

Flying into Shali's Desert Home

Brownie friends Campbell, Jamila, and Alejandra played in the sunshine in the park in their hometown of Green Falls. Jam and Ali—those were their nicknames—sang Campbell's new jump-rope song. It went like this:

The girls jump-roped to the song over and over.

Alejandra finally stopped to catch her breath.

"Campbell, it's time for a song with *your* name in it," she said.

"Didn't you say that your name is Scottish?" Jamila asked. "What are girls like in Scotland? Do you think they sing jump rope songs?"

Campbell laughed. "Yes, my name is Scottish. But I don't really know much about Scotland."

Alejandra grinned. "I know who does!" she said

"Me, too!" said Jamila. Then they all raised their arms, jiggled their bracelets, and called out:

*Twist me and turn me and show me the elf.
I looked in the mirror and saw . . . myself.*



Twist Me and Turn Me . . .



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

Those words with the fill-in-the-blank at the end are part of the earliest Girl Scout Brownie story—and of every Brownie story since. Brownies who are all grown up still remember those beloved lines. When you're older, you may find yourself remembering them, too!

Poof! Their good friend, Brownie Elf, appeared.
"Scotland?" she asked. "You know a lot about Scotland!"
But the girls were startled. Their friend stood in the doorway of something very strange.
"What is *that*?" Campbell pointed to the big, colorful *thing* behind Brownie Elf. It was sleek and silvery but all puffed up. Was it a giant, silver balloon? No! It had red wheels and a purple door, and yellow skis underneath. To top it off, there was a cherry-red chimney and a big white umbrella that shaded the roof!
"Is it a giant banana split?" Alejandra giggled.
"A rocket?" asked Jamila.
Grandmother Elf popped her head out the door.
"It's my *bookmobile*! It's full of books. I zip all over the world in it, taking books to girls. In Scotland, I'm a librarian, you know."

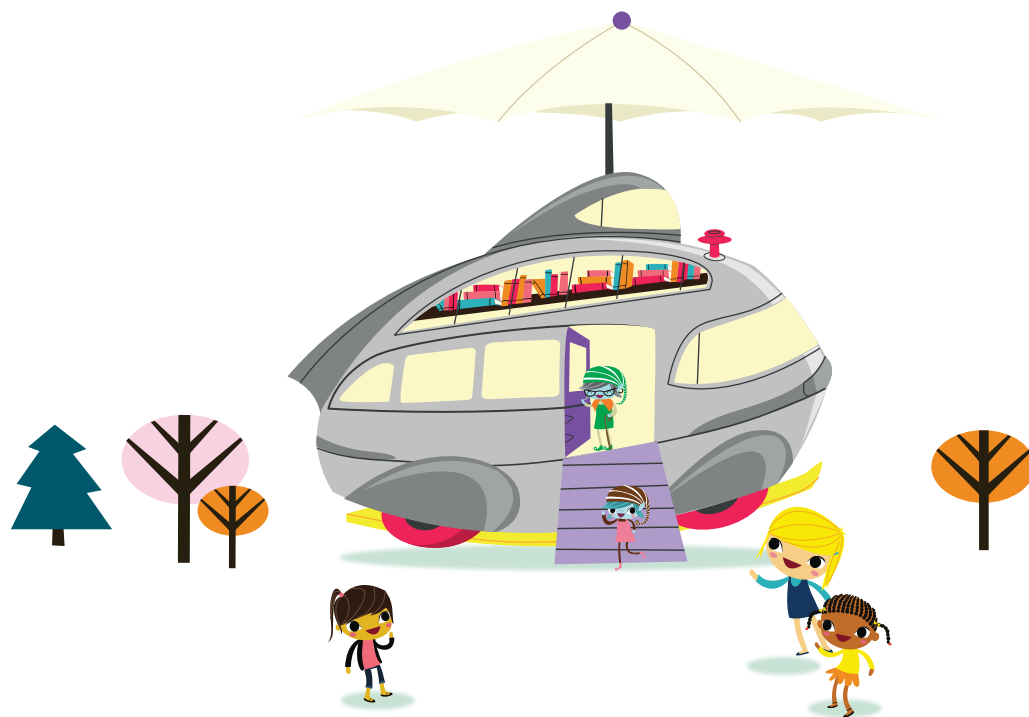
The girls ran to greet their visitors. Grandmother Elf brought out a tray with a teapot and a plate of cookies.
"Care for tea and biscuits?" she asked.

"*Biscuits*, those are cookies in Scotland!" Jamila said.

"And Scottish girls are called *lasses*," Campbell said.

"Ah, you *do* know something about Scotland," said Brownie Elf. "What about other countries? Would you like to meet other girls in places far, far away?"

The girls all talked at once. "Oh, yes!" "The world?" "The whole world?" "Where will we go?"





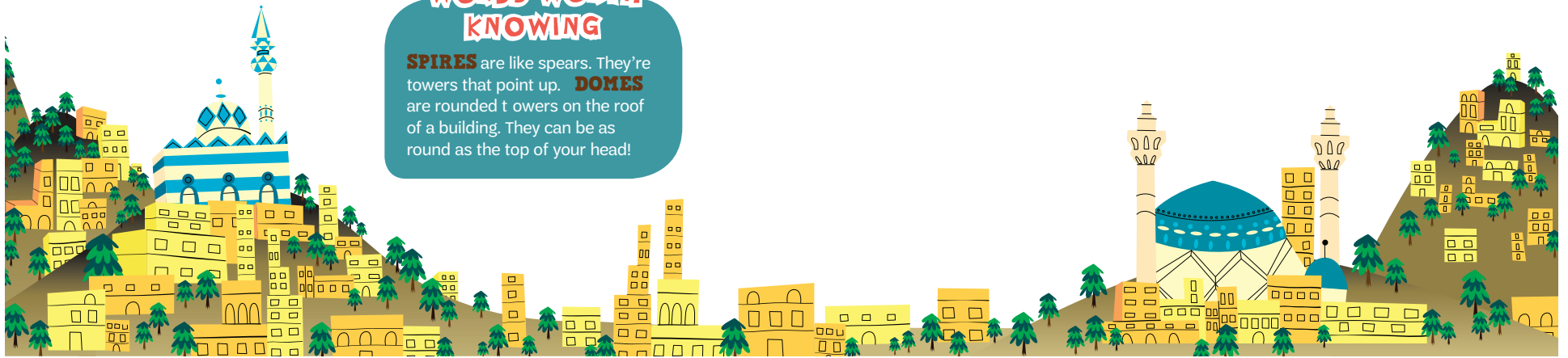
Campbell jumped up. “The library!” she yelled. They didn’t have to go far! Grandmother Elf’s bookmobile was filled with books. Laptops and electronic reading screens were in every corner. There were comfy chairs and tables, too. The walls were hung with photos of girls from all around the world. The Brownie friends opened one book after another. They used the computers to search for more books. Jamila found one about a faraway land called Jordan. “It has cities, deserts—and girls like us,” she said. They all leaned in to look. Then they nodded their heads. “Yes!”

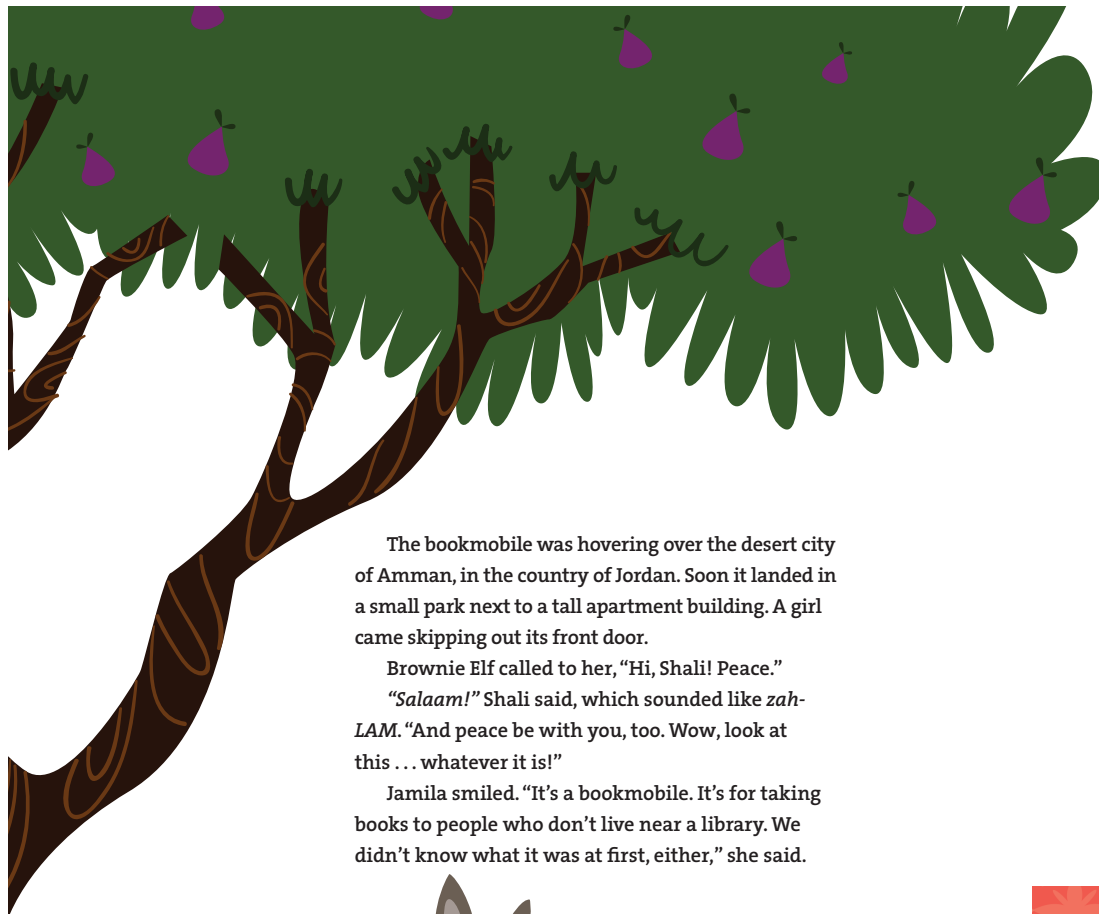
WORDS WORTH KNOWING

SPIRES are like spears. They’re towers that point up. **DOMES** are rounded towers on the roof of a building. They can be as round as the top of your head!

Poof! The big white umbrella popped up higher and the bookmobile rose toward the clouds. Suddenly, the girls felt little bulges in their jacket pockets. They reached in and pulled out small, slim notebooks. Campbell’s was red, Jamila’s was purple, Alejandra’s was yellow. “Those are your passports,” Grandma Elf said. “Fill them with everything you see and do as we travel!”

And so, their adventure had begun! The girls pressed their faces against the windows of the bookmobile. They saw blue sky above and sandy-colored hills below. Soon they spotted skyscrapers and glittering **domes** and **spires**. Trees and gardens, and buildings old and new, spread over many hills.



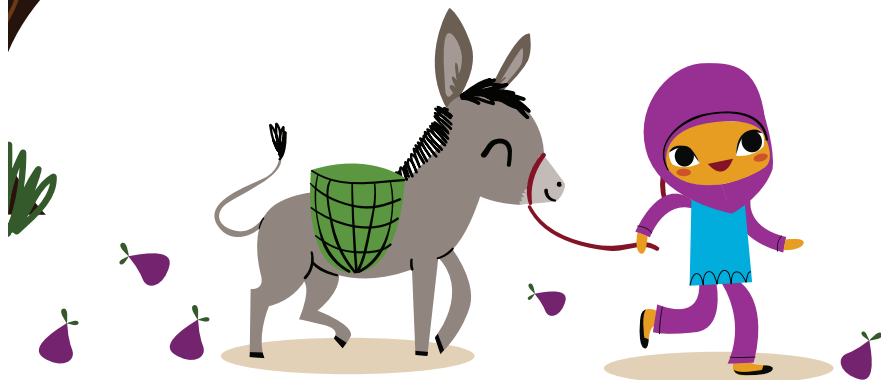


The bookmobile was hovering over the desert city of Amman, in the country of Jordan. Soon it landed in a small park next to a tall apartment building. A girl came skipping out its front door.

Brownie Elf called to her, "Hi, Shali! Peace."

"Salaam!" Shali said, which sounded like zah-LAM. "And peace be with you, too. Wow, look at this... whatever it is!"

Jamila smiled. "It's a bookmobile. It's for taking books to people who don't live near a library. We didn't know what it was at first, either," she said.



After all the girls said hello, Shali told them she and her mother were going to pick figs on her cousins' farm.

"Let us take you," said Grandmother Elf.

In a blink, the whole group was traveling along a dusty road outside the city. Brownie Elf steered the bookmobile while Grandmother Elf showed the girls books about Jordan. One book told about Jordan's queen, Queen Rania.

When the bookmobile stopped, Shali's cousins greeted them. They said *Marhaba*, which sounds like *MAR-ha-ba* and means *hello* in Arabic.

Jamila and Alejandra walked toward a grove of fig trees with Shali's cousins, who led two donkeys alongside them. Each donkey had empty baskets on its back. Brownie Elf drove the bookmobile behind them.



A Caring Queen



QUEEN RANIA of Jordan has her own video channel on the Internet, where she answers questions about her country. She even made a music video to inspire the world to end poverty.

Queen Rania cares about schoolchildren and works to get more computers in Jordan's schools. She also cares about girls and women. She wants them to have better lives, in Jordan and all around the world.

"Reading is important," said Grandmother Elf. "Maybe we can find some books that are just right for you. What do you like to read about?"

"Plants," said Shali. "I have lots of books at home, but most have big words and I can't figure them out."

"I trip up on words that aren't even big!" Campbell said. "But Jam and Ali help me out."

"Girls teaching girls," said Grandmother Elf. "That's what I like to see!"

Campbell laughed. "That sounds like a jump rope song!" she said. And then she made one up.

*Girls teaching girls—that's what I like to see.
Shali picked some figs today, tomorrow Shali reads!*

"That's great," Shali said. "Let's sing it to my cousins." As everyone picked figs from the fig trees, they sang the song and put in a new girl's name each time.

Soon their baskets were full, and Shali's cousins tied them onto the donkeys to carry home. Shali's mother turned to the girls. "Did you taste a fig?" she asked. "Try one." The girls had never seen a fig before. What a sweet surprise!

When they reached her cousins' home, Shali invited the girls to play table tennis.

"We call it 'ping-pong,'" said Jamila. "Different name, same game!"

Shali showed the girls the best places to stand behind the table to hit the ball. Then, wham! Jamila served.

"Great shot, Jam!"

"Now you try it, Ali!"

Whee! The ball flew by.

"Try bouncing it, like this," Shali said. She darted from side to side, turning her wrist left and right so the paddle smacked the ball just right.

The girls took turns playing. Soon Shali's mother carried out a tray with sweet, chilled tea in glasses with silver handles. Mint leaves swirled inside them.





Inside the bookmobile, Shali and Campbell talked with Grandmother Elf. "More than anything, I want to be a good reader," Shali said.

"Tea. What a nice link to people all around the world," said Brownie Elf. She winked at Grandmother Elf.

"I wonder where else in the world people drink tea and like to read books?" Jamila asked.

Alejandra said, "I know where we can find out."

"The bookmobile!" said Campbell.

As they rode the bookmobile back to Shali's home in the city of Amman, Grandmother Elf and the girls looked through more books. Before long, they reached Shali's apartment.

Shali and her mother gave each girl some figs as a gift. They said *Ma'assalama*, which sounded like *MAH ah-sah-LAY-mah* and means *good-bye*.

"*Ma'assalama*," the girls repeated.

Then *poof!* Off they went.



Stories on the Go

The first American bookmobile was a horse-drawn carriage. That was in 1905. Later, librarians used mules and horses to bring books into the mountains. To reach islands, they used rowboats. Buses and campers are now bookmobiles, too! In Ethiopia, donkeys carry books. In Kenya, camels do. Imagine your own fantastic bookmobile! Draw it or build it!