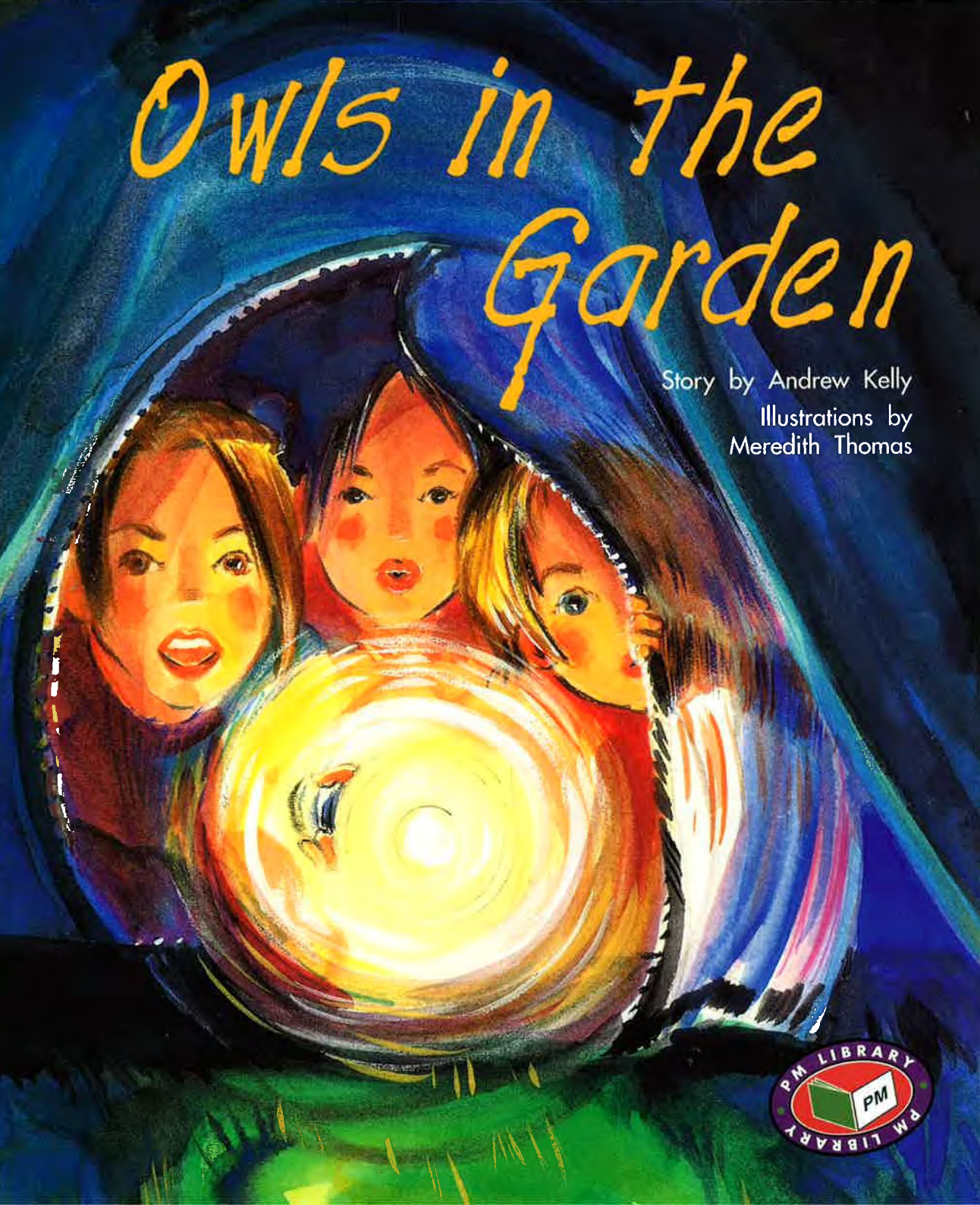

Owls in the Garden
Story by Andrew Kelly
Illustrations by Meredith Thomas
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Katie and her two best friends, Tring and Grace, put their sleeping bags inside Katie's new tent. "Imagine!" said Tring. "We're going to sleep outside for a whole night on our own. It'll be the best thing we've done all year."

"I can hardly wait for it to get dark," said Katie.



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The back door banged.
Katie's big brother Martin,
and his dog Rover, came out.
"You girls won't last five minutes
in that tent," said Martin.
"You'll be running inside crying,
'Mummy, Mummy! Something scared me.'"

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"I'm not scared of anything,"
Katie told them all at dinner that night.

"I'm not even afraid of the dark," said Grace.

"Nor am I," said Tring.

But none of them sounded very sure.

Martin laughed loudly.
"Do you know about the ghost owl
that swoops down at night and grabs..."

"Stop that, Martin!" said Mum.

But Martin went on,
"...grabs little girls and eats..."

"Martin!" said Dad.
"You heard your mother. Stop it."



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When it was dark,
the girls changed into their track suits
and went out to the tent.
Katie shone her torch all around.

"I've got some chocolate," said Grace.
"Let's eat it now."

The girls made the chocolate
last for as long as they could.

Tring showed the others
how to make shadow animals with their hands
in the beam of Katie's torch.

"That wolf's head is really scary," said Grace.

"I'm going to go inside and clean my teeth,"
said Katie.

"We'll come, too," said Tring and Grace.



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The girls ran across the lawn
and went into the house.

Martin laughed when he saw them, and said,
"I knew you wouldn't last five minutes!"

"We're just cleaning our teeth!" said Katie.

"And then we're going straight back," said Tring.



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