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
To Debbie, Libby, Linda, and Luke—my dream team editor, designer, publisher, and illustrator. Thank you for making this series possible. I will always be grateful for your amazing talents, trust, and vision.
There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends.

JOHN 15:13
Prologue

Merle and Pearl cruise down the Jordan River . . .
. . . on the vacation of a lifetime!

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

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

Could you have just worn your floaties in the lake back home?

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

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

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

Who are the Dead Sea Squirrels?

Israel, AD 70
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.
While Michael is sleeping, a thunderstorm rolls in, and it begins to rain . . .

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...

Thank you, chickens, for your nuggets!

and much fancier places to live!

I could get used to this!

Plus, they get to go to fifth grade (as long as no one sees them)!

Stay still, Merle! Pretend you are stuffed!
Now it’s back to the Holy Land to rescue the squirrels!

But even in quiet Walnut Creek, Tennessee, danger is never too far away!

What if Mom and Dad find out?!

And a man in a suit and sunglasses who wants nothing more than to get his hands on the squirrels... does!

HELP!!!

Now it’s back to the Holy Land to rescue the squirrels!

MICHAEL!
Under the cool light of a full moon, a lone alpaca galloped majestically through the Israeli countryside.

“Can’t . . . you . . . run . . . a little . . . less . . . bouncy?!” Merle the squirrel hollered in spurts as he clung to Adriana’s tail, very unmajestically.

“Get closer to the withers!” his wife, Pearl, yelled back from her perch at the base of the alpaca’s neck. “It’s much smoother up here!”

“What’s . . . a . . . withers?!”

“It’s where I’m sitting!” Pearl replied. The withers of a four-legged animal means the ridge between the shoulder blades. If you’ve ever been on a school
bus, you might have noticed it’s a much smoother ride in the front than it is in the back. It’s the same with alpacas.

“I prefer the view from up here!” Dave the Lizard of Judah called down from his seat between Adriana’s ears, his thin, light frame slicing through the wind.
“Hmm . . .” Adriana replied. Not being an animal who could speak human, it’s all she ever said.

“You getting tired, girl?” Pearl asked, perfectly understanding the tone of her friend’s hum. “Why don’t we stop and rest for a while?”

“Hmm . . .” Adriana agreed. She screeched to a stop, sending the head-mounted lizard flying.

“AHHHHHH!” Dave screamed before landing with a thud on the sandy soil.

Adriana and Pearl had not slept in the last 24 hours. After narrowly escaping Delilah and Ruben the previous evening in Nazareth, they had traveled over 20 miles to find Merle and Dave on the southern shore of the Sea of Galilee. From there, they struck out immediately on a rescue mission to
save their friends—the Gomezes, Justin, Sadie, Dusty, and Ham—who were headed toward BabbleLand and the crooked clutches of Dr. Simon.

“Attagirl! We can’t run all the way to Jerusalem without resting,” Pearl said. Her plan was to follow the now-familiar path south along the Jordan River to Jericho, and from there to take the Old Jericho Road west to Jerusalem—an other 100 miles in total.

“It’s almost sunrise,” Merle noted. A faint red glow shone on the horizon to the east. “I say we sleep during the day and travel at night.”

“Good thinking,” Dave replied, dusting himself off. “Fewer harriers to worry about.” The previous day, Merle and Dave had barely escaped being eaten by hungry harrier chicks,
whose parents hunt exclusively during the day.

“And fewer people too,” Pearl added. Merle slid down from Adriana’s back next to Dave. “Why don’t Dave and I take first watch and find some food while you and Adriana rest?” he offered.

“That sounds lovely, dear.” Pearl yawned before curling up with Adriana in the safety and shade of a bushy palm tree near the river.