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INTERMEDIATE
LEVEL
ENGLISH

Bee's Story

Families and the Law
in Australia

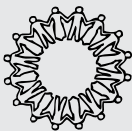


family
peace

Learning Law + Language

BEE'S STORY

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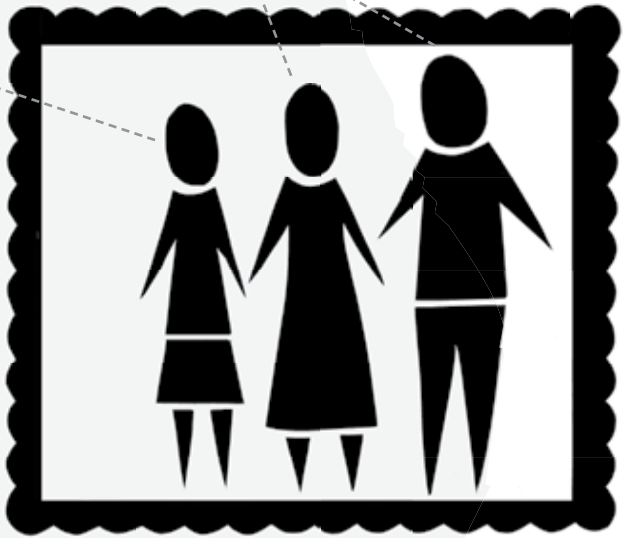
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Introduction

This is Bee's mother,
Matria and father Patri.

This is Bee.



This is Jay. Bee met Jay after she came
to Australia with her parents.

This is a story about family life and law
in Australia.

Chapter 1 – Love and Marriage

Bee was eighteen when she came to Australia with her mother, Matria and father, Patri two years ago. Her parents had been married for twenty-five years.

While Bee was doing Justice Studies at college, she met a young Australian man, Jay, who was studying Horticulture. Although they were from different cultures and had different religions, they spent a lot of time together and were very happy.





After dating for a year, Jay asked, **“Bee, will you live with me?”**

BEE: **“I don’t want to just live with you. I want to be married.”**

JAY: **“I love you, Bee, so, will you marry me?”**

Bee was very excited because she loved Jay and wanted to spend her life with him but she wanted to talk with her parents first.

With a big smile, Bee said, **“Jay, I love you too but let me think about it before I answer you.”**

The next day, Bee told her parents that she wanted to marry Jay. Her parents knew Jay and even though they liked him, they said that she could not marry him. Bee’s parents wanted her to marry someone from their own community and had already chosen a cousin for her.

Bee was upset.

BEE: “In Australia, the law says I can marry when I turn eighteen and I don’t need my parents’ consent.”

Matria and Patri mixed mostly with people from their country and tried to keep their traditions so they got angry with Bee.

PATRI: “That’s not our way! Your parents should choose who you marry! This is the way we were married. It’s how our family have always been married. This is the way it’s done in our culture!”

MATRIA: “He isn’t the same religion or culture! We don’t know his family and we haven’t discussed a dowry. You can’t do this!”

PATRI: “Bee, you must keep your culture.”

BEE: “In Australia, I can even live with a man and have a family without getting married!”



Bee got very upset. She respected her parents but was very sure that she wanted to marry Jay.

She ran out of the house screaming, “I want to spend my life with Jay because I love him! “

She slammed the door behind her.



Bee immediately ran to Jay and told him what her parents had said.

BEE: “Let’s live together and not get married, just like you said. Many people in Australia do it.”

JAY: “No, I love you and want to be with you for the rest of my life but I want everyone to be happy. I want to be friends with your parents. I want to talk to them. Maybe we can change their minds.”

Bee thought about this and agreed with Jay. She loved her parents and respected her culture. A few days later, they went to see Bee’s parents.

PATRI: “Bee, you’re our daughter and must allow us to choose a husband for you.”

MATRIA: “You must marry someone from the same religion and culture. You must keep your heritage and traditions.”

JAY: “I love Bee very much and want to marry her. I won’t try to make Bee change her culture or religion. We’ll teach our children to understand and respect both our cultures and religions. When our children grow up, they can make their own choices.”



BEE: “Things are different in Australia and we have to adjust. We want to get engaged first. We’ll wait at least a year before we get married. Then we’ll be sure this is what we want to do.”

JAY: “We don’t need to spend a lot of money on a wedding. In Australia there’s no need for a dowry or a bride price. We will share the wedding costs.”



Matria and Patri were still unsure so spoke to some wise elders and leaders from their community. However, they had different views and opinions.

ELDER 1: “Children must obey their parents even when they are over eighteen. We must follow our traditions. We should marry within our own religion. We must not forget who we are! We must remember where we come from! We must keep our old ways! We must keep our culture!”

ELDER 2: “We need to understand the customs and laws in Australia. Here parents cannot force their children to marry anyone. Bee’s over eighteen and can marry any man she chooses. There’s much more freedom here and young people will just go and live together if they want to. Parents should give their advice and always be there to help and support their children. We have to adjust to a new life in Australia otherwise the family could break up. Respect is the most important. If Jay’s honest and hard working then he’ll make a good husband.”

After that, Matria and Patri considered everything.

Patri and Matria loved their daughter and wanted grandchildren.

PATRI: “Jay, we know you’re a good man. We know that you love Bee and want to make her happy. You’ve promised to let her keep her cultural traditions and religion. We want Bee to be happy so we agree to the marriage.”



This made Bee and Jay very happy. Soon after, when they got engaged, Jay gave Bee an engagement ring. Then they had an engagement party to celebrate. The ring was not expensive because they wanted to save their money.

Bee and Jay had a big wedding and were very happy.





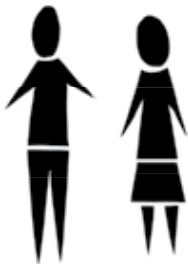
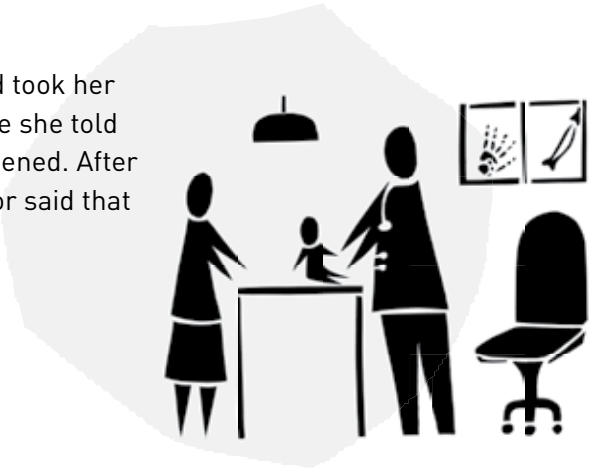
Chapter 2 – Raising Children

A year after Bee and Jay married, their baby daughter, Kayelle was born. Jay had a good job and worked long hours so Bee often felt lonely and scared about raising their baby daughter by herself.

One day, Kayelle fell out of the cot and badly bruised her face when the safety rail broke.



Bee was very worried and took her baby to the hospital where she told the doctor what had happened. After an examination, the doctor said that Kayelle would be alright.



JAY: “I fixed the safety rail on the cot. Everything will be fine now.”

BEE: “I’m scared. I heard on the television that the government can take children away if parents do not look after them properly or if someone harms them.”

JAY: “Bee, go to the local community centre to see if you can find out more.”



The staff at the community centre told Bee about a parents' group that met regularly to discuss problems with children. Bee was shy but joined the group that had many parents from different countries. The parents said there was no need to worry about the government. They talked about different ways to care for their children and how to teach them to behave without smacking. Bee was given some information sheets called '*Tools for Parents*' to take home and read.

**TOOLS
FOR
PARENTS**

Bee looked forward to the meeting each week, to spend time with the other parents, share lunch and watch the children happily play together.

BEE: “Where I come from, we smack children if they do something very naughty but I don’t smack Kayelle because I don’t want to hurt her.”

MOTHER 1: “My son had a friend at our house one day and they were fighting over a toy. I asked them in a calm voice, “Stop fighting please”. They kept fighting so I told them they had to sit apart for ten minutes. Then we talked about why fighting is not okay. They played together happily after that.”

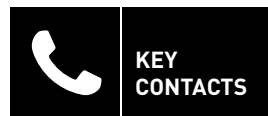
MOTHER 2: “I left my children, aged five and seven, in the car while I went shopping for an hour. Someone saw them alone in the car and called the government child protection office. I got legal advice to make sure I knew my rights.”

Hearing this, Bee got scared that child protection officers would visit her and talk to her about Kayelle’s accident.

MOTHER 2: “The child protection officers worked with me and taught me about Australian parenting laws. Legal Aid and the Community Legal Centre also gave me free legal help. Sometimes parents are worried about the law. The Legal Aid people told me it’s a good idea to take notes of things that happen and keep copies of any documents. They said I should get legal advice before I sign anything and I can also ask for an interpreter.”

Bee was glad with this friendly, supportive group and received a ‘*Key Contacts*’ list of useful telephone numbers.

Child protection officers did not visit Bee about Kayelle falling out of her cot.





Chapter 3 – Marriage Problems

When Bee and Jay's daughter, Kayelle, was four years old, Jay worked in a plant nursery while Bee looked after their daughter at home.



One day, Jay's boss told him, **"Jay, we didn't get the contract with the Council so I can't afford to employ you anymore. I'm very sorry because you're a good worker."**

This made Jay very upset because he didn't know how he'd support his family.



He went home and told Bee, **"The boss laid me off because we didn't get the Council contract and there's not enough work."**

BEE: **"Don't worry, we'll work something out. We're both young and healthy. I did Justice Studies at college so I'll look for a job too."**

Bee looked for employment and one day she excitedly hurried home to Jay.

BEE: “I’ve found a great, well-paid job supporting young people in court. I can work and you can stay home and look after Kayelle.”

JAY: “But I am the man! I should work and earn the money and you should stay at home and look after Kayelle!”

After a long silence, he added, “Umm I suppose it’ll be okay for a short time while I look for another job.”



The next week, Bee started work and enjoyed her job because she met a lot of new people and learnt more about Australia. She was very good at her job.



Jay liked to cook the meals but was not good at cleaning the house. Bee tried to teach him how to clean but he got angry and upset. Jay spent a lot of time with his mates. He took Kayelle with him but she often became naughty because she was bored so Jay shouted at her to try to make her behave.

When Bee got home from work, she was very tired but she had to clean the house. Jay didn't help her so Bee became angry. Kayelle got very upset when her parents argued.

One day when Bee got home, Jay was watching television and the house was in a mess again. Bee got angrier than ever so she shouted at him,

“Why are you sitting there doing nothing? Why haven't you cleaned the house?”

JAY: “I've had a hard day with Kayelle. She's been really naughty. I still can't find work. Just let me watch TV in peace.”



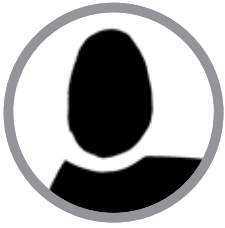
Jay was upset because he couldn't find a job so he liked to watch sport on television to help forget his problems. Bee and Jay got angrier at each other and started shouting louder. This made Kayelle cry.

Jay got so angry that he stood up and slapped Bee across the face. Bee fell to the floor, crying. Straight away she got up, grabbed Kayelle and ran to her mother's house.



When Bee arrived, Matria made her daughter a cup of tea and they put Kayelle to bed.

Jay was shocked by his behaviour. It made him feel very bad because he loved Bee and Kayelle. He wanted to go after them to bring them home but was too ashamed.



After Kayelle was asleep, Bee called her best friend, Lily who asked if she wanted to see a doctor but Bee said,

“No, I’m OK. I’m just upset.”



Lily came over and hugged Bee.

Later, Bee asked Lily for advice because she knew more about Australian law and culture.

LILY: “There are services to help people leave domestic violence situations. Your safety is the most important thing. There are even safe shelters you can go to. In Australia, family violence is police business not family business. Bee, you should call the police.”

BEE: “No, I’m okay. I just want time to think. I’m upset.”

LILY: “Well, you should go and get some help from Legal Aid.”

MATRIA: “What can Legal Aid do?”

LILY: “Legal Aid gives free advice about the law.”



BEE: “What should I do?”

MATRIA: “I’m very upset that Jay hit you, Bee, but think carefully. I like Jay. He is a good husband and father and he loves you both very much.”

Lily held Bee’s hand and said,

“Bee, everyone has the right to feel safe. No one should be abused.”

Bee and Kayelle stayed with Matria while Bee thought things over. Lily downloaded some *Fact Sheets* about family law from the internet and gave them to Bee to look at. Jay phoned Matria's house every day because he was very worried about his wife and daughter. Bee told him she needed some time to think about what had happened.



**FACT
SHEET**



A week later, Bee told her mother and Lily,

"I don't want to separate from Jay. I love him and I want our marriage to work. I want Kayelle to be with her father too. Lily, I promise I'll call you or the police if I need to."

LILY: "You could both go to counselling services. They can help you to talk about your problems. I'll give you a list of telephone numbers."

The next day, Bee and Kayelle returned home to Jay.

When Jay saw his wife and daughter, he gave them both a warm hug to welcome them.

JAY: “I’m so happy you came home. I was very worried. I’m so sorry for what I did. I promise it won’t happen again. I don’t want to lose either of you. I love you!”



Bee and Jay talked for a long time about their problems.

BEE: “We know we both love each other but we don’t talk about how we feel. We need to understand and respect each other better and share things more.”





They agreed to go to counselling. They learnt how to talk to each other more and what to do when they felt upset and angry. Jay also learnt that it was important for him to look after Kayelle and clean the house. After this, they spent more time together as a family. Jay kept looking for another job but also learnt how to clean the house.



BEE: “We really love your cooking, Jay. I hope you will keep cooking for us even after you find another job.”

JAY: “Of course I will. How could I refuse the two beautiful ladies in my life?”

Jay and Bee were excited about their future together and Kayelle was happy.

Chapter 4 – Teaching Teenagers

After sixteen years of happy marriage, Bee and Jay had a fifteen-old-year daughter, Kayelle and a four-year-old son, Emmenn.

Bee worked part-time as a court support worker with young people and looked after Emmenn at home when he was not at kindergarten. Jay worked in a plant nursery near their house. With both of them working and two children to look after, Bee and Jay were very busy.

Kayelle went to high school where she had friends from many different countries but she especially liked Patrick, a boy in her class. After school, she spent time at the local shopping centre with Patrick and her friends but told her parents she was studying at her friend's house.



One day, Bee met her friend, Lily, at the shopping centre for a coffee.

LILY: “Your children are growing up fast. I often see Kayelle at the shopping centre after school with some friends. I’ve seen her holding hands with one of the boys.”



When Bee went home and told Jay, they were both very upset that Kayelle had lied to them. Bee was worried about how she and Jay would handle this situation so she called her mother, Matria, to get her advice.

After her husband died, Matria helped with the children so Bee and Jay both respected her opinion.

When Kayelle got home after school, Bee and Jay were very angry. Her grandmother was also disappointed with her.

JAY: “You told us that you were studying at your friend’s house after school but someone saw you at the shopping centre. Even worse, you were seen holding hands with a boy! We trusted you but you lied to all of us! We are very angry!”

MATRIA: “You’re too young to spend time with a boy!”

KAYELLE: “You still don’t understand this country! I’m not doing anything wrong!”



JAY: “You still have to obey your parents! You’re grounded for a week because you lied to us! You can only leave the house to go to school!”

BEE: “You cannot see your friends and you must come home straight after school each day.”

Kayelle was very upset because her parents were taking her freedom away.

The next day at school, her friends talked about going to the shopping centre. Kayelle was too embarrassed to say she was grounded so she went with them.

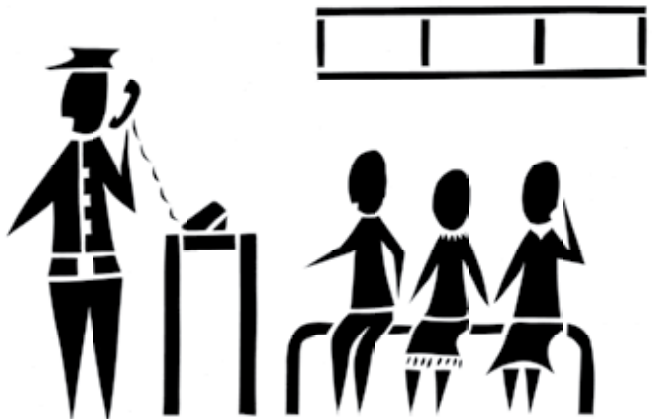


Their friends told them,
**“We’re going to steal some
DVDs. Look out and warn
us if someone comes.”**

Kayelle was scared
but agreed.

A security guard caught the group and called the police.

When the police arrived, they called Jay so he left work
and hurried to the shopping centre. The police questioned
Kayelle but just gave her a caution.



Kayelle was very ashamed. There was a tense, uncomfortable silence in the car as Jay drove his daughter home. When they got home, Bee and Jay talked about what they should do. They agreed that there should be a family meeting and Matria should be involved.



KAYELLE: “I’m sorry I lied. I’m sorry I got into trouble with the police.”

BEE: “If you lie to us, we cannot trust you. You are grounded for two months and will have to do extra chores. We’ll give you more freedom and independence when you show that we can trust you.”

KAYELLE: “Can I still see Patrick after my grounding is over? It wasn’t our idea to steal. We just wanted to fit in with our friends.”

JAY: “You must follow the rules and show we can trust you. Then you can bring Patrick home to meet us.”

Kayelle burst into tears as she hugged her father. Bee and Jay wanted Kayelle to understand and respect them as parents so they made plans to build better family communication. Everyone agreed that in the future, they would discuss differences before conflict started.

MATRIA: “Maybe Patrick should speak with the community elders. I am worried he might be a bad influence on Kayelle.”

The next day, Jay called Patrick to come to their house to talk about the situation.

JAY: “Kayelle got into trouble because she was with you.”

PATRICK: “I’m very sorry. I know it was wrong. I have learnt a big lesson. I want to see Kayelle and spend time with her. Please, can I see her?”

JAY: “Kayelle is not allowed to see you for two months and she has to do extra chores at home. She must also spend more time on her school work.”

PATRICK: “Please, I’ll do anything you say. Let me see Kayelle.”

JAY: “You can see her in two months time, on one condition.”

PATRICK: “Yes, what is it?”

JAY: “You have to talk to our community elders.”

PATRICK: “Okay, I will. I want to spend time with Kayelle.”

Everyone felt that they had learnt something important.

Matria was proud of how her family had learnt to live in harmony in Australia.

* * *

