



THE
**DEAD SEA
SQUIRRELS**

Nutty Study
Buddies

From the co-creator of VeggieTales

Mike Nawrocki

Illustrated by Luke Séguin-Magee

The Dead Sea Squirrels Series

Squirreled Away

Boy Meets Squirrels

Nutty Study Buddies

Squirrelnapped!

Coming Soon:

Tree-mendous Trouble

Whirly Squirrelies

The title is presented on a grey scroll with white text. 'THE' is in a small, simple font. 'DEAD SEA' is in a large, bold, blocky font with a slight shadow. 'SQUIRRELS' is in a very large, bold, blocky font with a thick black shadow, making it the most prominent part of the title.

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Nutty Study Buddies

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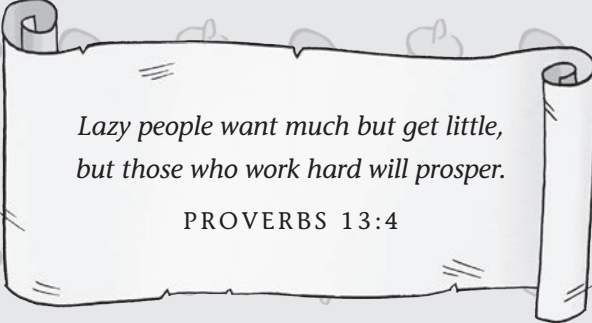
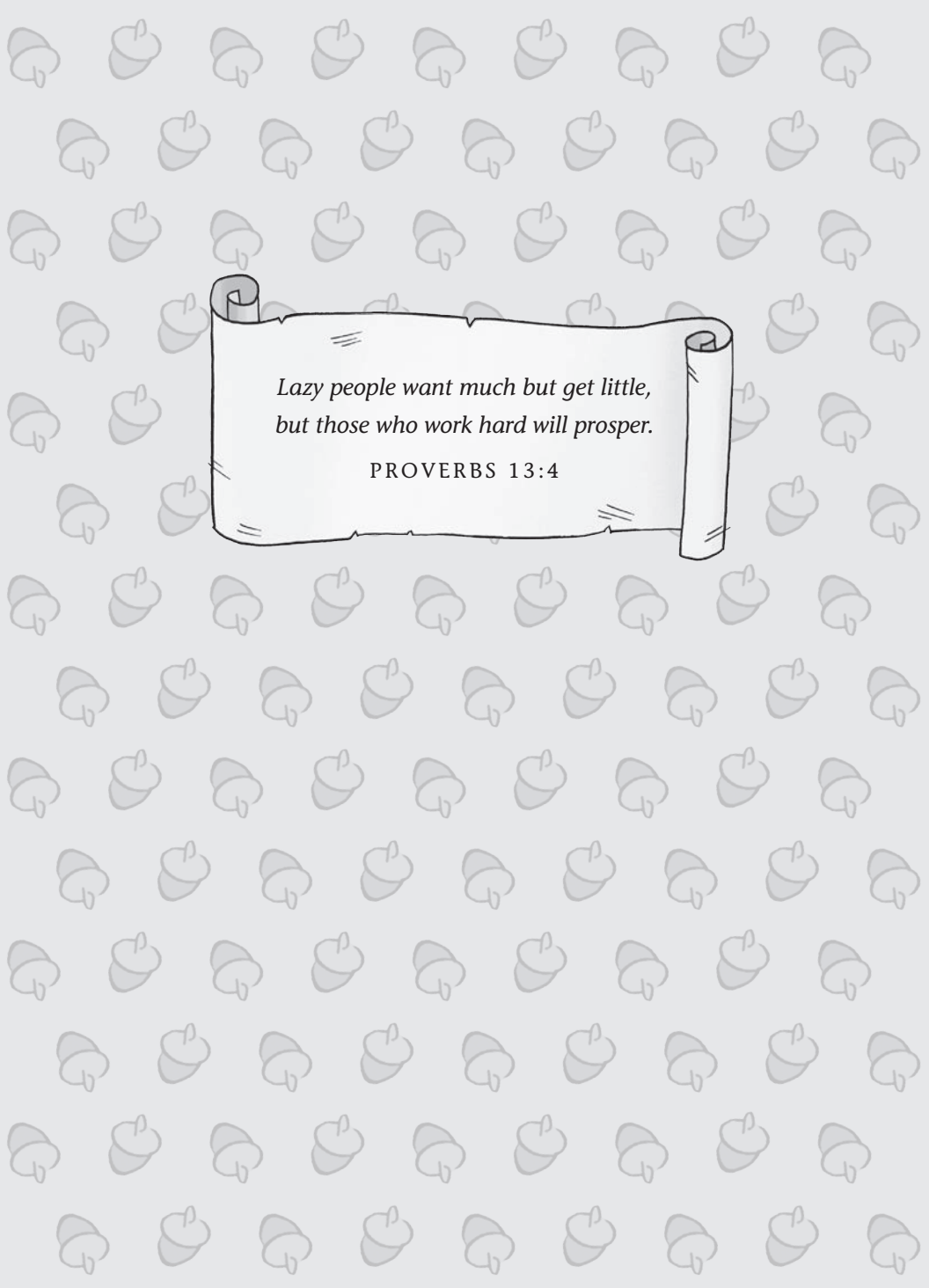
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*To my daughter, Alejandra (AKA Goose Juice)—
For all the hours we spent working through
math homework. I miss the hours
with you, but not the math.
Love, Dad*



*Lazy people want much but get little,
but those who work hard will prosper.*

PROVERBS 13:4

**BUT
WAIT!**

BEFORE WE START...

Who are the
Dead Sea Squirrels?

**ISRAEL,
AD 70**

Merle and Pearl cruise
down the Jordan River ...



The squirrels end up at the
Dead Sea, where ...

You can't sink!
I've always
wanted
to not sink!



Soon the two salty squirrels are
hot, thirsty, and desperate for
shade. Then they spot a cave.



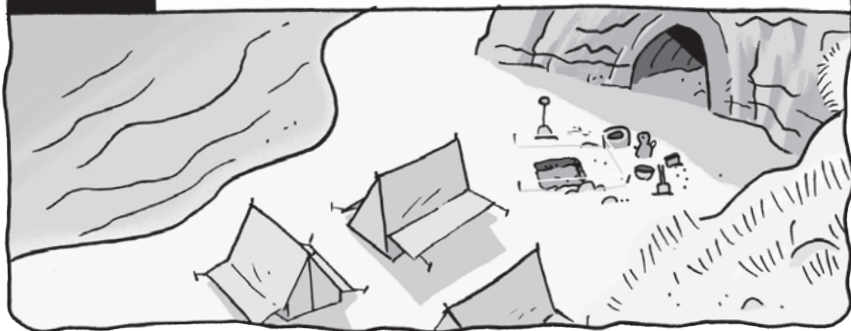
Merle's sense of adventure lures him
into the cave, despite Pearl's protests.

If God wanted you to
go into a cave,
he would have made
you a bat.

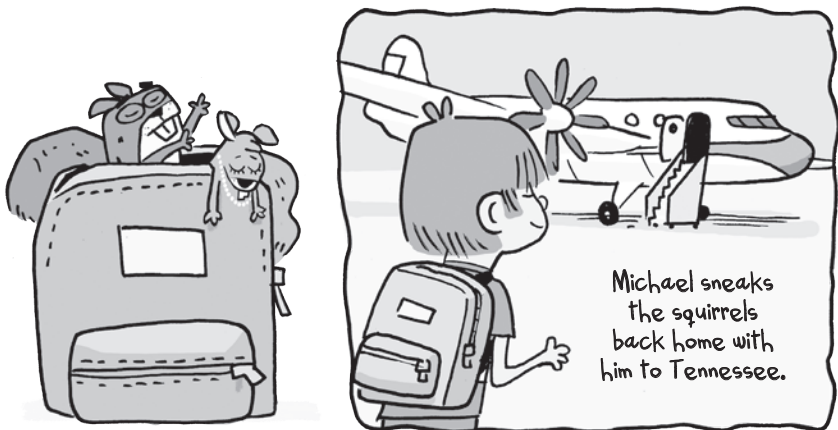


1,950
YEARS LATER

Ten-year-old Michael Gomez is spending the summer at the Dead Sea with his professor dad and his best friend, Justin.

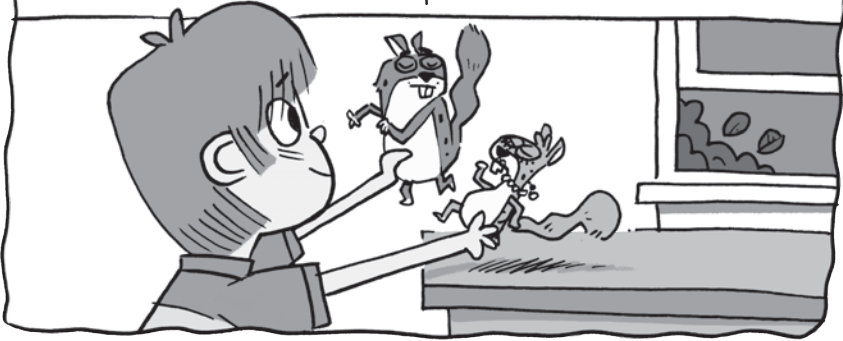


While exploring a cave (without his dad's permission), Michael discovers two dried-out, salt-covered critters and stashes them in his backpack.

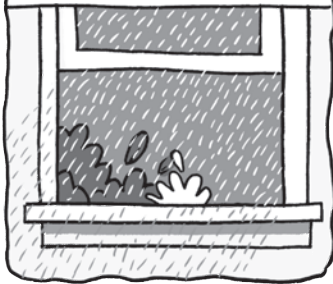


Michael sneaks
the squirrels
back home with
him to Tennessee.

He sets them up like posable action figures on his dresser—
under an open window.



While Michael is sleeping,
a thunderstorm rolls in,
and it begins to rain ...



... rehydrating the squirrels!



Up and kicking again after almost
2,000 years, Merle and Pearl
Squirrel have great stories
and advice to share
with the modern world.

They are the
Dead Sea
Squirrels!





CHAPTER 1

“Merle! Wake up, Merle!”

Merle Squirrel heard his wife, Pearl, calling him softly. He slowly opened his eyes to find himself surrounded by Pearl, Michael, Justin, and Sadie.

“What happened? Where am I?” Merle asked groggily. The last thing he remembered was being in the lunchroom of Walnut Creek Elementary School munching on a chicken nugget.

“We’re back home, Merle,” Michael said.

“I think my news was a little too much for you.” Sadie smiled at him. Sadie had discovered that the squirrels had witnessed the Sermon on the

Mount firstpaw (which is like firsthand, except for squirrels), which meant that they must have been suspended in time in a cave by the Dead Sea for nearly 2,000 years. Merle and Pearl knew the world was much different now than the one they remembered, but knowing just how much time had passed had overwhelmed Merle.

“I didn’t know squirrels could faint,” Justin said. “I’ve seen goats do



it.” Justin stiffened his limbs and fell sideways onto the bed.

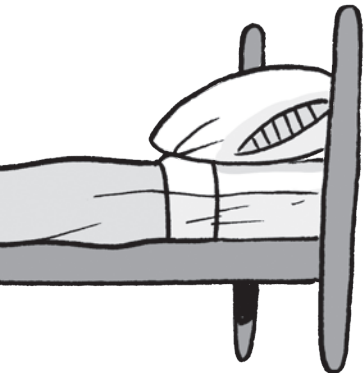


MAAAAAA!

“You’d faint too if you realized you were 2,000 years old,” Merle answered. “It’s not natural. Squirrels usually go for a few decades, tops.”

“We’ve got Methuselah beat by a long shot!” Pearl said proudly. “But we were asleep for most of it, so I’m not sure it counts for the record.”

“This is huge, guys,” Sadie said. “Michael, we need to tell your dad. He’ll know what to do.”



“No way!” Michael said. “I would get so busted. I just got done being grounded for getting lost in the cave. I don’t know what Dad would do if he found out I smuggled back talking artifacts!”

“I resent being called an artifact.” Merle sniffed. “Makes me feel old.”

“You are old, dear.” Pearl patted his paw.

“What if they have to go back to the Dead Sea?” Michael said.

“I don’t wanna go back there!” Merle protested. “It’s too hot!”

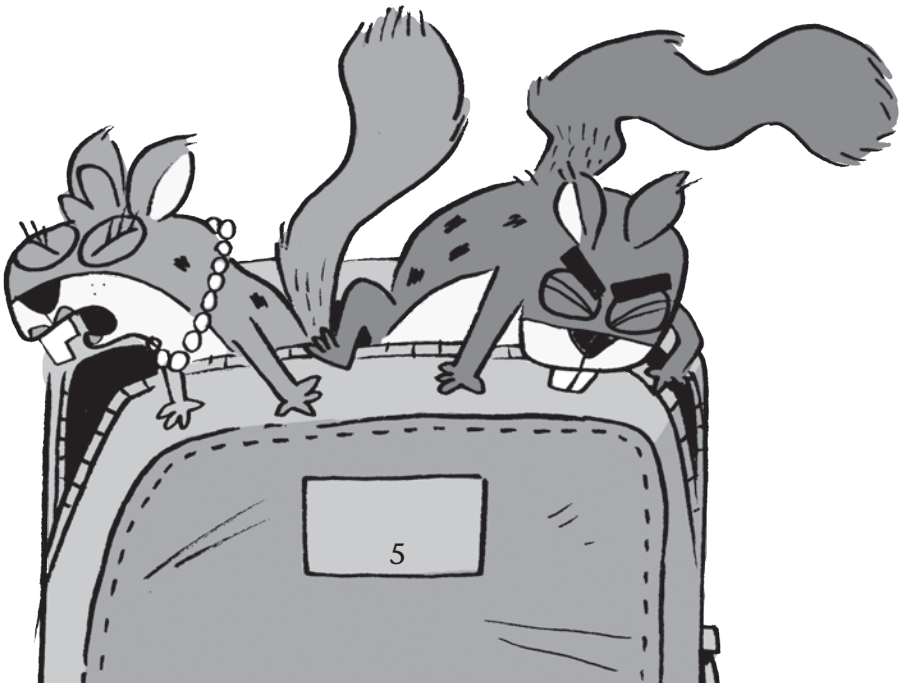
“We’re not even from there. We were just on ‘vacation,’” Pearl said, making air quotes with her paws.

“I like it here, where there are trees and nuts and chicken nuggets,” Merle said. “Don’t make us go back!”

“Nobody’s making anybody go back.”
Michael crossed his arms. “You can hide
out in my backpack. No one needs to
know.”

“Michael,” Sadie said, “they can’t
hide in your backpack forever.”

“No offense to your backpack,” Pearl
agreed, “but it is a little snug.”



“Well, Jane will be at school tomorrow, so maybe you guys can hang out in my room,” Michael suggested. Michael’s little sister, Jane, attended preschool three days a week. While she was at school, the family cat, Mr. Nemesis, stayed closed up in her room.

“Good idea,” Merle said. “While you’re at school tomorrow, we’ll stay here and come up with a plan for where to settle down.”

“Squirrel witness protection! It’s like a spy movie!” Justin said. “I like it!”

“Well, we should get going, Justin,” Sadie said. “We all have a math test to study for.”

“Don’t remind me!” Michael groaned as Sadie and Justin headed out.