

## Paddington's Story – Part 5

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I raced across the paddock, my paws springing me up the slope, answering Sooz's call to dinner. The dream ended suddenly and I woke screaming.



The pain came from my ankle and throbbed along my back leg. I scrambled to my feet holding my injured leg off the ground while searching for help.

Pet Sooz climbed out of bed and rushed to my side. 'What's wrong Paddington?' she cooed.

'It's my ankle,' I cried. 'Can't you see? It hurts, make it stop.'

'If only you could talk little man.'

I was talking, didn't she understand? 'It's my ankle and the pain is excruciating.' Perhaps if I howled loudly she would understand.

'Ohooooooooooooooooooooo.'

'What's all the noise?' Pet Pete popped his head around the bathroom door looking at us both.

'He's holding his back leg up at an odd angle. Can you sit with him on the bed, so I can check it?' said Sooz.

'Yeah sure,' said Pete. 'Come on Paddington.' Pete bent down and scooped me up into his arms. He carried me to the bed and perched on the edge of it.

'Hold him still,' Sooz ordered.

I squirmed as she fingered the area around my sore ankle. 'Ohooooooooooooo.' I howled as she touched it. 'Be careful Sooz, it hurts.' I wriggled in Pete's arms trying to escape Sooz's probing fingers.

'It's swollen. I think he needs to go to the vet,' she said looking at Pete.

'V - E - T,' I choked on the word. I bet it wasn't a trip to meet my new friends at puppy school. The word conjured torturous images in my mind.

Lola lifted her head from her bed for the first time. 'Always making a fuss,' she moaned before curling back onto the quilt and closing her eyes.

I ignored her and looked back at Sooz. 'I'll make an appointment,' said Sooz.

'Sooz, you're still in your pyjamas,' I woofed but she continued down the stairs to the kitchen and Pete followed with me still in his arms. Considering his height, Pete was gentle with me. Unlike Sooz who poked and prodded and made me cry. I loved Sooz, but I was glad Pete was cuddling me now. I'd soon worked out I could twist him around my paw. Sooz, however wasn't so easy.

I heard the clip of nails on the stone floor and looked down to see Lola following us. She yawned and stretched her back legs out arching her body. I'd heard Sooz say, Lola wasn't getting any younger, and that her joints were stiff in the mornings. I thought, it was more likely that she was working on gaining their sympathy, and of course it worked as she always seemed to get loads of it.

'Breakfast,' said Pete.

I forgot about Lola's problems at the sound of that word. It was one of my most favourite words. But Pete seemed to be talking to Lola and ignoring me. 'Just because my ankle hurts doesn't mean I don't want breakfast.' I looked into his face trying to smile the way I'd seen Lola smile.

'Okay, Paddington. Sit next to Lola and don't do anything stupid.'

'Why would I?' I woofed. He placed me next to the enemy and she wagged her tail at him while scowling at me.

We watched Pete disappear into the pantry, another of my favourite places. A droplet of drool rang along my tongue and dripped down my chest. I loved the pantry and for a moment forgot the pain in my ankle.

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Pete emerged and the aroma of biscuits hit my nostrils. He handed a biscuit to Lola and she smiled. She was so smiley whenever Pete or Sooz were around, but as soon as their backs were turned, she transformed into a different person.

I watched her take the biscuit delicately in her teeth and trot out to her trampoline bed in the indoor outdoor room.

I turned back to look at Pete. 'Me too,' I yapped in case he'd forgotten I hadn't had breakfast either. I needed to keep my strength up, especially with a trip to the vet looming.

'Don't worry I wouldn't forget you,' said Pete. He offered me a biscuit and I munched it greedily.

I'd never experienced the luxury of grazing over my food like Lola. Instead, I'd learnt early on, that any delay was a sure fire invitation to lose a meal. Lola wasn't big on food like I was, but if I had something she wanted she'd stand over me until I gave ground to her. Hence, I swallowed my food as quickly as possible.

'Helen can see us straight away,' said Sooz as she put the phone down.

'You'd better get changed darling,' said Pete. 'Not a good look to go out in your pyjamas.'

'Give me a minute and I'll be back,' we watched her disappear up the stairs to return moments later, dressed in jeans and t-shirt.

'Okay, let's go.'

Pete scooped me up and carried me to the car.

Helen, the vet, was nice. She offered me a handful of tasty dried meat. I gobbled down the pieces and looked at her for more. She obliged, by placing a mound on the table where I stood with Sooz holding me. While Helen fingered my ankle, I snuffled and munched through the treats.

'Grrrrr, that hurts,' I said lifting my nose from the remaining bits of dried meat.

'He's going to have to be kept quiet,' said Helen ignoring my protest. 'No running around for at least ten days. He also needs to go on a course of injections.'

'I - n - j - e - c - t - i - o - n - s,' I quivered at the sound of the word. 'I hate injections, please Sooz,' I gazed into her eyes, pleading for her to refuse the offer. She looked worried and sad. Perhaps this was bad, perhaps I wasn't going to recover, my imagination was running riot.

'It's okay Paddington, this won't hurt,' Helen stuck the needle into me before I could object. I hardly felt a thing which was a surprise. Helen was obviously good at giving injections.

I licked Sooz hand as she picked me up and cuddled me. She really did look worried. 'I'm fine,' I told her.

In the car, on the way home, I listened with interest to my pet's conversation.

'We'll have to take him with us,' said Sooz.

'Take me where?' I asked.

'We can't take him into the parks,' said Pete.

'Parks?'

'But it will be an ideal way of keeping him still. We can make a spot for him on the back seat of the Toyota and buy one of those doggie seat belts.'

'Seat belt? What were they talking about?'

'But, what about the parks? Dogs aren't allowed,' argued Pete.

'He's tiny, who's going to see him if we keep him undercover. Let's face it, he will be under our control the whole time. And anyway, what harm can one ten week old pup do?'

'Well, I guess it sounds okay,' conceded Pete.

'Stop worrying. It's settled then,' said Sooz smiling.

My head swung from one to the other as they spoke and I still wasn't any the wiser to what they were talking about.

A few days later I found out.

The pain had receded, but the joint was still swollen and I'd had another visit to the vet and I listened to Sooz tell the vet about the trip.

'Can he have his full injections before we head North?' asked Sooz.

'Not really. He's still too young. You'll have to keep him away from other dogs.'

'I won't let him out of my sight,' replied Sooz.

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'An outback trip is certainly a good way to keep the little fellow off his feet,' said Helen.  
'He'll sit out the trip in comfort.'

'How long are you away?' asked Helen.

'About two weeks.'

'That'll be fine. Have a good trip and see you when you get back for his injections.'

'Thanks, Helen. Come on Paddington, you're coming on an outback trip with us. You'll probably be the first bearded collie to ever travel outback South Australia.'

'Woof.' I replied. I was going away with my pets. 'Is Lola coming?' I asked. But Sooz didn't answer, she was probably busy thinking about the trip.

When we got home I went in search of Lola. 'Lola, are you coming on an outback trip with us?'

'In a car? No way - oh dear I hope not, I hate cars.'

'Will you stay here then?' I asked concerned she'd be alone.

'Yes, I'm not going anywhere. I can take care of the house.'

'But who will look after you?'

'Don't worry about it pup... Paddington I mean. I'll be fine.'

She sauntered off and I wondered why she was always so bad tempered with me. I was trying to wheedle my way into her affections, but it was slow going.

Over the following days I watched as Sooz and Pete dismantled the house. Packages were piling up everywhere. Bags full of clothes, boxes full of food, containers full of equipment. I meandered my way through it all stopping at the boxes full of food. I could detect the aroma of my biscuits in one of the boxes.

I felt special. I was going away with my pets, how good was that? Lola wasn't going, but I was. However, she didn't seem worried about it and I wondered if she was happy to have the house to herself.

She grumbled loudly when I asked. Sooz and Pete didn't trust she could look after herself and invited people to come and stay with her. 'I don't like it,' said Lola.



The day finally arrived and with the hired Toyota packed to the roof, and me buckled into the back seat unable to move, and my pets in the front, we drove away.

I barked farewell to Lola through the window, but she didn't even come to say goodbye. I wondered if she was sad at being left behind, but remembered her previous words and dismissed her from my mind.

I found out we weren't going alone. My grand pets were coming with us. They had their own Toyota, a twin of ours and they followed Pete through the hills towards the North and the desert.

The first night we stopped at Parachilna in the Flinders Ranges. I was listening to Sooz and Pete and learning everything I needed to know about our destination. The country was quite different to my home with sparse open spaces and kangaroos hopping about.

Sooz and Pete parked out the back of the Prairie Hotel and while Pete disappeared into it, Sooz took me for a walk. After our walk she fed me and I enjoyed a long drink of water before she put me back on the back seat and went looking for Pete.

They'd been gone ages and it was now dark and eerie and the noises were different from our home. I felt scared and wondered when Sooz was going to come back for me.

Where were they? Did they need my help? Had they run into trouble? I was getting crazy thoughts in my head and I didn't like it.

Time was something I'd learned quickly with my pets. Everything in my home ran to clockwork. The time they got up during the week was different to the weekend. And the time I had breakfast and the time they left for work and the time they got home and the time we had dinner was always the same. The time we went to bed varied depending on whether it was a

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week night or the weekend. I knew it had been an awfully long time since Sooz disappeared and I was alone in the vehicle worrying about them. And I was starting to think something had happened and I'd never see them again.

I whined as I pushed my nose against the glass and squinted into the dark. I couldn't see a thing. It was so dark out here. The lights from the hotel shone dimly across the car park, and when I looked up at the sky, I noticed a lot more stars shining than I'd ever seen at home.

Another hour went by. Now I was really worried. I scratched at the door. If I could get out, I could go and rescue them. I whined and barked.

A face looked through the window and I nearly fainted. Then I saw it was Sooz with Pete standing behind her. She opened the door and I jumped up to lick her face in relief.

'Are you okay Paddington?'

'No. Where have you been Sooz? Are you okay? Don't you know how worried I've been?' I gave her the annoyed expression I'd learnt from Lola.

'Come on little fella. We're going to sneak you into our room,' said Pete.

Sneak. What did that mean? And why wasn't I welcome in their room? I slept with them at home. None of what he said made sense.

Pete took off his jacket and cocooned me in it. I was covered by his coat and couldn't see a thing. I squirmed not liking the feeling and wondered what new game we were playing.

I heard the click of a door close behind us and the change in tone of Pete's footsteps from crunching over gravel to the smooth clip clop of his feet over stone.

'I'll get the door,' said Sooz.

Another click and the coat fell away and I found myself in a bedroom.

Sooz and Pete were laughing. 'Oh my God,' giggled Sooz. His tail was sticking out of the coat. How would you have explained that if someone asked?

'Thank goodness they didn't,' laughed Pete.

They were still laughing as I sniffed around looking for a place to pee. I'd been locked up so long I was busting and they'd not thought about my toilet requirements when they'd hustled me under the coat.

'Oh no, you don't,' said Sooz, grabbing me in the nick of time.

'Pete, put some paper down on the bathroom floor. He can do his business there.'

Pete obeyed and Sooz placed me on top of it.

'Wee wees,' she chanted. 'Come on Paddington wee wees.'

Didn't she realise how embarrassing it was to listen to her baby talk me? 'Sooz I'm a big boy now. I get the paper trick.' I told her. They'd asked me to do my toilet on newspaper before, so I understood quickly what I had to do.

'Do you mind?' I looked at them both looking at me.

'He get's it,' said Sooz. 'Let's give him some privacy.'

'Thanks,' I woofed.

After I'd finished in the bathroom, they took it over. Sooz cleaned her teeth, washed her face, creamed her face and brushed her hair. I walked away at that point making for the bed. She was obviously going to be there for hours. When she emerged glowing and clean, she pulled a large bone out of a bag and offered it to me. 'That should keep you happy most of the night,' she said.

'A bone, wow, thanks Sooz.' How could I refuse such a gift?

The bone was as big as me, but I was strong, bad leg or not, and I dragged it to a corner of the room. I gave my teeth a good work out, gnawing, grinding, chewing and more gnawing. Bit by bit, I stripped the fat off, then the gristle and worked the marrow from inside with my tongue.

'Paddington, could you please go to sleep?' Pete's sleepy voice interrupted my chewing.

How could I leave such a delicious bone? Someone might pinch it. I had to eat it all up just in case. 'I won't be much longer,' I whined.

'It's no good. I can't sleep a wink with that noise going on,' grumbled Pete.

'The whole hotel can probably hear him,' grumbled Sooz. 'I think you'd better take it off him.'

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The room brightened in pale yellow light and I blinked at the sight of Pete climbing out of bed and making for my corner. He bent down and picked up my bone.

'You can have it tomorrow.'

'But, but... it's mine. I haven't finished yet. Pete, I want it back. Sooz you gave it to me. Please.'

'Pad – ding – ton,' Sooz's voice rose petering out on the last syllable of my name. I'd learnt when she spoke like that she meant business.

'Well, I suppose I can finish it tomorrow,' I whined grudgingly. I had to trust Pete would give it to me back in the morning. 'Okay, I'll go to sleep.'

I put my front paws onto the edge of the bed and looked up at her. 'Could someone give me a lift up?' I woofed.

'Come on Paddington, for goodness sake. I'll be glad when you can jump up yourself,' grumbled Pete.

'Don't forget he has a sore leg and isn't supposed to be overdoing it,' said Sooz.

'Thank you Sooz,' I said, as she boosted me onto the bed.

I curled up between them and fell into a deep sleep.

We all slept in.

'Pete, wake up.'

I felt the bed shake.

'Quick, can you take Paddington out for a wee before anybody sees we had him in the room?'

'Yes, sure,' said Pete yawning. He dressed quickly grabbing his jacket and my lead. As an afterthought, he picked up my bone and once again I was tucked inside his jacket and taken outside.

We went for a walk around the car park and I sniffed out the interesting smells. I did my toilet away from prying eyes and Pete gave me a nice long drink before returning me to the back seat of the Toyota. He placed my half chewed bone in front of me.

'Breakfast.'

'Thanks, Pete. Do I still get my biscuits?'

'Stay there Paddington. We'll be along after we've had breakfast.'

'I can't exactly go anywhere,' I woofed, more than happy to chomp my teeth back into my bone.

My pets arrived with my grand pets and as I continued gnawing, grinding and crushing the bone into powder, Pete put the vehicle into gear and drove away from Parachilna towards the North and Marree.

What an adventure this was, I thought, burying my bone under Pete's jacket that he'd carelessly thrown over the back seat with my needs in mind. I placed my nose on my paws and fell into a deep contented sleep counting down the time until dinner.

