

A Bear Called Paddington



by Michael Bond

Chapter One Please look after this bear



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MR AND MRS Brown first met Paddington on a railway platform. In fact, that was how he came to have such an unusual name for a bear, for Paddington was the name of the station.

The Browns were there to meet their daughter Judy, who was coming home from school for the holidays. It was a warm summer day and the

station was crowded with people on their way to the seaside. Trains were humming, loudspeakers blaring, porters rushing about shouting at one another, and altogether there was so much noise that Mr Brown, who saw him first, had to tell his wife several times before she understood.

“A *bear*? On Paddington station?” Mrs Brown looked at her husband in amazement. “Don’t be silly, Henry. There can’t be!”

Mr Brown adjusted his glasses. “But there is,” he insisted. “I distinctly saw it. Over there – near the bicycle rack. It was wearing a funny kind of hat.”

Without waiting for a reply he caught hold of his wife’s arm and pushed her through the crowd, round a trolley laden with chocolate and cups of tea, past a bookstall, and through a gap in a pile of suitcases towards the Lost Property Office.

“There you are,” he announced triumphantly, pointing towards a dark corner, “I told you so!”

Mrs Brown followed the direction of his arm and dimly made out a small, furry object in the shadows. It seemed to be sitting on some kind of suitcase and around its neck there was a label with some writing

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on it. The suitcase was old and battered and on the side, in large letters, were the words WANTED ON VOYAGE.

Mrs Brown clutched at her husband. "Why, Henry," she exclaimed. "I believe you were right after all. It *is* a bear!"

She peered at it more closely. It seemed a very unusual kind of bear. It was brown in colour, a rather dirty brown, and it was wearing a most odd-looking hat, with a wide brim, just as Mr Brown had said. From beneath the brim two large, round eyes stared back at her.

Seeing that something was expected of it the bear stood up and politely raised its hat, revealing two black ears. "Good afternoon," it said, in a small, clear voice.

"Er... good afternoon," replied Mr Brown, doubtfully. There was a moment of silence.

The bear looked at them inquiringly. "Can I help you?"

Mr Brown looked rather embarrassed. "Well... no. Er... as a matter of fact, we were wondering if we could help you."

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Mrs Brown bent down. "You're a very small bear," she said.

The bear puffed out its chest. "I'm a very rare sort of bear," he replied importantly. "There aren't many of us left where I come from."

"And where is that?" asked Mrs Brown.

The bear looked round carefully before replying. "Darkest Peru. I'm not really supposed to be here at all. I'm a stowaway!"

"A stowaway?" Mr Brown lowered his voice and looked anxiously over his shoulder. He almost expected to see a policeman standing behind him with a notebook and pencil, taking everything down.

"Yes," said the bear. "I emigrated, you know." A sad expression came into its eyes. "I used to live with my Aunt Lucy in Peru, but she had to go into a home for retired bears."

"You don't mean to say you've come all the way from South America by yourself?" exclaimed Mrs Brown.

The bear nodded. "Aunt Lucy always said she wanted me to emigrate when I was old enough. That's why she taught me to speak English."

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“But whatever did you do for food?” asked Mr Brown. “You must be starving.”

Bending down, the bear unlocked the suitcase with a small key, which it also had round its neck, and brought out an almost empty glass jar. “I ate marmalade,” he said, rather proudly. “Bears like marmalade. And I lived in a lifeboat.”

“But what are you going to do now?” said Mr Brown. “You can’t just sit on Paddington station waiting for something to happen.”

“Oh, I shall be all right... I expect.” The bear bent down to do up its case again. As he did so Mrs Brown caught a glimpse of the writing on the label. It said, simply, PLEASE LOOK AFTER THIS BEAR. THANK YOU.

She turned appealingly to her husband. “Oh, Henry, what *shall* we do? We can’t just leave him here. There’s no knowing what might happen to him. London’s such a big place when you’ve nowhere to go. Can’t he come and stay with us for a few days?”

Mr Brown hesitated. “But Mary, dear, we can’t take him... not just like that. After all...”

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“After all, *what?*” Mrs Brown’s voice had a firm note to it. She looked down at the bear. “He is rather sweet. And he’d be such company for Jonathan and Judy. Even if it’s only for a little while. They’d never forgive us if they knew you’d left him here.”

“It all seems highly irregular,” said Mr Brown, doubtfully. “I’m sure there’s a law about it.” He bent down. “Would you like to come and stay with us?” he asked. “That is,” he added, hastily, not wishing to offend the bear, “if you’ve nothing else planned.”

The bear jumped and his hat nearly fell off with excitement. “Oooh, yes, please. I should like that very much. I’ve nowhere to go and everyone seems in such a hurry.”

“Well, that’s settled then,” said Mrs Brown, before her husband could change his mind. “And you can have marmalade for breakfast every morning, and – ” she tried hard to think of something else that bears might like.

“*Every* morning?” The bear looked as if it could hardly believe its ears. “I only had it on special

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occasions at home. Marmalade's very expensive in Darkest Peru."

"Then you shall have it every morning starting tomorrow," continued Mrs Brown. "And honey on Sunday."

A worried expression came over the bear's face. "Will it cost very much?" he asked. "You see, I haven't very much money."

"Of course not. We wouldn't dream of charging you anything. We shall expect you to be one of the family, shan't we, Henry?" Mrs Brown looked at her husband for support.

"Of course," said Mr Brown. "By the way," he added, "if you *are* coming home with us you'd better know our names. This is Mrs Brown and I'm Mr Brown."

The bear raised its hat politely – twice. "I haven't really got a name," he said. "Only a Peruvian one which no one can understand."

"Then we'd better give you an English one," said Mrs Brown. "It'll make things much easier." She looked round the station for inspiration. "It ought to be something special," she said thoughtfully. As she

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spoke an engine standing in one of the platforms gave a loud wail and a train began to move. "I know what!" she exclaimed. "We found you on Paddington station so we'll call you Paddington!"

"Paddington!" The bear repeated it several times to make sure. "It seems a very long name."

"Quite distinguished," said Mr Brown. "Yes, I like Paddington as a name. Paddington it shall be."

Mrs Brown stood up. "Good. Now, Paddington, I have to meet our little daughter, Judy, off the train. She's coming home from school. I'm sure you must be thirsty after your long journey, so you go along to the buffet with Mr Brown and he'll buy you a nice cup of tea."

Paddington licked his lips. "I'm *very* thirsty," he said. "Sea water makes you thirsty." He picked up his suitcase, pulled his hat down firmly over his head, and waved a paw politely in the direction of the buffet. "After you, Mr Brown."

"Er... thank you, Paddington," said Mr Brown.

"Now, Henry, look after him," Mrs Brown called after them. "And for goodness' sake, when you get a moment, take that label off his neck. It makes

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him look like a parcel. I'm sure he'll get put in a luggage van or something if a porter sees him."

The buffet was crowded when they entered but Mr Brown managed to find a table for two in a corner. By standing on a chair Paddington could just rest his paws comfortably on the glass top. He looked around with interest while Mr Brown went to fetch the tea. The sight of everyone eating reminded him of how hungry he felt. There was a half-eaten bun on the table but just as he reached out his paw a waitress came up and swept it into a pan.

"You don't want that, dearie," she said, giving him a friendly pat. "You don't know where it's been."

Paddington felt so empty he didn't really mind where it had been but he was much too polite to say anything.

"Well, Paddington," said Mr Brown, as he placed two steaming cups of tea on the table and a plate piled high with cakes. "How's that to be going on with?"

Paddington's eyes glistened. "It's very nice, thank you," he exclaimed, eyeing the tea doubtfully. "But

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it's rather hard drinking out of a cup. I usually get my head stuck, or else my hat falls in and makes it taste nasty."

Mr Brown hesitated. "Then you'd better give your hat to me. I'll pour the tea into a saucer for you. It's not really done in the best circles, but I'm sure no one will mind just this once."

Paddington removed his hat and laid it carefully on the table while Mr Brown poured out the tea. He looked hungrily at the cakes, in particular at a large cream-and-jam one which Mr Brown placed on a plate in front of him.

"There you are, Paddington," he said. "I'm sorry they haven't any marmalade ones, but they were the best I could get."

"I'm glad I emigrated," said Paddington, as he reached out a paw and pulled the plate nearer. "Do you think anyone would mind if I stood on the table to eat?"

Before Mr Brown could answer he had climbed up and placed his right paw firmly on the bun. It was a very large bun, the biggest and stickiest Mr Brown had been able to find, and in a matter of

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moments most of the inside found its way on to Paddington's whiskers. People started to nudge each other and began staring in their direction. Mr Brown wished he had chosen a plain, ordinary bun, but he wasn't very experienced in the ways of bears. He stirred his tea and looked out of the window, pretending he had tea with a bear on Paddington station every day of his life.

"Henry!" The sound of his wife's voice brought him back to earth with a start. "Henry, whatever are you doing to that poor bear? Look at him! He's covered all over with cream and jam."

Mr Brown jumped up in confusion. "He seemed rather hungry," he answered, lamely.

Mrs Brown turned to her daughter. "This is what happens when I leave your father alone for five minutes."

Judy clapped her hands excitedly. "Oh, Daddy, is he really going to stay with us?"

"If he does," said Mrs Brown, "I can see someone other than your father will have to look after him. Just look at the mess he's in!"

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Paddington, who all this time had been too interested in his bun to worry about what was going on, suddenly became aware that people were talking about him. He looked up to see that Mrs Brown had been joined by a little girl, with laughing blue eyes and long, fair hair. He jumped up, meaning to raise his hat, and in his haste slipped on a patch of strawberry jam which somehow or other had found its way on to the glass table-top. For a brief moment he had a dizzy impression of everything and everyone being upside down. He waved his paws wildly in the air and then, before anyone could catch him, he somersaulted backwards and landed with a splash in his saucer of tea. He jumped up even quicker than he had sat down, because the tea was still very hot, and promptly stepped into Mr Brown's cup.

Judy threw back her head and laughed until the tears rolled down her face. "Oh, Mummy, isn't he funny!" she cried.

Paddington, who didn't think it at all funny, stood for a moment with one foot on the table and the other in Mr Brown's tea. There were large

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patches of white cream all over his face, and on his left ear there was a lump of strawberry jam.

“You wouldn’t think,” said Mrs Brown, “that anyone could get in such a state with just one bun.”

Mr Brown coughed. He had just caught the stern eye of a waitress on the other side of the counter. “Perhaps,” he said, “we’d better go. I’ll see if I can find a taxi.” He picked up Judy’s belongings and hurried outside.

Paddington stepped gingerly off the table and, with a last look at the sticky remains of his bun, climbed down on to the floor.

Judy took one of his paws. “Come along, Paddington. We’ll take you home and you can have a nice hot bath. Then you can tell me all about South America. I’m sure you must have had lots of wonderful adventures.”

“I have,” said Paddington earnestly. “Lots. Things are always happening to me. I’m that sort of bear.”

When they came out of the buffet Mr Brown had already found a taxi and he waved them across.

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The driver looked hard at Paddington and then at the inside of his nice, clean taxi.

“Bears is extra,” he said gruffly. “Sticky bears is twice as much again.”

“He can’t help being sticky, driver,” said Mr Brown. “He’s just had a nasty accident.”

The driver hesitated. “All right, ’op in. But mind none of it comes off on me interior. I only cleaned it out this morning.”

The Browns trooped obediently into the back of the taxi. Mr and Mrs Brown and Judy sat in the back, while Paddington stood on a tip-up seat behind the driver so that he could see out of the window.

The sun was shining as they drove out of the station and after the gloom and the noise everything seemed bright and cheerful. They swept past a group of people at a bus stop and Paddington waved. Several people stared and one man raised his hat in return. It was all very friendly. After weeks of sitting alone in a lifeboat there was so much to see. There were people and cars and big, red buses everywhere – it wasn’t a bit

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like Darkest Peru.

Paddington kept one eye out of the window in case he missed anything. With his other eye he carefully examined Mr and Mrs Brown and Judy. Mr Brown was fat and jolly, with a big moustache and glasses, while Mrs Brown, who was also rather plump, looked like a larger edition of Judy. Paddington had just decided he was going to like staying with the Browns when the glass window behind the driver shot back and a gruff voice said, "Where did you say you wanted to go?"

Mr Brown leaned forward. "Number thirty-two, Windsor Gardens."

The driver cupped his ear with one hand. "Can't hear you," he shouted.

Paddington tapped him on the shoulder. "Number thirty-two, Windsor Gardens," he repeated.

The taxi driver jumped at the sound of Paddington's voice and narrowly missed hitting a bus. He looked down at his shoulder and glared. "Cream!" he said, bitterly. "All over me new coat!"

Judy giggled and Mr and Mrs Brown exchanged glances. Mr Brown peered at the meter. He half

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expected to see a sign go up saying they had to pay another fifty pence.

“I beg your pardon,” said Paddington. He bent forward and tried to rub the stain off with his other paw. Several bun crumbs and a smear of jam added themselves mysteriously to the taxi driver’s coat. The driver gave Paddington a long, hard look. Paddington raised his hat and the driver slammed the window shut again.

“Oh dear,” said Mrs Brown. “We really shall have to give him a bath as soon as we get indoors. It’s getting everywhere.”

Paddington looked thoughtful. It wasn’t so much that he didn’t like baths; he really didn’t mind being covered with jam and cream. It seemed a pity to wash it all off quite so soon. But before he had time to consider the matter the taxi stopped and the Browns began to climb out. Paddington picked up his suitcase and followed Judy up a flight of white steps to a big green door.

“Now you’re going to meet Mrs Bird,” said Judy. “She looks after us. She’s a bit fierce sometimes

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and she grumbles a lot but she doesn't really mean it. I'm sure you'll like her."

Paddington felt his knees begin to tremble. He looked round for Mr and Mrs Brown, but they appeared to be having some sort of argument with the taxi driver. Behind the door he could hear footsteps approaching.

"I'm sure I shall like her, if you say so," he said, catching sight of his reflection on the brightly polished letterbox. "But will she like me?"