



Summer Holidays

It was the last day of term and Daisy was saying goodbye to the school gerbils, Burble and Furball.

“Can’t we stay with you for the summer?” asked Furball. “We could get the squirrels round for a sleepover and watch films about gerbils who save the world.”

“Can’t I’m afraid,” said Daisy, “I’m going away on holiday tomorrow, so Abigail’s going to look after you.”

“Has she got any films about gerbils saving the world?” asked Burble.

“I don’t think so,” said Daisy, “but she has got popcorn.”

“Ooh,” said Furball, “I like her already.”

“It doesn’t take much to make him happy,” said Burble. She waved at Daisy through the bars. “Have a great summer, Daisy D!”

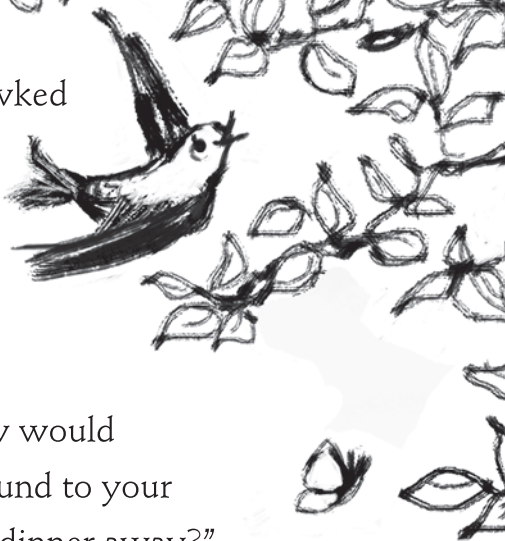
“You too!” said Daisy.

As she walked home, she noticed Trixie the cat sneaking through the long grass towards Flapperton the sparrow. Daisy had made friends with Flapperton only that morning when she had given him some of her flapjack.

“Hey, Trixie!” she called as loudly as she could. “What are you up to?”



As Flapperton squawked and flew up into the trees, Trixie stared at Daisy with cool green eyes.

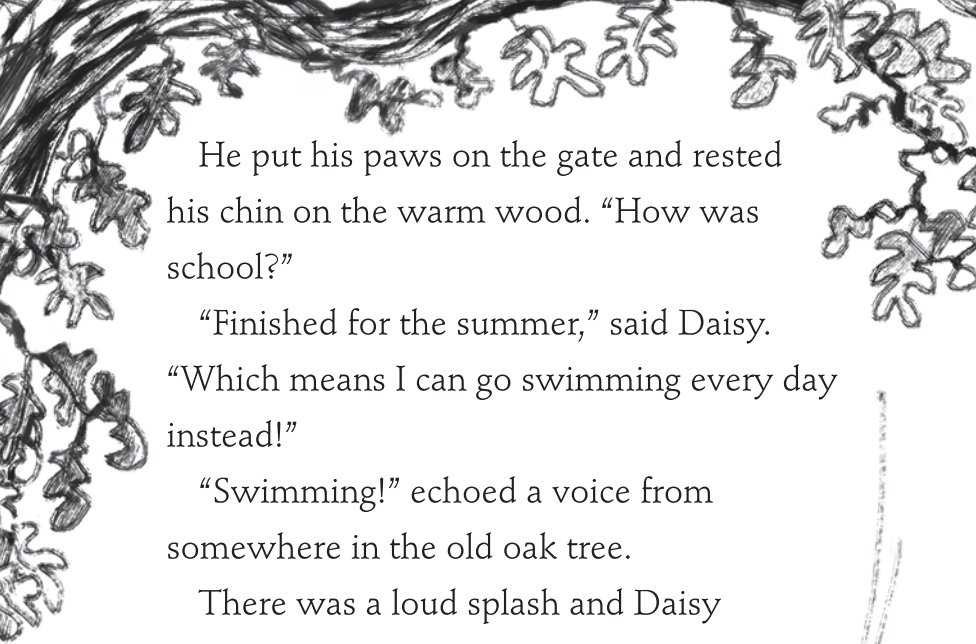


"Thanks a bunch, Daisy," she said. "How would you like it if I came round to your place and scared your dinner away?"

Daisy smiled sweetly. "You're welcome to try," she said, "but I don't think jam sandwiches scare easily."

"You didn't upset her, did you?" chuckled Boom the dog as Trixie slunk away into the long grass. "I do so hate it when cats get upset."





He put his paws on the gate and rested his chin on the warm wood. "How was school?"

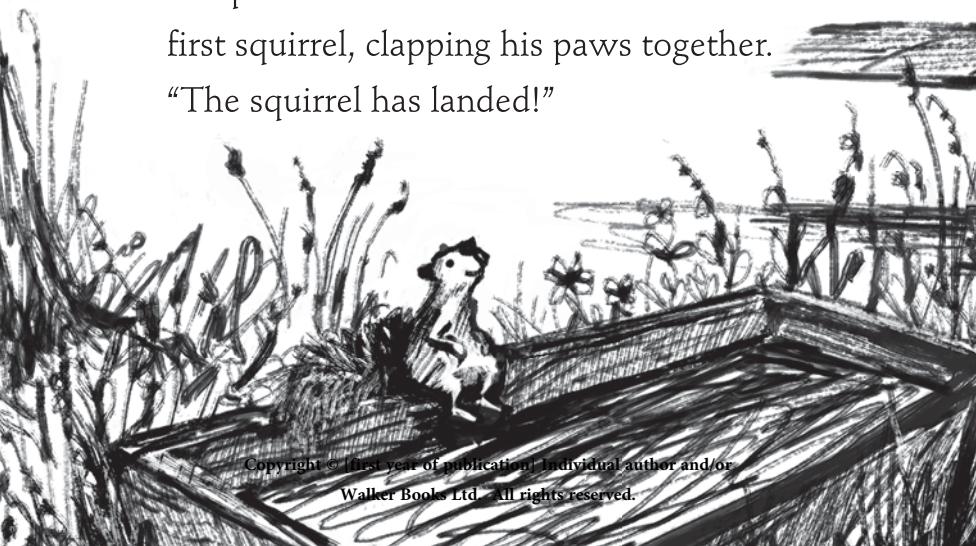
"Finished for the summer," said Daisy. "Which means I can go swimming every day instead!"

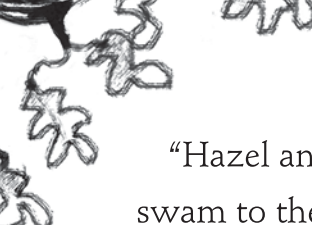
"Swimming!" echoed a voice from somewhere in the old oak tree.

There was a loud splash and Daisy turned to see a small squirrel climb out of the water trough. As he shook himself and waved, another squirrel belly-flopped into the water behind him.



"Splashdown!" shouted the first squirrel, clapping his paws together. "The squirrel has landed!"





“Hazel and Conker!” cried Daisy as Hazel swam to the side and tumbled out onto the grass.

“Hello Daisy,” said Conker, squeezing the water out of his tail. “Fancy a swim?”

“Thanks for the offer,” said Daisy, “but I think I’ll wait until I get to the seaside.”

“Seaside?” said Hazel, drying herself with a dock leaf. “What’s a seaside?”

“You know,” said Conker. “That thing in the park that goes up and down.”

“The sun?” said Hazel.

“I think he means a seesaw,” said Daisy.

“That’s it,” said Conker. “I’ve always wanted a go on one.”



“I’m talking about the *seaside*,” explained Daisy patiently. “It’s a place with water and boats and ice cream.”

“Is it very scary at the seaside?” asked Hazel.

“No, it’s lovely,” said Daisy. “Why?”

“Because you said it makes you scream.”

“Huh?” said Conker.

“You said ‘It’s a place with lots of boats and water and I scream’.”

“No, not ‘I scream’,” said Daisy. “Ice cream.”

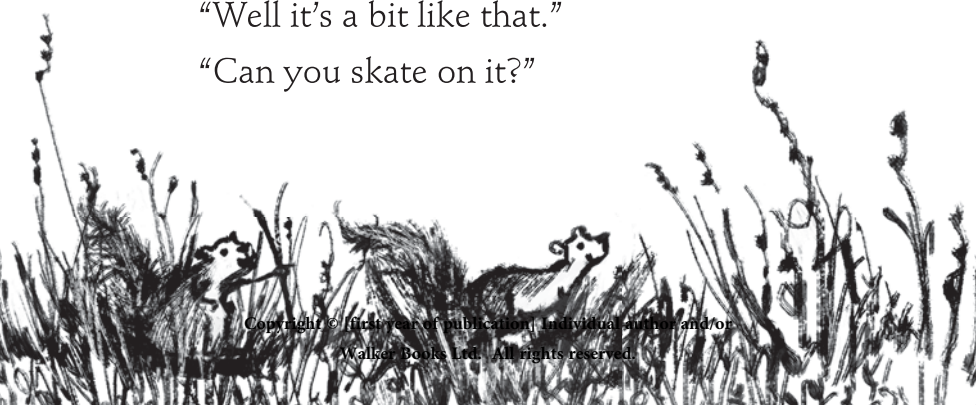
“I know. That’s what I said.”

Daisy shook her head. “No, *ice cream*. You know when the water trough freezes over in winter?”

“Uh-huh.”

“Well it’s a bit like that.”

“Can you skate on it?”



“Not really. You sort of ... eat it.”

“Wow,” said Conker. “This seaside place is *mad*.” He stared at Daisy for a moment and then asked, “Where’s that funny thing where you put all your stuff?”

Daisy glanced over her shoulder and realized that Conker was talking about her backpack.

“I don’t need it,” she said. “I’m not going to school today.”

“Me neither,” said Conker.

“You never go,” said Hazel.

“Good point,” said Conker.

At that moment, Meadowsweet the mare trotted out from beneath the oak tree and leaned over the fence to nuzzle Daisy’s hair.



“Hello Meadowsweet,” said Daisy. “I was just telling everyone that I’m off to the seaside tomorrow.”

“How lovely,” said Meadowsweet. “I knew a donkey who went there once. He wore a straw hat to keep the sun off his head and he used to let the children ride around on his back.”

“That sounds like fun,” said Conker, looking up at Meadowsweet.

“Don’t get any ideas young squirrel,” said Meadowsweet. “It’s too hot for that kind of thing.”

“Is the sea as big as the river?” asked Boom.

“It’s bigger than the river,” said Daisy. “Sometimes you can see the whole of the sky in it.”

“The whole of the sky,”
whispered Hazel.
“Imagine that.”



Daisy saw that Boom was looking worried and remembered Meadowsweet telling her that he had once fallen into deep water as a puppy.

“Don’t worry Boom,” she said. “I’m a very good swimmer.”

As she knelt down and stroked his ears, he whispered, “The sea’s a big place, Daisy. Promise me if you ever get lost in it, you’ll swim towards the sun.”

“The sun?” Daisy frowned. “Why?”

“Because the sun’s above the field,” said Boom. “And if you swim towards it, you’ll find your way home.”

