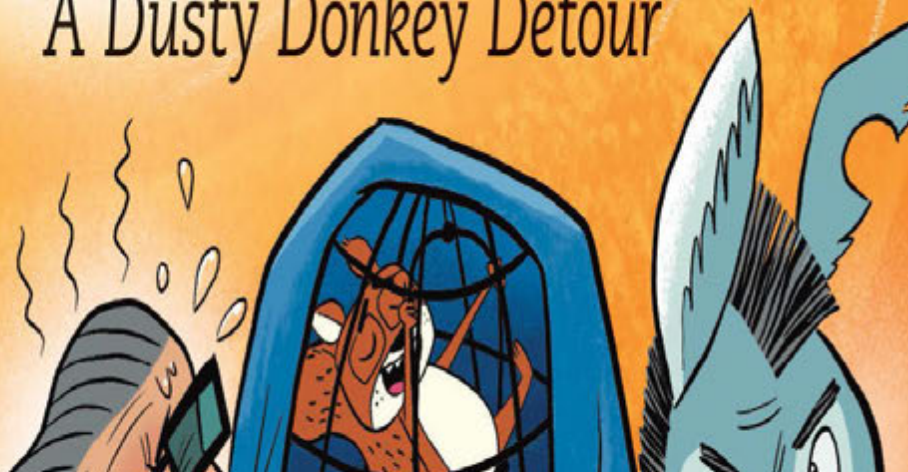


THE
DEAD SEA
SQUIRRELS

A Dusty Donkey Detour



The Dead Sea Squirrels Series

Squirreled Away

Boy Meets Squirrels

Nutty Study Buddies

Squirrelnapped!

Tree-mendous Trouble

Whirly Squirrelies

Merle of Nazareth

A Dusty Donkey Detour

The title is presented on a grey scroll with rolled-up ends. The word 'THE' is in a small, simple font at the top. 'DEAD SEA' is written in a bold, blocky font with triangular shapes at the ends of the letters. 'SQUIRRELS' is written in a very large, bold, blocky font with a 3D effect and a drop shadow.

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SQUIRRELS

A Dusty Donkey Detour

Mike Nawrocki

Illustrated by Luke Séguin-Magee



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A Dusty Donkey Detour

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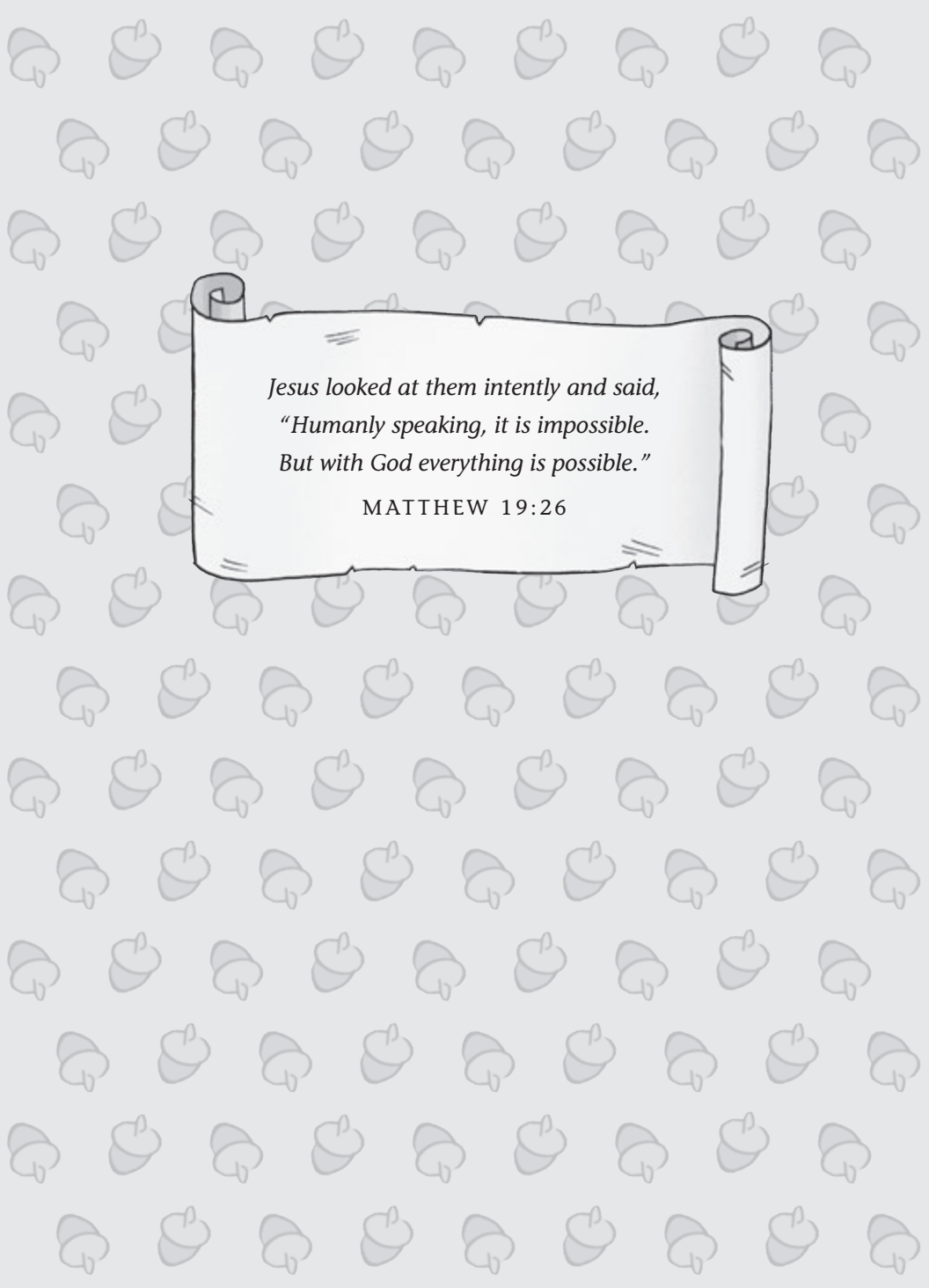
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*To my colleagues and friends
at Lipscomb University.*

The background of the entire page is a repeating pattern of light gray thumbs-up icons. In the center, there is a white scroll with a black outline and a 3D effect. The scroll is unrolled in the middle and has small black lines indicating its thickness and the way it is rolled up at the ends. The text on the scroll is centered and reads:

*Jesus looked at them intently and said,
“Humanly speaking, it is impossible.
But with God everything is possible.”*

MATTHEW 19:26

**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.

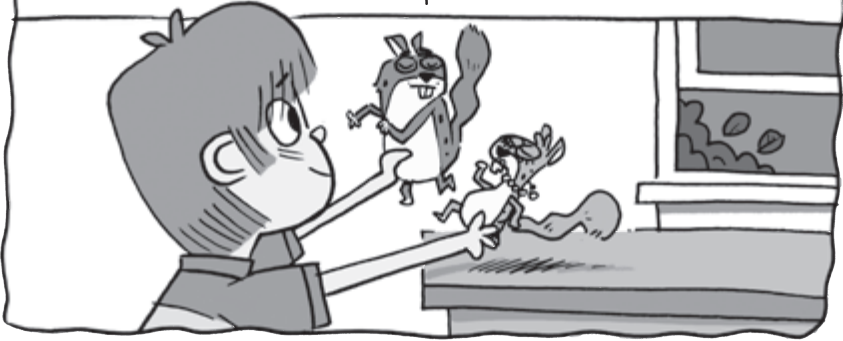


While exploring a cave (without his dad's permission), Michael discovers two dried-out, salt-covered critters and stashes them in his backpack.



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

YOU WANT ME
TO GO
WHERE?

Ruben yelped into the phone from his cramped hotel room in Nazareth. Next to him sat a rolling pet carrier (the ones people on airplanes use to tote their tiny terriers to Tampa) wrapped tightly with duct tape. And in that pet carrier stood Merle and Pearl Squirrel

with their faces pressed up against the mesh.

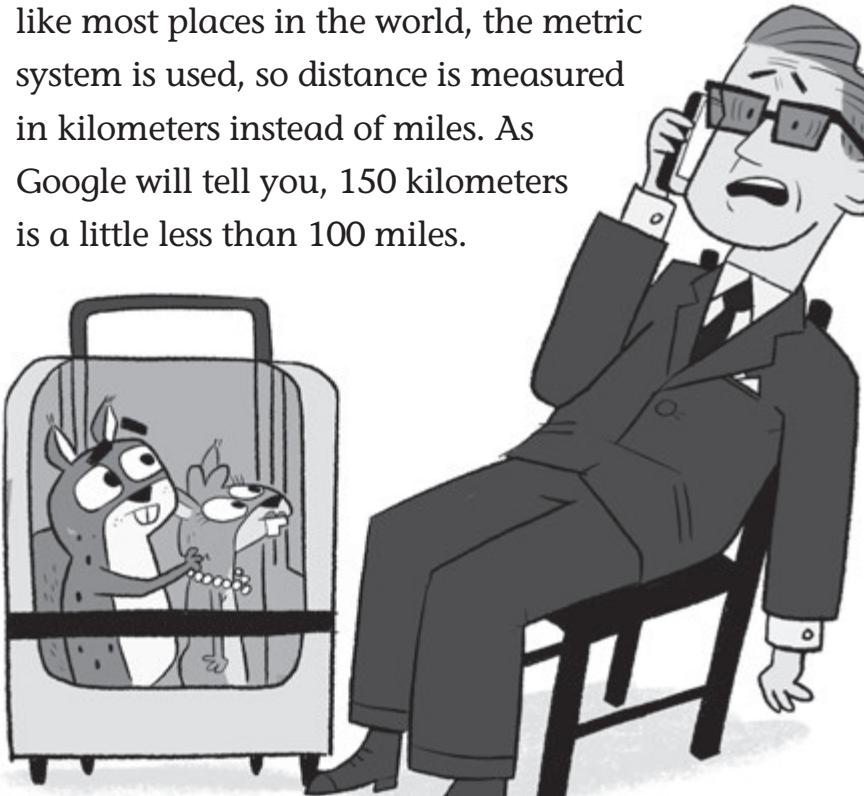
If you'll recall from where we last left our friends, Merle and Pearl had been re-squirrelnapped by the man in the suit and sunglasses, whose real name was Ruben. As Michael and Dr. Gomez were on their way to the famous Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth to rescue their friends, Ruben received a tip about where the squirrels were hiding out and got there first.

"Ein Karem. It's a little town in the hills outside of Jerusalem," the voice on the phone replied.

"Why do I have to go all the way down there? I thought I was supposed to drop them off up here!" Ruben complained.

“If you hadn’t botched things up so badly, you could have!” the man scolded as Ruben held the phone away from his ear. “But now Dr. Gomez and his son know you’re in Nazareth, so you and the squirrels need to be someplace else!”

“But I’m nearly 150 kilometers from Jerusalem!” Ruben protested. In Israel, like most places in the world, the metric system is used, so distance is measured in kilometers instead of miles. As Google will tell you, 150 kilometers is a little less than 100 miles.





“And?” the man on the phone said. “It should only be a two- to three-hour drive.”

Ruben swallowed hard. “I . . . uh . . . I don’t have a car.”

“What do you mean, you don’t have a car?”

“I sort of crashed it when the squirrels got away from me yesterday,” Ruben confessed. Merle and Pearl looked at each other and smiled. It

had been a very daring and exciting escape.

“Well, rent another one!”

“I’m a little short on cash at the moment,”

Ruben admitted. A long silence followed.

“Well,” the voice finally said, spacing the words out, “I guess you’ll just have to walk.”

“That’ll take days!” Ruben groaned.

“You’d better get started, then.” The man hung up.



