

Brown Owl's First Meeting
by Leslie Carmichael

"You want me to be Brown Owl? Sure! After all, how hard could it be?"

First meeting. Drive to the facility. Hoist boxes, bags and other containers to door.

Wrong door. Search for door. This one? No. Ah, this one. Struggle through door and down dark stairway. Turn lights on. Completely bare gymnasium. Climb stairs to main floor. Find office.

"Um, hi there. I need to get some tables and chairs. Where are they? Oh, the storeroom? Could I borrow the key? What? My driver's license? As collateral. Okay. Thanks. Back in a minute!"

"Oh, hello! Yes, this is your Brownie group. You're a little early... your Dad brought you? Is he still here? No? Oh, I was hoping he'd be able to... oh, hello. Yes, this is Brownies. No, the Guides are in the other room.

"Oh, Tawny Owl. Good, you're here. Could you go get -- oh, hi. Yes. Welcome to Brownies. Oh - thank you! Now, where should I put these dues? And who was that? Anyway... could you take the key back?... thanks. Hi, Snowy and Grey Owls! Yes -- eager, aren't they? Could you get a table... thanks.

"Hi there! Whoops! No, no, that's quite all right. We'll clean it up. Now, here's -- yes? The table goes right here. The -- oh. It's broken? Another? Yes, please, that would be great. The storeroom door locks as soon as you shut it? Oh, dear. Yeah, you'll have to get the key again.

"Yes, sweetie? Oh. Already? I think it's around the corner. You'll probably have to turn on the light. You're afraid of the dark? Well, just a minute, okay?

"What? Yes, you're right. We should start. Hello! An extra form? Sure. And a pen? I think so. Here. Now, we'd-- what? Okay. It's around the corner.

"Welcome to Brownies! The first thing we'll do is take attendance. Now let's see-- what? Can't you wait? No? This will just be ... oh, all right. Go ahead. Around the corner.

"Attendance, right. We have Hannah and Hannah, Britney, Brittany and . . . Briadhneigh? Say it just the way it's spelled -- right. Six more in your class? Wow. We also have Caitlyn, Katelynd and Catelinn.

"Oh, good, you're all back from the bathroom. Why are your feet wet? Never mind.

"Where was I? Oh, yeah. I see we also have two Samanthas. And Arianna, Ariel and Ariane. And Ariella. Oh, you and Ariel are twins? Great. So, which one of you is Michelle? But you prefer to be called Susanna. Okay. And two Jennifers. And Parmali! Pretty name, dear. And one I can actually remember!

"Now, we're going to -- yes, dear? Yes, that's a beautiful teddy bear. Okay, we're going to sing our Brownies song. Yes, I know you don't know it. We're going to teach you. What? You want a bonfire? No, no bonfire tonight. Because we can't have them indoors. No, I don't think the table would make good kindling (keep an eye on that one for me, would you?)

"Right. We walk around in a circle as we sing -- that way? Sure. All of us, dear. Turn around, okay? Backwards is not a good choice for a direction.

"Now for the circle songs. What are circles? They're listed in your handbook. You don't have one? That's okay. How many of you have a handbook? Ah, that's good. No, you don't have to bring them if you don't want to. Oof! Thank you, sweetie, but I didn't need to have it shoved into my stomach. Oh, dear. No, that's the Guides book, I'm afraid. You can trade it in, I'm sure.

"So. Circles are groups of girls. You can choose your circle name ... yes? Fairies? My, that was quick. Oh, you've read your handbook. Cover to cover. Well, good! All right, you can be the Fairies. Who's next? Oh, you want to be Fairies, too. Well, this group has already chosen that name... how about Sprites? Not as good as Fairies, you say? But you like it, sweetie? That's good. No, you can't change circles. Maybe next year, dear.

"What about your circle, dear? No, not Fairies. How about Leprechauns? No, you don't have to wear green all the time. Okay, there you go. Now, we'll sing the circle songs. You know yours? Go ahead then. Well, that was very nice dear, but the tune is the same as the Brownies song, not "Stayin' Alive".

"Stand up, please, girls. Uh, sweetie? Could you put her down? Yes, her. The one you're lifting off the floor. Because you're shorter than she is. And you two -- please put your shoes back on your feet. No, your OWN shoes. On your OWN feet. Yes, both of them. Because hers are much smaller than yours.

"Now for the Promise. Hold up your right hand. Your other right hand, honey. Yes, that's it. Now hold up two fingers. Uh, the other two fingers, please. Look at my hand. Two, not three. I hold up three. Because I'm a

Guider, like them. Yes, we are owls, too. No, we can't turn our heads around in a complete circle. And I for one don't eat mice.

"Okay, now the Brownie Law. No, it has nothing to do with your daddy getting a speeding ticket. Now the motto. What's that? It's a saying. No, that has nothing to do with cars. Our Brownie motto is "Lend a Hand". What? Either hand, honey. It means you should help people. Yes, your mom and dad. And even your brother. Honest. You do? Well, that's great. Yes? Yes, it is weird that your mom sends you to help your dad all the time. And he sends you back.

"Now, how about we do a craft? Oooh. Use your indoor voices, please. What are we going to do? We're going to make name pins. What? You don't like crafts? Just try, okay? What would you rather do? Sing songs? We might sing one later ... your favourite song? What's that? Oh. Well, that's a very ... interesting song, dear. Your daddy's favourite, you say? I thought it might be.

"What are name pins? We put alphabet beads on wire, then put them on pins. Pardon, sweetie? Your mommy won't let you play with pins? Well, that's a very good rule, but these are safety pins. See? They're perfectly... Um, could we get a bandaid here? No, that's okay. I'm fine, really. No, don't use your shirt to wipe... oh, dear. Just tell your mom to use cold water, sweetie.

"So to make your pin, what you do is wrap the wire around the safety pin, yes, right on the end there. No, don't wrap that other end around the pin yet. Just a second, I'll get it off. Then you string the beads .. Oh, you're already done? That was fast. Let's see - Refinnej. Hmm, I think you may have done this backwards dear. Yes, you'll have to start over. No, don't throw it! I'll help you in a minute.

"Pardon? You want me to put the A on? There you go. Your turn. I'm sure you'll be... oopsie. Now how are we going to find those? Yes? You should have just enough, dear, we separated them out. Oh. Wrong letters. Can you trade with ... sure. And look! She's almost done hers, too. Yes, now the R, dear. The extra beads are for the end. You didn't get any? Oh you did, but you gave them to Samantha. Well, that was sweet of you, dear. Yes, I'm sure Tawny Owl can give you some more.

"You're done? Oops, you missed the R, Ariella. Yes, you'll have to start again .. no, hold on to this open end or the beads will all... oh, dear.

"Are you finished? Good! Now wrap the other end of the wire around ... ah. Could I get another bandaid please. Yes, those wires are sharp. No, no. I can do lots of things without using this thumb. But since you're done, could you help me clean up the beads? Yes, these beads. No, I'm sure there is more than one. Look! There's another. Pardon? Yes, go ahead. You know where it is.

"All right, is everyone finished? No? Because you didn't like the way the colours of the first beads looked? Well, you'll have to hurry now, dear. We're going to play a game... ow! Sweetie, maybe you could run somewhere else? And didn't I tell you not to carry her around? You forgot. I see.

"Right, the game. Yes, we have lots of good games. Poker? No, not that kind of game. You get to run in this one. Pardon? You're tired? Already? We haven't even started yet. Just try, dear. No, the bathroom is out of bounds.

"What? Is it that time already? Oh, good! I mean, uh, let's do our closing song. Yes, we'll teach that one to you, too. Next week, we'll ... pardon? No, no bonfire next week either. We'll have one when we go camping, I guess. What? Oh, thanks, but I don't think we'll need your daddy's barbecue fluid. You have a suggestion? Rock climbing? Um, no, I don't think so... You say your daddy runs a parachuting school? I'll, uh, keep it in mind... now, this is what we sing at the end of every meeting. Good! But how about if we all sing it at the same time. See you next . .

"Wait! Here's your newsletters! See if you can catch her before they leave, okay? Yes, she's very fast. Excuse me, which one of you dropped yours? No dear, you already have one. Your mom is holding it, see? You gave it to her. Badges? Not yet, sweetie. Yes, maybe next week. The way it's going, I think we might work on the first aid badge.

"Whew! Well, that went okay, don't you thin-- whoop! Darn beads.

"So, what was it we were doing next week, again? Right, program work. And another craft. Using... scissors? And glitter glue? And paint?

"Oboy."