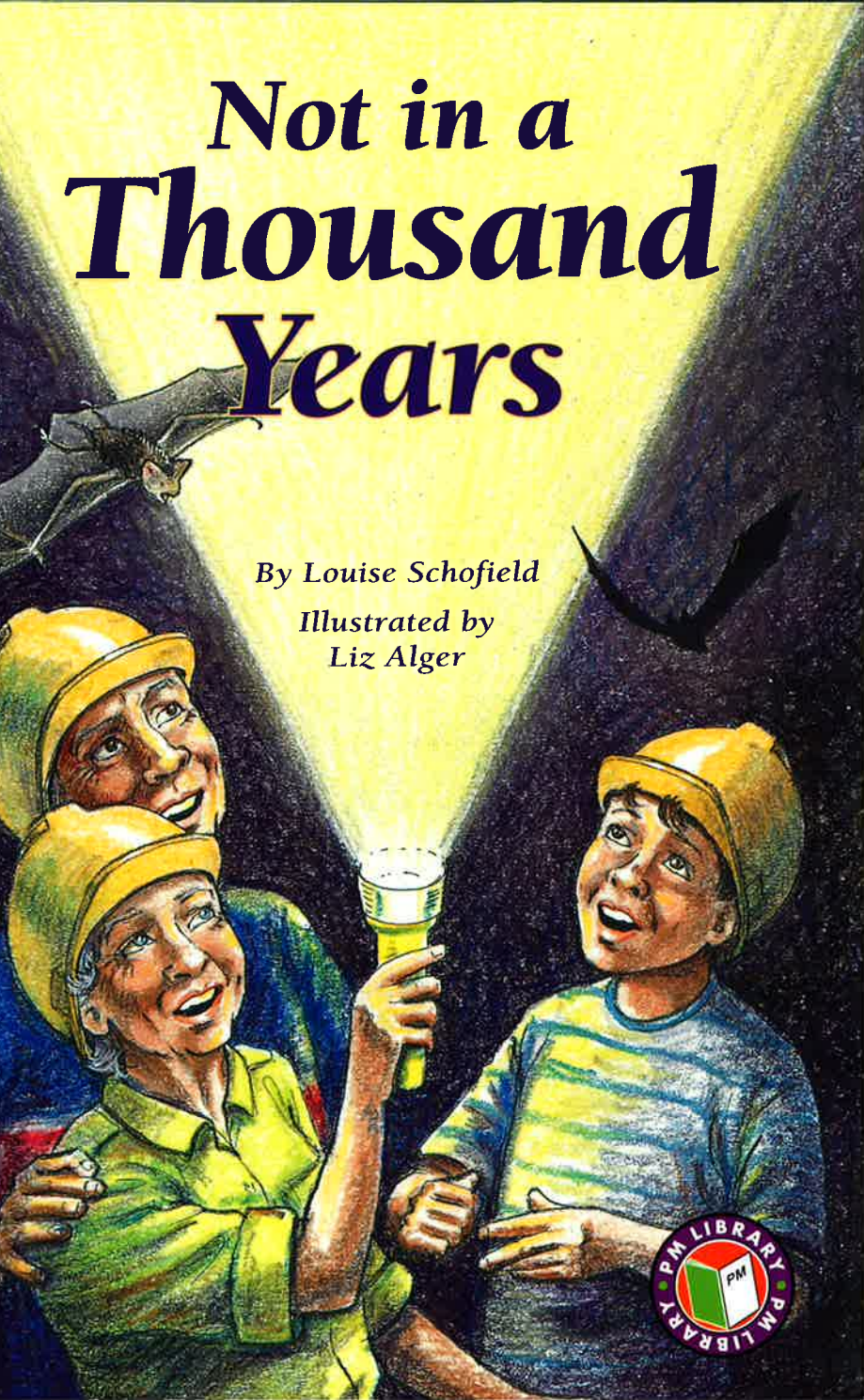
Not in a Thousand Years

By Louise Schofield

Illustrated by Liz Alger



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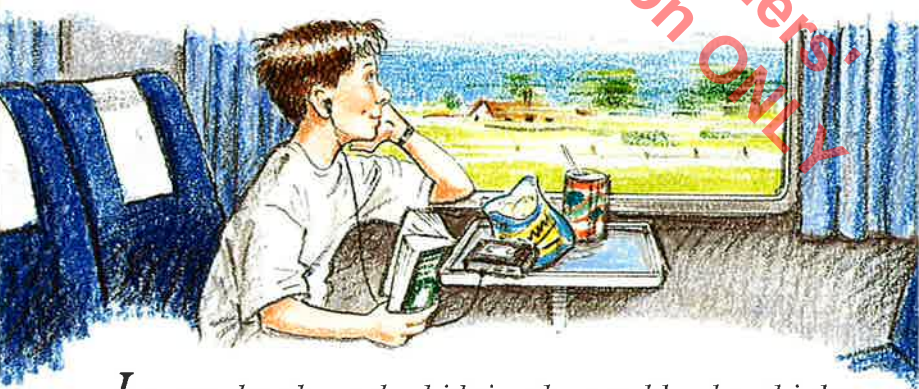
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Chapter One

Marg, Pop and Monster



I must be the only kid in the world who thinks that visiting your grandparents is the most exciting thing you can do in your school holidays. But then, I'm the only person I know who has grandparents like mine.

Marg and Pop are different from everyone else I know. Sometimes I think they're a bit crazy, but they're THE BEST and, occasionally, I wish I lived with them all the time.

This time Marg and Pop were taking me camping. They had promised to show me something extra special. It was going to be great fun! I couldn't wait…

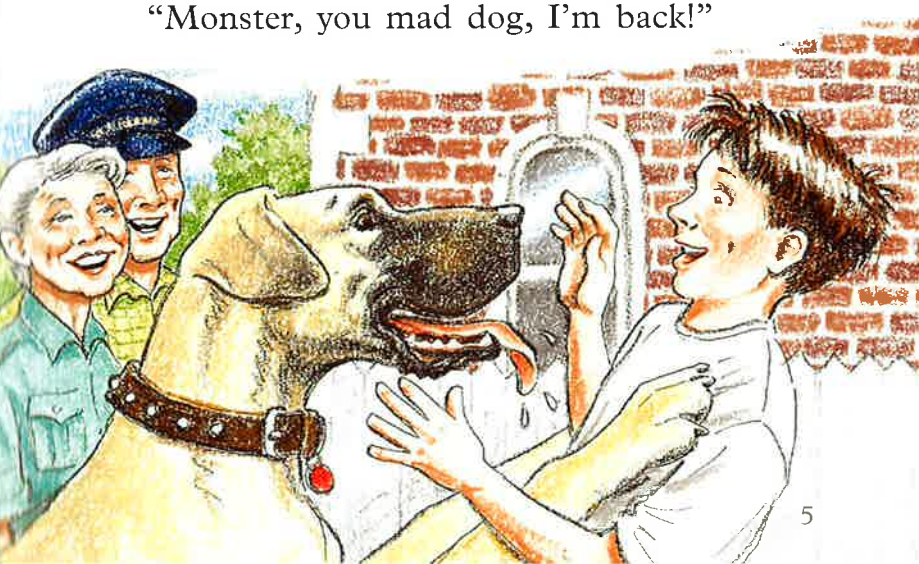
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Marg and Pop were waiting at the station when my train pulled in. You couldn't miss them. As usual, Marg was wearing the most amazing clothes. This time she wore one of her 'ready-for-anything' safari suits. Not only was the colour funny, but she had so many gadgets hanging off her belt, you'd think she was ready for battle.

Pop was wearing an old station-master's cap from his famous hat collection. He likes to wear a different hat every day. Mum calls him the Mad Hatter.

Marg and Pop's dog, Monster, was there as well. As usual he was excited to see me.

"Monster, you mad dog, I'm back!"



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Once Monster had finished licking me to death, we piled into Marg and Pop's truck and headed for town to buy supplies for the camping trip. We needed lots of food.

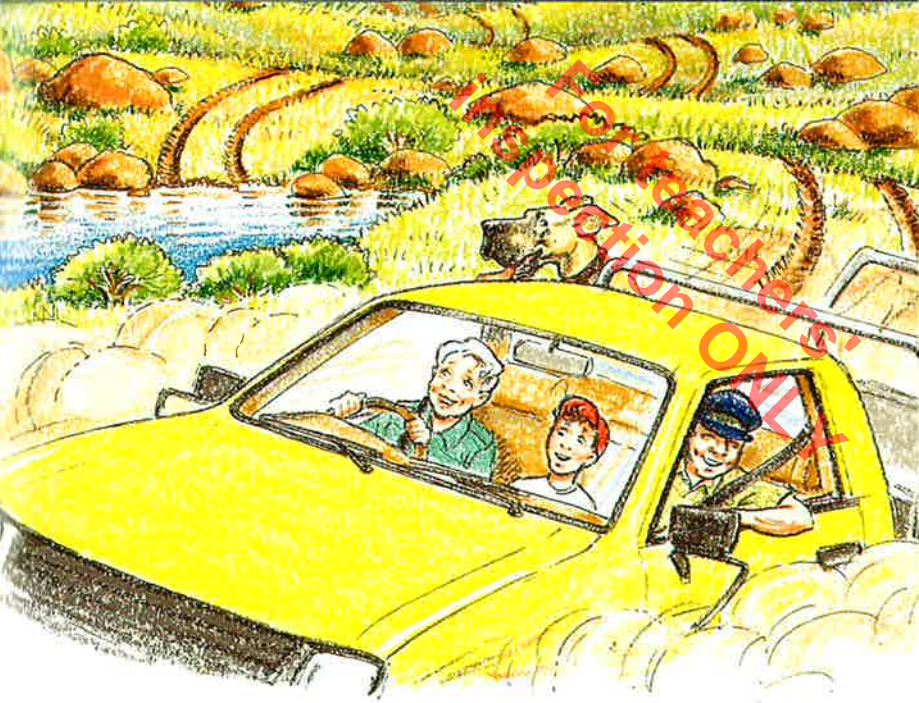
"Choose anything you like, Jack," said Marg, grinning — she knew I had a bit of a sweet tooth.

At the butcher, I ordered sausages and chicken. At the supermarket, I ordered chocolate, biscuits, cakes ... and some fruit, too.

Pop selected a huge watermelon, the size of a dinosaur egg.

"You always need a big watermelon when you go camping," he said, giving me a wink.





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Next stop was Marg and Pop's farm. I never knew how we were going to get there — Marg always drove and she never liked to drive the same way twice in one week. She said that was boring.

Sometimes the trip to the farm would be quick and direct, and other times it would take hours while Marg drove along back roads, through small lanes and over forgotten bridges — even across paddocks if no one was looking.

But today Marg took her favourite short cut. It was an interesting ride!

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That night, after dinner, we played cards. We had a great time, but every now and then Pop would look at me and smile like a Cheshire Cat.

"You'll never guess what our surprise will be, Jack," he said with a wink. "Not in a *thousand* years."

"Now, don't go giving him hints, dear," said Marg.

When I went to bed, I couldn't sleep for wondering what the surprise would be. But I knew they'd *never* tell me. I would just have to wait.

