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Opening extract from

Love from Paddington

Written by

Michael Bond

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Michael Bond

Love from Paddington



Illustrated by

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HarperCollins *Children's Books*

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Preface

One night, many moons ago, the ocean liner *S.S. Karenia* left the Peruvian port of Lima in South America and set sail for Europe.

There was nothing unusual in that, for it was a regular crossing carrying as many passengers as it could take, along with a full crew to look after their every need during the voyage.

However, on this particular occasion, unbeknown to the Captain, they had a stowaway

aboard. He had been smuggled onto the ship at the very last moment by his aunt, and he was hiding under a sheet of tarpaulin in one of the lifeboats.

"Now, promise me you will write," she said, as the liner's siren gave an impatient wail that echoed round the harbour.

"I promise to write as soon as I get the chance," said the bear.

"I've filled your suitcase with jars of marmalade for the journey," said his aunt. "And I have paid one of the crew to make sure you never run short of drinking water."

While she was talking she tied a large label round her nephew's neck. "I've knotted the string twice over," she said, "so it shouldn't come apart. But you may find it very useful, so do take care of it."

"Thank you, Aunt Lucy," said the bear, raising his hat. "You are very kind." He would have preferred cocoa, but he was much too polite to say so.

In any case there was no time for more as the gap between the *Karenia* and the quay began to widen and his aunt had to make good her escape by sliding down a rope.

She only just managed to avoid falling into the harbour and by the time she had righted herself a wall of darkness separated her from the lifeboat.

She wiped away a tear as she waved a last goodbye into the pitch black night. "I hope I've done the right thing," she said, when she arrived back at the Home. "It feels as though I have lost a part of myself."

"Of course you've done the right thing," said

the oldest inhabitant. She stopped knitting and set her rocking chair in motion to emphasise the point.

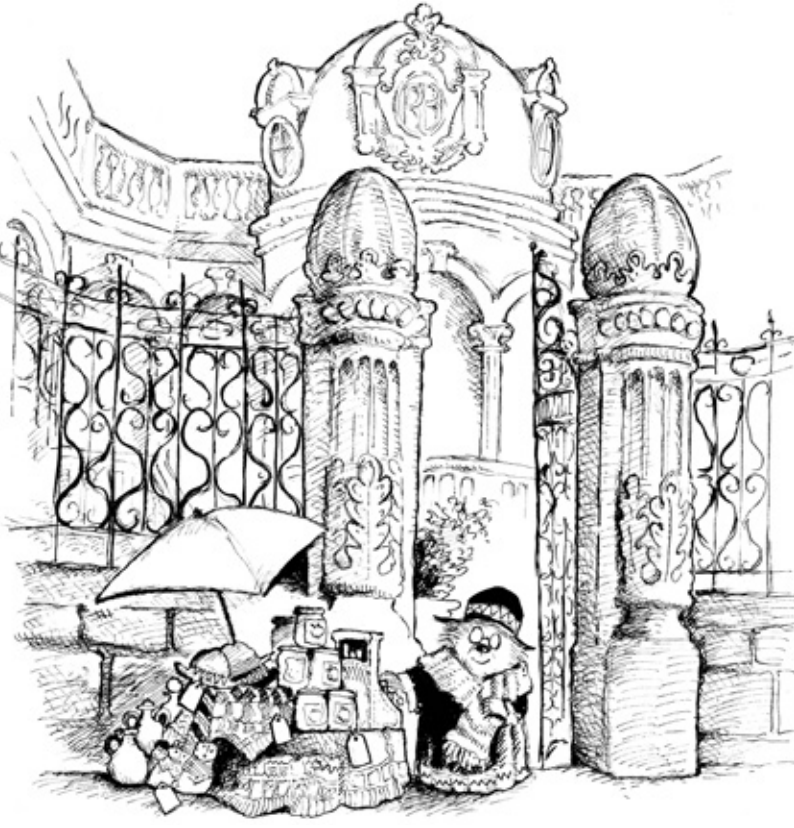
"This is no place for a young cub full of the joys of spring. That bear needs to go out into the world. We shall hear more about him before the year is out … you mark my words."

"I wish I'd given him a good book to read," said Aunt Lucy.

"You will need one yourself by the time the *Karenia* reaches the end of its journey," said another bear.

"It's always worse for the one who stays behind," she added.

And she was right, for Aunt Lucy soon lost count of the number of raffia table mats she made while she awaited news. Luckily it was the tourist



season, so they soon disappeared from the stall permanently outside their building.



Then one day a postman arrived brandishing an envelope, the front of which was festooned with blue labels and strange-looking stamps.

It was addressed to Aunt Lucy, c/o The Home

for Retired Bears, Lima.

By popular request, Aunt Lucy dropped the table mat she was working on and began reading the contents of the letter out loud to the other bears.

"Dear Aunt Lucy, I…" she began, before pausing for a moment as the next word seemed to have been crossed out for some reason.

"I ~~eggspect~~ expect this will come as a great surprise to you, but not only have I arrived in England, but I have an address!

"I'm staying at number 32 Windsor Gardens and it isn't at all like the Home for Retired Bears. You may not believe this, but it's very near the Portobello Road, which you have often talked about when you suggested I might like living in London.

"I have been taken in for the next day or two by a nice family called the Browns, but I'm hoping it will be much longer than that because I am very happy here. I have my own bed, so I am on my best behaviour, which isn't easy because I have already flooded their bathroom by mistake and a lot of the water went through their downstairs ceiling. The trouble is I'm used to sitting in a puddle after it rains and I had never been in a bath before.

"Luckily the drips landed on their two children, Jonathan and Judy, who came to my rescue.

"But then, as I said to Judy when I first arrived, 'Things are always happening to me. I'm that sort of bear.'

"In fact, it is Judy who is typing this letter because she noticed straight away that my

spelling isn't very good. Also, using Mr Brown's computer isn't easy with paws as I can't help touching several keys at the same time. This is an example of what happens when I try to type the letter 'i' – uhiyg …!"

Aunt Lucy held up the letter for the others in the room to see.

"I find using a pencil to poke the keys is the best way to do it," she read. "But that takes much longer.

"I wrote several letters to you while I was in the lifeboat on the way over. That took even longer because I used marmalade chunks instead of a pen, so the writing wasn't very clear. I put them one by one inside the empty marmalade jars, screwing the tops on tightly before throwing them into the sea. I expect they might turn up

one day, but you won't have missed much if they don't.

"All I could think of to say was, 'I hope this doesn't find you as it leaves me,' and there aren't any signposts in the middle of the ocean so, as I had no idea where I was at the time, they aren't very interesting.

"Jonathan is sending this note by something called AIR MAIL, so you will get it as soon as possible. I will write again tomorrow because I have another big surprise for you. Love from PADDINGTON."

Aunt Lucy had trouble with the last word. "I don't know what that means," she said, "but someone else has added a bit more at the end."

"Hello Aunt Lucy," she read. "And a big hello to everyone else in the Home for Retired Bears.

We have been hearing all about you. Don't worry. We will look after him and the odd job man is already working on the ceiling. Judy."

As she reached the end all the other bears applauded.



The sound was not unlike the gentle lapping of the sea as it entered the harbour, for paws are not really meant for clapping.

"If only my nephew could hear it," thought Aunt Lucy. "He *would* be pleased. I must send him a postcard straight away."