



Preface

Our story is deeply painful to share, but it is also beautiful and true.

Just know that when I tell you about the tears, the anger and the longing, I am also talking about love.

We have laughed till we cried and we have wept ourselves to sleep, for that is the nature of love.


Love hurts.

Love heals.



Angels come in all shapes and sizes.





Penguin was just a small, wobbly-headed magpie chick when my son Noah found her lying in the car park next to his grandmother's house.

Gusting onshore winds had tossed her out of her nest, some twenty metres up a towering Norfolk Island pine, and she had tumbled, spun and bounced her way through the branches to fall heavily onto the cold asphalt.

One wing was hanging limply by her side and, though too battered to move a great deal, she was extremely lucky to survive such a horrendous fall.

But she wasn't out of danger yet. Without immediate care the shaky little chick would have died within hours.

Our family had witnessed enough tragedy for one lifetime and we were not going to sit idly by. Sam let Noah pick up the little bird and, with grandmother at the wheel, they sped for home.

Unable to find an animal rescue shelter that would take in an injured baby bird, Sam and I decided that we would care for her until she was fully healed and became strong enough to fend for herself; however long this took. If we failed, then we would lay her to rest in the backyard. Either way, she was staying with us.

The boys immediately named her Penguin, after her black-and-white plumage, and that was that.

Our three sons suddenly had a baby sister. Miss Penguin Bloom.





We didn't own a cage and we weren't inclined to get one. Penguin was a wild bird and we didn't want her to grow up to be any other way. We made a simple nest out of an old cane laundry basket and lined this with soft cotton fabric to keep her warm.

It is not easy to look after any sick or injured creature, and this is especially true of a baby bird – as we soon found out. Our little girl was quite a handful. Caring for Penguin, especially during those first few weeks, was a massive commitment.

Initially Penguin had to be fed every two hours. Noah, Oli and Rueben took turns with feeding duty before and after school, while Sam and I took over resident chef and nanny duties throughout the rest of the day.

But while getting Penguin to eat, drink and rest was a real victory, her recovery remained touch and go.

Though her damaged wing was not as badly broken as we'd feared, it seemed unlikely she'd ever be able to fly. She was severely weakened by her fall and prone to illness.

There were many days when Penguin refused her food and appeared so listless we thought we might lose her.

Some evenings, as we tucked her into bed, we wondered if she would survive the night.



Despite the setbacks, we continued to do all we could for the smallest member of our family. We played with her, sang to her and encouraged her to eat well and exercise her injured wing. Over time, with a great deal of patience and a whole lot of love, Penguin grew in stature and confidence.

As an avian toddler her wingspan wasn't especially impressive, and she often resembled a manic fluff-ball with a beak, but we occasionally caught glimpses of the proud airborne goddess she was destined to become.