then to ignore mother and if the worst came to the worst, I'd say I forgot my new name.

I spotted the cat at the furthest side of the yard, digging a hole in the garden bed. What a fantastic opportunity to catch it, when its mind was on personal matters. But I lacked the art of attack and it heard me coming. It leapt away from the hole as I arrived, hissing and spitting, hair standing on end and performed an amazing somersault, to land in style onto the garden table. Grinning, it looked down at me.

'Silly little pup. When are you going to learn you can't catch me?'

'Grrr,' I replied. 'I'd heard mother use a similar tone and it had the desired affect on us children. But the cat didn't seem bothered. It sat down and began licking its paws. I decided to change tact and barked at it. It was my come and get acquainted bark and I elevated my voice slightly to attract its attention.

The cat ignored me and kept licking.

I stamped my paw on the ground and went into my frustrated bark. It had a higher range than my previous bark. It meant come down now or I'm coming up there to get you.

It hissed a rude reply and starting laughing. And that's when I felt a cuff to my ear and jumped into the air in fright. The cat had seen my mother coming and hadn't warned me. I decided there and then, cats were the enemy.

'Paddington I called you. Didn't you hear me?'

'Yes, mother. Sorry, I was getting to know the cat.'

'Don't tell fibs, pup,' said the cat, as it turned its back on us and walked to the furthest side of the table and lay down.

'The cat doesn't like dogs. You could have gotten hurt.' She picked me up in her teeth and carried me back to our box.

'Paddington you can stay here while I play with your brothers and sisters.'

'But mother.'

Her paw slapped my nose, and I sank upon the ground. 'Do as you're told. What good will you be when I send you to look after your own pets, if you can't learn the basic lessons in life?'

It was a hard lesson to learn being alone in the box, while she played with the others, but I vowed to listen to my mother from then on.

I dismissed the cat incident from my head for now, as I raced across to the box with dinner foremost on my mind. I shoved aside my two sisters in my haste not to miss out and latched onto a teat. Sucking a mouthful of warm creamy milk, I closed my eyes and forgot all else.

Much later, after dinner and a wash, mother took me to one side.

'Paddington, the time has come for you to leave for your new home.'

I knew about my new home. She'd told me it was a long way from this home, and I was booked on a plane to get me there. I wasn't sure what a plane was, but she'd made it sound exciting. None of the others had left yet, and I would be the first. I puffed up my chest with pride at the thought of having my own pets to look after.

'Yes, mother,' I said bravely. 'When do I go?'

'Tomorrow darling.' She sliced her tongue across my nose. 'You must promise me, you'll be a good boy and do everything your new pets tell you to do.'

'Don't worry mom, I'll be good.'

I stood tall and proud and went off to tell the others about my new home.

'Will we ever see you again?'

'Don't go.'

'Mother said I'm going overseas to Canada.'

They were all talking so fast I had to summon silence while I told them what I knew. That night, my last night, we all curled up together, and as I drifted off to sleep, I felt my first panic attack.

The next morning breakfast was a rushed affair. Mom cleaned me up and before I had time to say good-bye to everyone, I was picked up and placed inside a cage. Mother's pet picked up the cage, and I looked down at my mother, as she followed us out to the car.

'Aren't you coming mother?' I called to her.

'No darling, I have to stay here with my pets. Now don't forget to look after yours as I've taught you. I will always love you Paddington,' she called.

She wasn't coming. Why hadn't I thought about that? 'But mother,' I called loudly, but my words were lost as the cage was placed on the back seat of the car, and the door closed. 'M - o - t - h - e - r!' I screamed.

Mother's pet climbed into the front, and a whirr and drone erupted as the car came to life. It moved away from the house, and I strained my neck to catch another glimpse of mother. She stood in the front yard watching us go and I realised I wouldn't see her again. That was the final straw. I didn't want to go. I wanted to stay with her and my brothers and sisters. I clawed at the cage. I couldn't budge it, there was no escape and I felt my heart break with my grief.

There was nothing left to do but howl.

The rocking and rolling motion soon took away all thoughts, and I fell quiet. I felt sick and vomited up my breakfast. The sickly smell of milk mixed with weeties filled the cabin space, and mother's pet stopped the car. She picked me up from the mess and wiped my face and cleaned my paws. She removed the messy paper from the bottom of the cage, and replaced it with clean, before popping me back into it. For a moment, I'd thought she would let me sit on her lap and continue to cuddle me. It felt nice to be held, when my stomach hurt and heart broke.

The car ride seemed to last an eternity. With nothing left in my stomach to throw up, I dry retched and drooled saliva all down my chest. I felt so ill and all I could think off was the warmth of my mother's body and my brothers and sisters when we were all curled up sleeping.

I felt so alone and unhappy. I couldn't stop the sob escaping my lips.

Between sobs, I heard mother's pet announce our arrival at the airport. She stopped the car and removed my cage from the back seat, making cooing noises at me, as she handed me over to a total stranger.

S - t - r - a - n - g - e - r. My voice cracked on the word, as I called out to her.

She didn't look back, but disappeared from my view, leaving me with the stranger. I couldn't look at him, my fear consumed me. I breathed a sigh of relief when I saw her walking back to me. In her hand she waved a tag which she gave to the stranger. He attached it to my cage and they spoke a few words before she dropped her face to my level and uttered the words I dreaded.

'Good-bye little man. Have a happy life. Sam will look after you now.'

I saw her eyes tear up and I wailed. 'Don't leave me,' but she was already striding away wiping her hand across her face.

Could my day get worse?

Yes, and it did. The stranger called Sam, drove me to a humongous mechanical bird. I sniffed the air, and it reminded me of the garage at my old home with its pungent smell of oil and petrol. Sam placed my cage on a moving walkway which carried me towards the belly of the bird. The light dimmed as my cage was gobbled by it.

I sat and shivered. The gaping hole closed and darkness took all light, and I whimpered. If I cried louder perhaps someone would hear me. It was worth a try. So I tried my:

Please help me cry – nobody came.

Next, I howled, I'm scared and terrified please rescue me – still, nobody came.

Frustrated, I squealed. It was a full blown tantrum squeal and it left my head hurting and throat roar. But still, nobody came.

Suddenly a roaring, shaking, rattling drove me onto my stomach. I'd thought the car made a terrible noise, but it was nothing compared to the bird. I curled into a tight ball and thought of my happy carefree days with my family.

The tone of the mechanical bird changed waking me. It bumped along screeching and whining before settling into a pleasing rhythm and finally, all movements stopped. I waited, not sure what to expect. A gash opened and I blinked as light poured in

‘How ya going little chap?’

A voice, a friendly voice, I’d been found.

I shivered and whined my story to the stranger who picked up my cage.

‘I’m scared,’ I told him. ‘And hungry and thirsty,’ I cried the words and looked at him with pools of tears brimming in my eyes. But he didn’t seem to understand and other than the odd word of sympathy, there were no cuddles to make me feel better.

I was on the move again and let rip with a howl to let him know I wasn’t happy about it.

Howling took up the last of my energy reserves, and so I barely noticed my surroundings, until we left the open space of a shed and entered the confined space of a small waiting room. There were many strangers in the room, and I stopped mid howl to look at them.

One of the strangers stepped forward and looked down at me. She picked up the tag.

‘Yep, he’s mine.’

That sounded promising. I wondered if I was to spend the rest of my life in the cage or whether I could convince the stranger to let me out. Luckily, I didn’t have to do a thing. She opened the door and picked me up cuddling me in her arms. Oh it was so nice. So many emotions hit me at once, her warmth and the smell of her breath against my face and then when she kissed me, I melted. I snuggled my nose into her neck, and I knew instantly; this stranger was my new pet. And then she confirmed it in words.

‘There, there Paddington. It’s going to be okay,’ she cooed. ‘You’re coming home to live with me.’

She smelt of the garden, and I sneezed. However, it was a nice smell, and as she cooed to me, I felt safe.

Another car ride, I was so over travel. I was an emotional wreck, exhausted, hungry and thirsty and thought I’d come close to death. So there was no way I was going to let my pet out of my sight. She cuddled me on her lap in the passenger seat and I desperately tried to climb into her neck. I needed to kiss her face to show my gratitude for saving me.

I didn’t notice much of the journey but it looked like we were in the countryside. And when we reached my new home it was confirmed, with lots of open space around the house.

My pet carried me into the kitchen and tried to put me down. I didn’t like it, I felt safe in her arms and wasn’t ready to leave. I clung on with my claws.

‘It’s okay Paddington. You’re home now,’ she said pulling my paws from around her neck. Her voice soothed and I decided to be brave and face my new world and so reluctantly I let her go. With further words of encouragement she placed me on the floor and I took my first tentative steps. My nose was drawn to a number of delightful aromas drifting up from the floor. Working my way across it, I detected

similar smells to my other home. But there was one overriding smell that appealed – the strong smell of a dog.

My pet was talking to it. ‘Lola, come and say hello to Paddington.’

I rushed across the room to my pet, who knelt by a bigger version of me. In fact, Lola looked a lot like my mother. I was eager to make friends.

‘Hello Lola,’ I squeaked with a sore throat.

‘Keep your distance pup,’ said Lola. ‘Don’t get too settled. Sooz won’t keep you here long.’

I took a step back from her bared teeth. She didn’t like me. What had I done and what did she mean, I wasn’t going to be here long? I thought this was my new home. I whimpered.

‘Lola, don’t be like that,’ said my pet. ‘Be nice.’

Lola turned and walked away, and my pet began organising a bowl of food for me. I’d lost my appetite, but to please her I took a few mouthfuls. Just when I thought I’d found my home, life looked uncertain. I felt the need to cry and when I let out a wail of distress, I was scooped off the floor to be comforted. This, I decided, was the only place I felt safe.

Night time came around quickly, and I found out I was lucky to have two pets. My male pet arrived home and introduced himself to me with a huge cuddle. He seemed nice and I worked my charm on him. Licking and smooching. I used the same method on him as my other pet and he seemed to like it. I remembered my mother saying how important it was to know where you stood with your pets, as they could be quite different in their personalities.

I’d heard Lola call my pets by their names and decided this was a modern thinking family, and decided to follow her lead. I followed them around now, as Pete started putting together a fence in the kitchen. Sooz showed me my bed again. So far I’d managed to sleep in her arms and didn’t relish having to sleep alone. It now appeared they were up to something, and I didn’t like the look of the construction.

Sooz placed me on a quilt with a toy and something that made a strange ticking noise. It reminded me of a clock on the kitchen wall of my old home. It annoyed me there and was equally annoying here. She kissed me, patted me, cooed and soothed me. The light went out, and she followed Pete up the stairs to another room.

I climbed out of bed and tested the fence with my foot. It didn’t seem very stable, and I tried a sideways swipe with my hip. It gave way and clattered onto the ground. This was easy, I thought making my way to the bottom of the stairs that led to their room.

The light came on, and Sooz looked down at me. I thought that would seal it, but her look said something else and she picked me up placing me back in bed.

‘No, Paddington,’ she said.

No, what did that mean?

Pete put the fence back in place and when he’d finished patted me on the head. ‘Go to sleep,’ he said.

Once the light went out, I got out of bed and made for the fence. Down it came again. Perhaps they were playing a game with me. If so, I liked it. I raced to the bottom of the stairs, woofed once and waited. This time Pete greeted me from the top of the stairs.

He came down to me with Sooz behind him. I followed him around the kitchen, wagging my tail in agreement to his words, as he argued my case with Sooz.

‘Let the little fellow sleep upstairs with us?’

‘Woof,’ I smiled and raised my tail wagging rapidly.

‘No. He has to learn this is where he sleeps.’

I lost my smile and my tail dropped between my legs.

‘What harm can it do?’

I lifted my tail and wagged furiously.

‘Plenty. If we give in now...’

‘Poor little chap.’ Pete bent and scratched me behind the ear. ‘We have to obey her indoors,’ he whispered to me.

Pete, I was learning, was a soft touch, which was a useful bit of knowledge to store away for the future.

Sooz helped him rebuild the fence. She seemed hell bent on keeping me in the kitchen. And so they left me again. If I worked on them a bit more, I knew they would cave in.

I waited for them to turn off the light and went back to the fence. I couldn’t budge the thing this time, no matter how much I threw myself at it – it stood rock solid. I suddenly panicked. I didn’t want to be alone. I needed them. How could they leave me after everything I’d been through? I decided to howl my point of view. I went straight into my terrified howl.

It took a few minutes but eventually the lights came back on.

Pete came down and picked me up. ‘He’s scared. We can’t leave him alone.’

This sounded promising.

‘He’s not alone. We’re a few strides away from him,’ replied Sooz. ‘If you ignore him, he’ll settle.’

‘No, don’t ignore me, I want to be with you,’ I whimpered into Pete’s shoulder. ‘Oh thank you,’ I licked his face as he carried me upstairs.

He put me down. Well, I gotten to the upstairs room, a good sign, I thought, as I wandered across the room sniffing out interesting smells. I wasn’t paying much attention until I realised the fence was being erected up here. They didn’t really think I was going to sleep in it – did they?’

I noticed Lola asleep on her bed. She wasn’t behind a fence. Why did I have to be? Perhaps I could convince Lola to let me sleep with her. I sauntered over to her, and before I could utter any words of friendship, she lifted her head and a deep throaty growl left her lips.

Pete saved me in the nick of time from losing a piece of fur. He picked me up and placed me on my quilt behind the bars. He’d even put a bowl of water in there with me. As the light went out, and I climbed out of my bed and knocked over my bowl spilling water everywhere, my terrible journey caught up with me, and I howled.

‘Would I be locked away behind bars for ever?’ I screeched loudly. ‘Please listen to me. I’m not a bad pup. I’ll be good... I promise,’ I shrieked louder still. ‘Please, please let me out. I can’t cope,’ I threw my head back and howled and howled and howled. I was gripped by some primeval force that threatened to consume me.

The light came back on.

Pete picked me up and cuddled me against his chest, and I stopped shaking and crying and tried to calm myself. He popped me on the bed, and I stumbled on my

little fat legs to Sooz. She pulled me against her chest, and I snuffled and sniffed and licked her neck. 'Please can I sleep here?' my voice was muffled by her hair as I buried my face into it and I was scared she didn't hear me.

Pete must have heard me though and turned off the light. I curled between my two new pets and prayed they wouldn't make me sleep behind that fence again. I was already scarred for life. All I wanted was to be with them and look after them like my mother taught me and I'd promised her I'd do a good job. How could I do it behind bars?

Calm down I told myself. The light is out and you are where you wanted to be. Tomorrow I would convince them of my worth. But tonight I could sleep and not be scared of being alone.