



# A Surprise New Friend



“Pat! Hurry up, or we’ll never get started!”

Pat McKenzie zipped up the top of her backpack and carried it out to the driveway. Dad was running around, checking that everything was packed into the boot of the car. He kept looking at his watch and frowning.

“Are you ready?” Grandma came out of the front door, with a package in her hand.

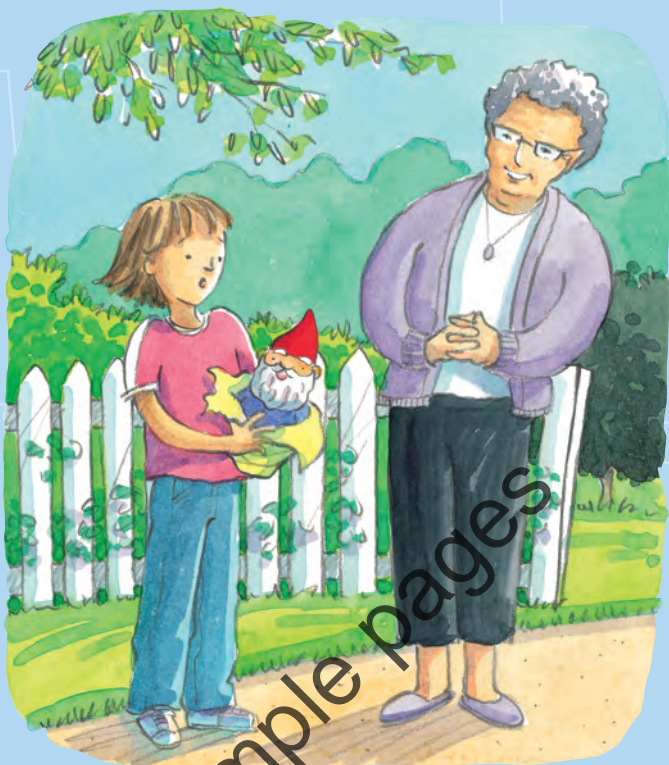
“Yes,” said Pat sadly. “But I don’t want to go. Who wants to drive around Australia anyway? It’s going to be boring in the back seat by myself. I wish you could come with us.”

Grandma shook her head. “I can’t,” she said. “I’m too busy here! You wouldn’t want me to miss my lawn bowls tournament, would you?” She handed the package to Pat. “But I’ve got something for you.”

“What is it?” asked Pat.

“Why don’t you open it and find out?” said Grandma.

Pat tore off the wrapping paper. Inside was a little concrete man, with a long white beard and a cheerful smile. Pat was puzzled. “I don’t understand,” she said.



Grandma smiled mischievously.  
“Pat, meet Henry,” she said. “Henry  
is my special friend.”

“But he’s just a garden gnome,  
Grandma!” said Pat.

“Not quite,” said Grandma. “He’s  
a *travelling* gnome. We’ve had lots  
of adventures. Now it’s your turn.”

“I don’t understand,” said Pat.

“With Henry for company, I promise that you will have a great time,” said Grandma. “Whenever you visit a new place, I want you and Henry to write me a postcard and tell me all about it.”

“But how can Henry do that?” asked Pat. “He’s just a garden gnome.”

Grandma grinned and gave Pat a big hug. “Trust me!” she said. “And enjoy yourself!”

Pat shrugged. “I’ll try,” she said.

