

THE DEAD SEA SQUIRRELS

Cybersquirrels

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!
Tree-mendous Trouble
Whirly Squirrelies
Merle of Nazareth
A Dusty Donkey Detour
Jingle Squirrels
Risky River Rescue
A Twisty-Turny Journey
BabbleLand Breakout
Cybersquirrels

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 an even larger, bold, blocky font with a thick black outline and a drop shadow, making it the most prominent part of the title.

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SQUIRRELS

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Cybersquirrels

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*To Linda Howard for believing in the crazy vision of
two ancient dehydrated and reconstituted squirrels,
and for a friendship that stands the test of time.*

The background of the entire page is a repeating pattern of small, stylized mushrooms. Each mushroom has a light-colored cap with a small stem and a darker, shaded underside. The pattern is uniform and covers the entire surface. In the center, there is a white scroll with a black outline, rolled up at both ends. The scroll has some faint, horizontal lines on its surface, suggesting texture or folds. The text is centered on the scroll.

*People with integrity walk safely, but those
who follow crooked paths will be exposed.*

PROVERBS 10:9

**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.

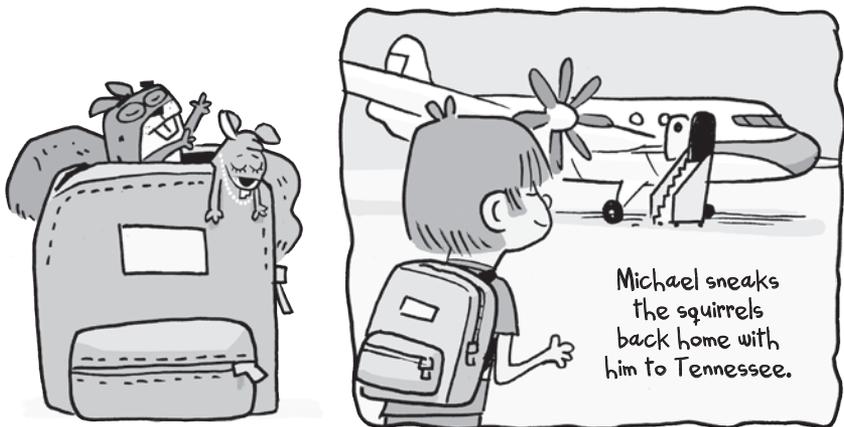


1,950
YEARS LATER

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

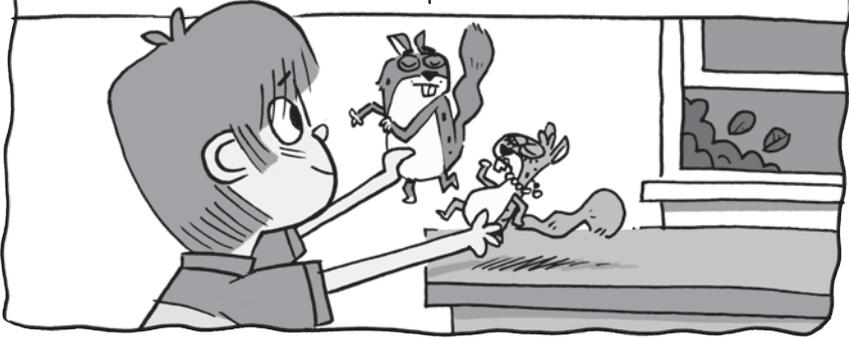


While exploring a cave (without his dad's permission), Michael discovers two dried-out, salt-covered critters and stashes them in his backpack.



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!

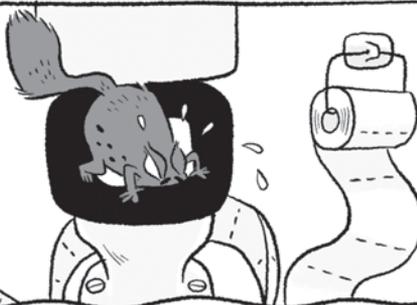


But the Dead Sea Squirrels' adventures don't end there.

Merle and Pearl soon find out that things are

a whole lot different from the first century!

For one thing, there are self-filling fresh water bowls...



an endless supply of walnuts and chicken nuggets...



and much fancier places to live!

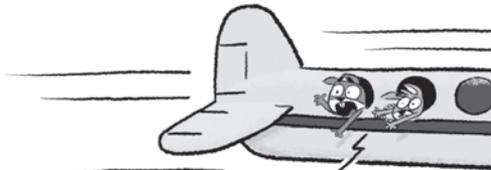
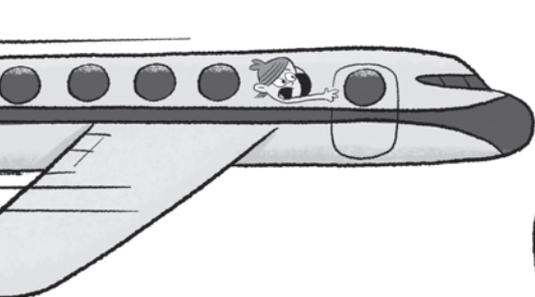


But when a mysterious man in a suit and sunglasses gets his hands on the squirrels...

HELP!!!

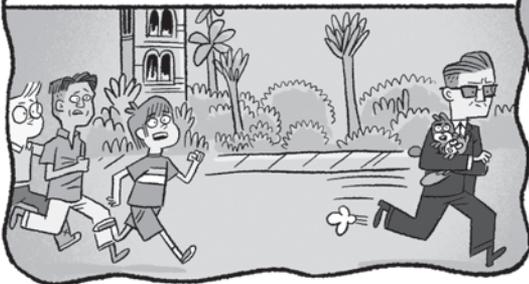


... Michael and his friends head back to the Holy Land to rescue them!



MICHAEL!

It's a big game of hide-and-seek all over Israel in many of the same towns where Jesus once lived...



... meeting some unforgettable friends along the way.

Michael and his friends save the day before the evil Dr. Simon can imprison Merle and Pearl in a biblically themed petting zoo!



Back in Tennessee at last, the squirrels are ready for more adventures!

HOLYLAND AIRLINES



CHAPTER 1

What do you do after the adventure of a lifetime? If you're a ten-year-old kid just finishing fifth grade with your whole life in front of you (like Michael Gomez and his friends Justin and Sadie), why not have another one? And if you're a two-thousand-year-old squirrel (like Merle and Pearl Squirrel), why stop now? Of course, another adventure was the last thing on the minds of any of them as they arrived back in Tennessee on a warm spring evening along with Michael's parents, Dr. and Mrs. Gomez, and his sister, Jane. They were just happy to be back home safe and sound and all together.

“What was the purpose of your trip to Israel?” the customs agent droned, looking down at the group’s passports and forms. “Business or pleasure?”

“Pleasure,” Dr. Gomez answered for the family.



Pleasure?!

Merle protested reflexively. Being rescued from the clutches of the evil Dr. Simon and a life of captivity in BabbleLand’s biblically themed petting enclosure was not Merle’s idea of pleasure. He’d never been the touchy-feely type.

“Shhh!” Pearl shushed, immediately covering his mouth.

“Was that a statement or a question?” the customs agent asked, looking up over his glasses.

“A statement, sir. We had a lovely time,” Dr. Gomez replied nervously as Merle vigorously shook his head.

“Hmmm,” the customs agent grumbled suspiciously. “Are you carrying currency over \$10,000?”

“No, sir.”

“Gifts or merchandise?”

“No, sir.”

“Animals?”

“Just our emotional support squirrels,” Mrs. Gomez piped up cheerfully.

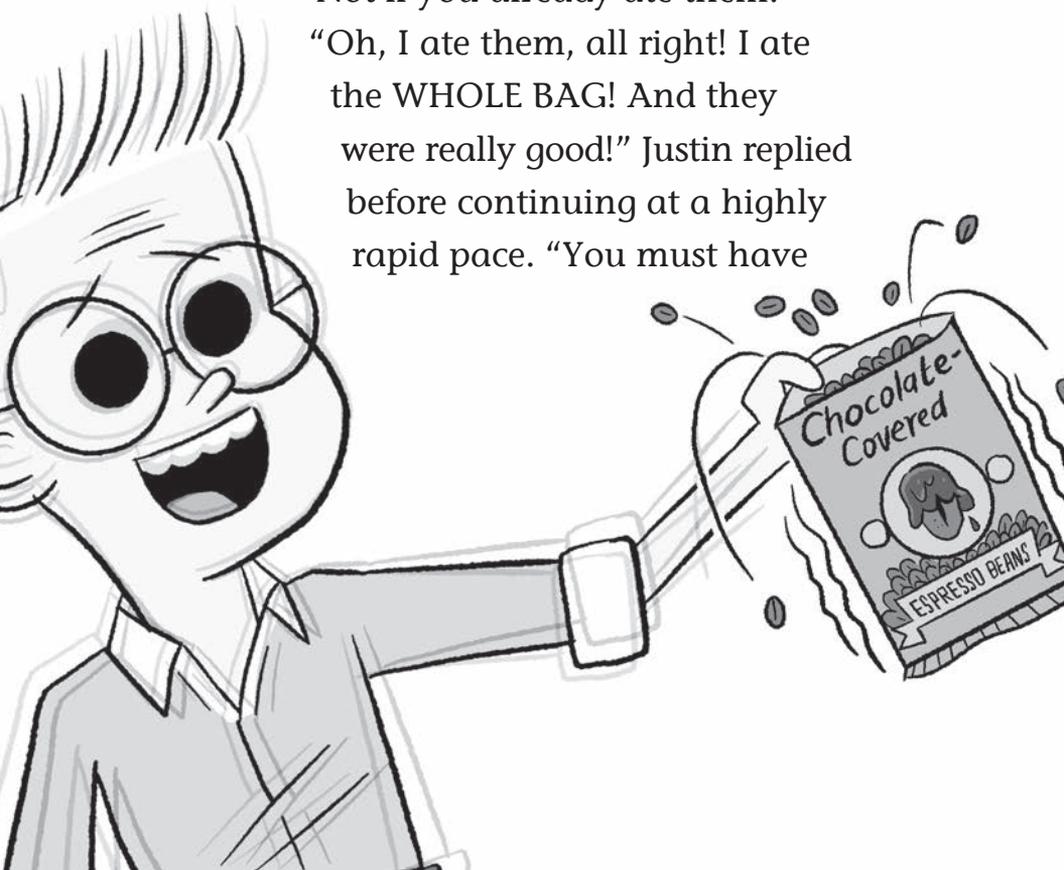
“Hmmm,” the customs agent growled, looking again over his glasses at Merle and Pearl, who smiled and waved

innocently. “Plants, seeds, or food?” he continued.

“Do espresso beans count?!!!” a wide-eyed Justin barked out. Justin had purchased a package of what he thought were chocolate-covered raisins at Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv.

“Not if you already ate them.”

“Oh, I ate them, all right! I ate the **WHOLE BAG!** And they were really good!” Justin replied before continuing at a highly rapid pace. “You must have



a very interesting job—getting to meet lots of people each day, hearing great stories—what’s the most fascinating story you’ve heard? Say, I have a fascinating story—did you know that it’s really hard to sleep when you eat a whole bag of espresso beans?! And if you close your eyes, the whole world spins around like a carousel even when you’re on an airplane?!!!”

“You’re right. That’s a fascinating story,” the customs agent replied dryly as he handed Dr. Gomez back their stack of passports. “Welcome home.”

“Meet you at the luggage!!!” Justin shouted before sprinting toward baggage claim.

