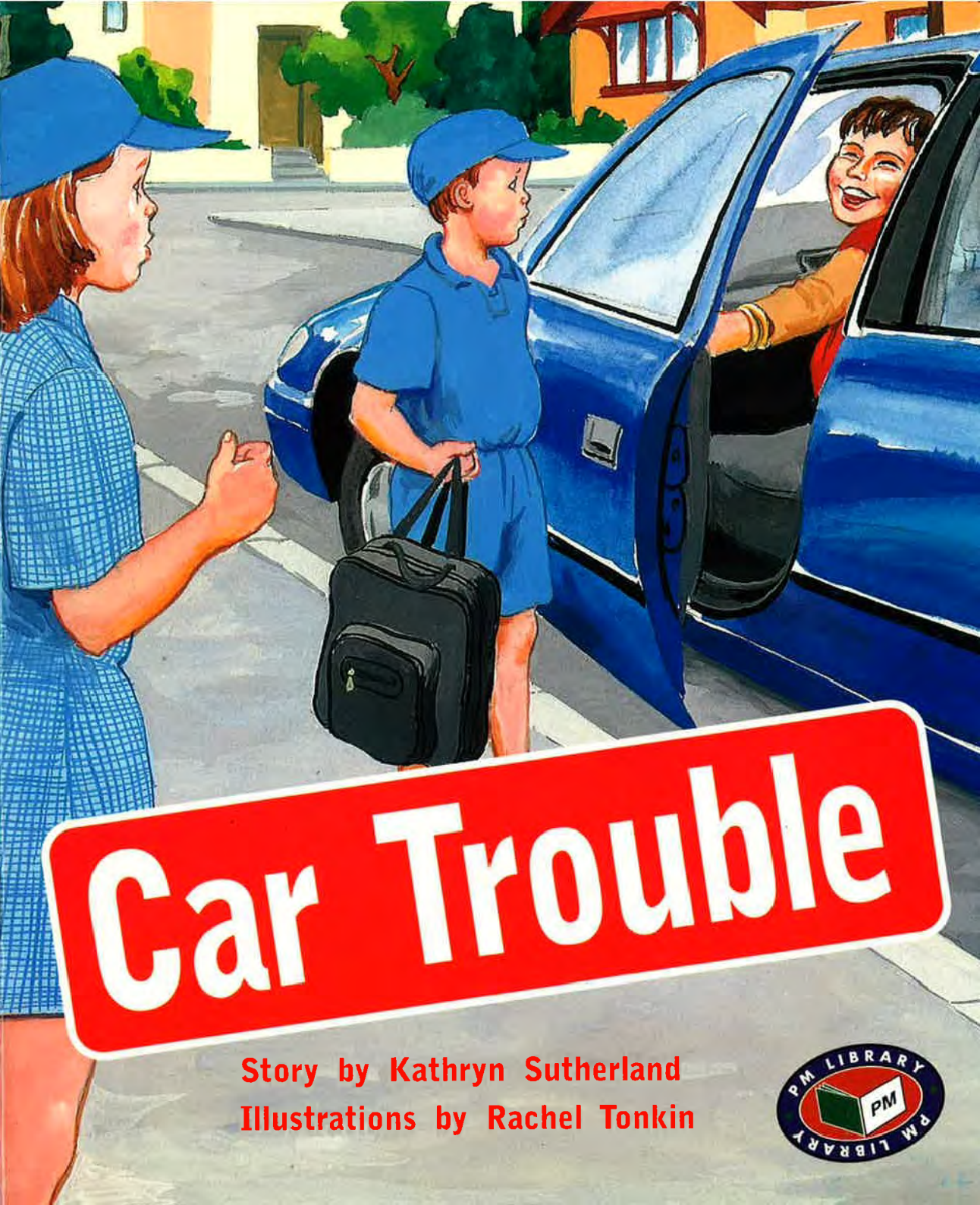


Car Trouble

Story by Kathryn Sutherland
Illustrations by Rachel Tonkin

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The bell rang loudly
at the end of the school day.
Children and parents were everywhere,
and cars came and went.

But when they had all gone,
Claire and her little brother, Lewis,
were still there, waiting for Dad.
He was late—again.

"Dad's probably had car trouble," said Lewis.
"Let's go back to the classroom
and wait with my teacher."

"No, let's wait here today," said Claire.
"Then we'll be able to see Dad coming."

Lewis wasn't sure that this was a good idea.
"But Miss Greco says we should wait with her
if our parents are late," he argued.

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"It doesn't matter. Dad won't be long," said Claire. "We'll stand here by the gate."



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Minutes later, a blue car
came around the corner.
"That's not Dad," said Lewis.

"No, but it looks like Aunty Jane's car,"
said Claire. "Maybe she's picking us up."

"That's not Aunty Jane in the car,"
said Lewis.

The car slowed down. The driver stared
at Claire and Lewis. Then she drove off.



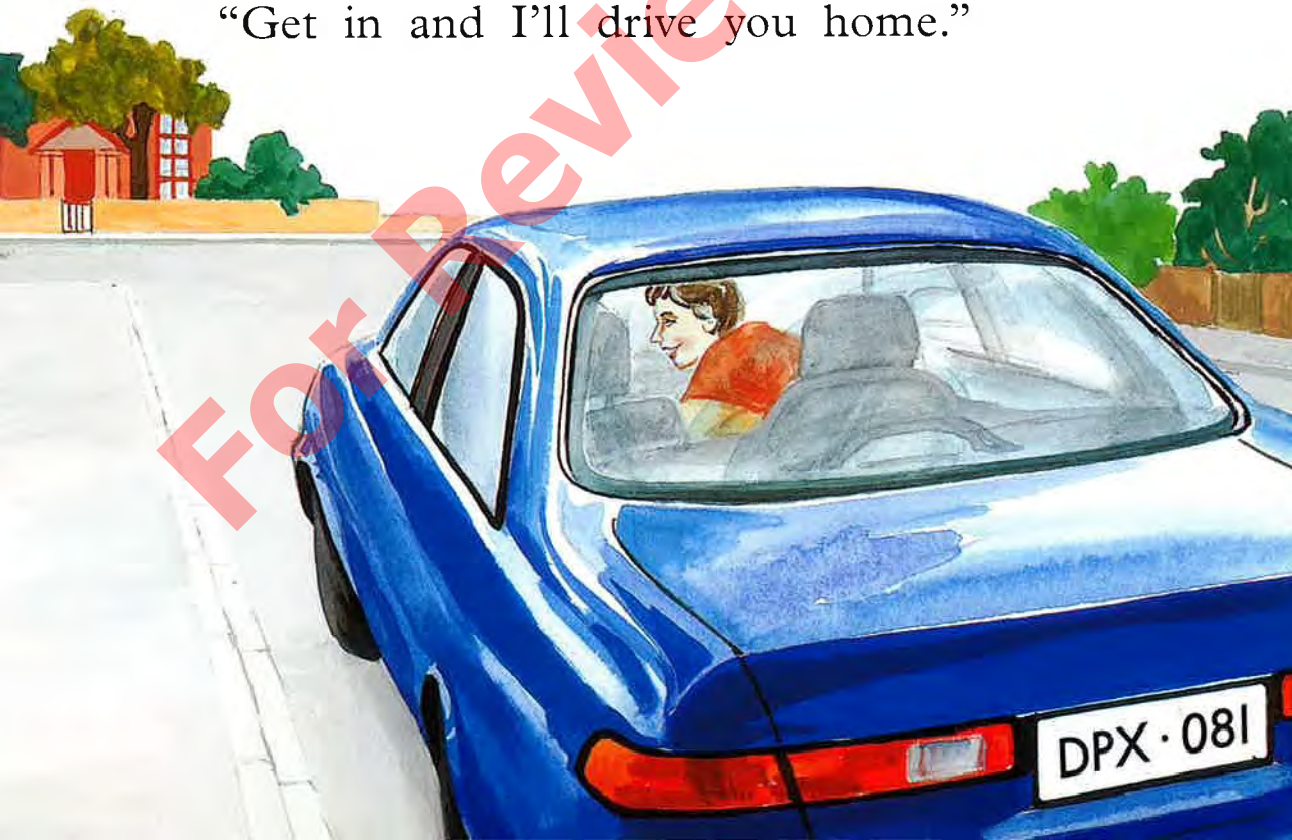
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Soon the same car came past again, and this time it stopped.

The driver wound down the window and called to Claire and Lewis.
"Who are you waiting for?" she asked.

"Our dad," Lewis told her.

"Your dad asked me to pick you up," replied the woman.
"Get in and I'll drive you home."



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Claire didn't like the sound of that.
She felt funny inside—uncomfortable.
Dad would never send a stranger
to pick them up.
But it was hard to say *no* to a grown-up.

Lewis picked up his bag
and walked towards the woman's car.
Claire called out to him,
"No, Lewis! Come back here!"

He started to turn back,
but the woman spoke softly to him.
"Come on, love.
You'll come with me, won't you?"

She opened the car door.

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