

The Brownie Story

*This is the traditional Brownie story.
It's been told to Brownies for years and years!*

Once upon a time, two sisters named Mary and Betty lived in a little house in the North of England. They lived with their father and grandmother. Their father was a tailor who worked hard all day. At night, he tried his best to keep the house clean. But Mary and Betty just played all day.

"Bairns are a burden," said the tailor one day. (Children were called "bairns" in the North of England, you know.)

"Bairns are a blessing," said the grandmother.

"Not my bairns," said the tailor. "They do not help me."

"But they are not bad bairns, my dear," said the grandmother. "They are as playful as little squirrels."

"And about as helpful," said the tailor.

Just then, the door flew open. Mary and Betty ran in. Their arms were full of moss and acorns, which they threw on the floor. "Take that outside," said the tailor.

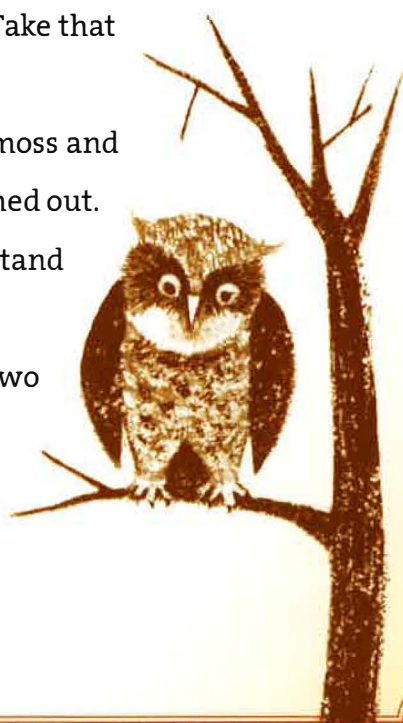
"Betty, you take it out!" said Mary. Betty kicked the moss and acorns across the room and out the door. The tailor stormed out.

"You pick them up, Mary," said Betty. "I don't understand why Father is angry."

Their grandmother answered. "He is tired, and you two do not help him."

"But what could we do, Granny?" the girls asked.

"Many things, my dears. Ah, what this house needs is a brownie or two!"



"What are brownies, Granny?"

"Very helpful little persons. They came before the family was up. They cleaned, watered the flowers, and helped in other ways. They always ran off before we could see them. But often we heard them dancing and laughing."

"Oh, Granny! Where are they now?"

"Only the Wise Old Owl knows, my dear."

"Who is the Wise Old Owl, Granny?"

"I don't know, my dear."

That night Mary kept thinking of the brownies. "There is an owl living in the big tree near the pond," she thought. "If she is the Wise Old Owl, she can tell me where to find a brownie."

Mary got up and ran to the tree. The owl was sitting on a high branch, so she climbed up. "Please," said Mary, "where can I find a brownie?"

"I know of two brownies," said the Owl.

"Tell me, tell me—where do they live?"

"In your house," said the Owl.

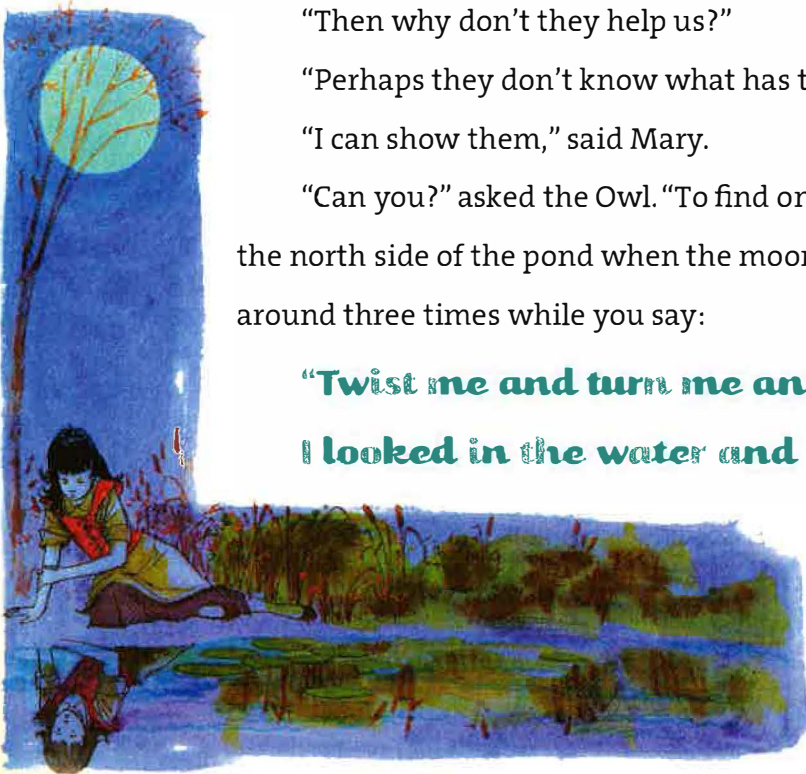
"Then why don't they help us?"

"Perhaps they don't know what has to be done," said the Owl.

"I can show them," said Mary.

"Can you?" asked the Owl. "To find one of the brownies, go to the north side of the pond when the moon is out. Turn yourself around three times while you say:

**"Twist me and turn me and show me the elf,
I looked in the water and saw _____ . . ."**



"Then look into the pond to see the brownie. You will think of the word that ends the magic rhyme."

Mary climbed down and ran to the pond. She turned around three times while she said the rhyme. Then she looked into the pond, but she only saw her own face!

"Why, there is no brownie, just me," she said. "And there is no word that seems to rhyme with elf. Helf . . . Jelf . . . Melf . . . How silly!"

Mary looked into the pond again. "I am supposed to see a brownie and I see only myself! Myself? How strange. I have the rhyme, but no brownie!" So back Mary went to the tree.

"What did you see in the pond?" said the Owl.

"I saw nothing but myself," said Mary.

"Go home and speak to Betty about it," said the Owl. "Then, if you find the brownies, come to our magic Brownie Ring. There all the brownies talk about the helpful things they have done. I help them find new things to do."

Mary was surprised. "Brownies meet here in these woods?"

"Yes," said the Owl. "Every time the moon is full, you will hear the call to the Brownie Ring:

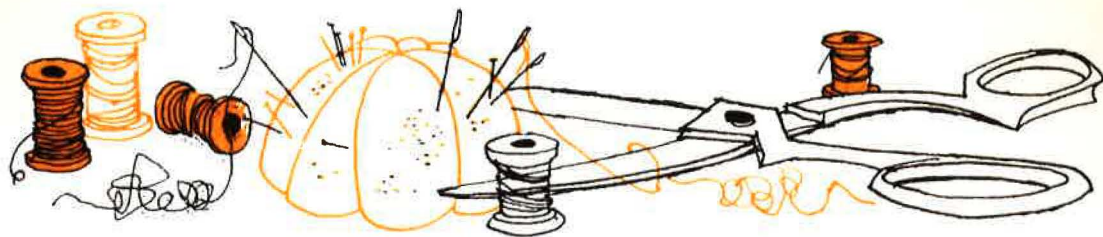
Round and round and round about,

Turn about and in and out.

Come into the Brownie Ring,

Ready for most anything!"





Mary hurried home. She woke Betty and told her what had happened. They both laughed out loud when they realized who the brownies were!

They tiptoed down to the kitchen and did every bit of work they could find. When their father came in, he looked around and rubbed his eyes. The table was set. The floor was clean. The room was as bright and shiny as a new penny.

“Granny! Mary! Betty!” he called out.

“Our brownies have come back!”

For many mornings after that, the tailor tried to get up early enough to thank the brownies. But he was never able to catch them at their work.

Early one morning, he heard singing. “It must be the brownies,” he thought. In the kitchen, he saw Mary and Betty dancing around the room.

“What have we here?” the tailor asked. “Where are the brownies?”

“Here!” said Mary and Betty.

When Granny heard the noise, she came down, too. “Bairns are a blessing,” said Granny to the tailor. “I told you so.”

And ever after the tailor’s brownies were the joy of his life. Every day they found more things to do to brighten their home.

Sometimes he wondered how they learned to do so much. But he never found out. For he never saw them creeping out to join the other brownies in the magic Brownie Ring deep in the woods.



Excerpt from Girl Scout Brownie Handbook

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