



JOSH HAS SURVIVAL SKILLS
FROM YEARS IN BOY SCOUTS,
BUT WILL HE BE BRAVE ENOUGH
TO SAVE HIMSELF AND HIS
NEW ISRAELI FRIENDS FROM
DANGERS LURKING IN AN
UNDERGROUND CAVE?



*A rousing adventure story with plenty of cliffhangers
and nail-biting episodes that contribute to a young
Scout's growth, insight, and bravery.*

—Margery Cuyler, Author

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CHAPTER 1

“It’s too bad the airline lost your baggage,” said Amit to his cousins as they walked into his room.

“No big deal,” said Josh. He pretended not to care, but privately he felt rotten. The camping equipment he and his twin brother, Nate, had packed was on its way to Australia.

Nate shrugged. “I heard about a guy who sued the airline for losing his bag.”

“Really?” said Amit. “What happened?”

“He lost his case.”

It took a second before Amit groaned.

Josh rolled his eyes. “Get used to it,” he said.

Amit tossed each of his cousins a set of Scouts beige shirts and pants. “Good thing my brothers kept their old uniforms,” he said. “And we can share my gear.”

“Thanks,” said Josh, pulling on the pants. This was their first trip to Israel, and Josh wanted everything to go right. “Time to reconnect with family,” his mother had said. “And have an adventure. A Scouts trip with Amit will do both at once.”

“These are a little big for me,” said Josh.

“Here’s my brother’s belt,” said Amit.

“He won’t mind if I borrow it?”

“Better check with him first,” said Nate. “You heard about the belt that was arrested.”

“Arrested,” said Amit. “Why?”

“Because he held up a pair of pants!”

Amit laughed.

Nate tried on the other pair of pants. “These’ll do. But the pockets feel empty. I wish I had my flashlight.”

“Tell me about it,” said Josh. “I had big plans for my Swiss Army knife.”

“I have an extra flashlight somewhere,” said Amit. “And we need to go to the store to buy some snacks before it closes.”

Stifling a yawn, Josh tried to shake off his grogginess. Traveling into a different time zone made him feel like his body had arrived but his head was still floating somewhere above the Atlantic Ocean. According to the plane monitor, they had flown 5,683 miles. That was the distance from JFK airport in New York to Tel Aviv, Israel, not counting the twisty car ride from the airport to Jerusalem once they’d landed.

“Hey, Josh, if you’re too tired to go, you can stay here,” said Amit. “Nate can come with me.”

Josh shook his head. “Tired? Who said I was tired? I’m not going to spend my winter vacation sleeping!”

Josh stepped out of the house behind his twin and cousin and stood in the cool Jerusalem evening. The streets were full of dog walkers, cyclists and cars that zipped in and out of lanes at daring speeds. Josh swerved as a cyclist raced past him.

“Here we are,” said Amit, holding the store door open.

They squeezed inside. From floor to ceiling there was no unused inch of space. Stacked one on top of the other, cans of tuna, boxes of spaghetti, bottles of ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise, and all kinds of sandwich spreads lined the shelves.

“Hi, Eli,” said Amit to the man behind the counter. “These are my twin cousins from America.”

“Twins?” said Eli, peering over the top of his newspaper. “How do people tell you apart?”

“He’s the evil twin,” said Nate.

“And you’re the stunt double?” said Eli.

Nate laughed.

Josh was glad the shopkeeper hadn’t mentioned the birthmark on his forehead, which was how most people told them apart.

Eli stuck out his hand. A miniature blob wrapped in colored foil rested in his palm.

“What’s that?” asked Josh.

“A Krembo. It’s a kind of sweet found only in Israel. Sold only in winter.”

“A winter candy?” said Nate, as Josh reached out to take it.

“Careful!” shouted Amit.

Too late, the candy collapsed in Josh’s palm.

“What happened?” asked Josh. He tried to push the candy back into shape, but it was totally squished.

Eli’s laugh resounded through the pea-sized room. “You have to be careful how you hold it,” he said. He held up another Krembo. “They’re as delicate as people. On the outside, they look big and strong, but touch them roughly, and – poof! – all that remains is an empty shell.” Eli smiled at Josh.

“I see,” said Josh, feeling a bit unnerved.

“We’re done,” said Amit. He set the supplies on the counter. “Mom will come and pay you tomorrow.”

“Fine,” said Eli. “You boys have a great time.”

As they left the store, Nate fell into step beside Josh. “That Eli was kind of strange, wasn’t he?”

Josh nodded. “Everything here feels a bit weird.”

“Hey, Josh,” said Nate, as he elbowed him in the ribs. “I’m glad the airline didn’t ship you to Australia with our suitcases!”

Josh shoved his brother back. Though there were

moments when Nate could be really annoying, Josh wouldn’t want to go anywhere without him.