

# Maxwell Mutt

and The SQUIRREL without a STORY



Steve Voake ILLUSTRATED BY Jim Field



WALKER  
BOOKS

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## CHAPTER ONE

# A SQUIRREL CALLED ANT

Whenever the sun dropped behind the rooftops and the moon rose above the city, Maxwell sensed a change in the air. During the day the world was filled with noise and sunshine and people and cars and all the things that showed you what the world was really made of.

But at night everything dissolved into darkness, shadows sliding over gardens and owls hooting beneath a scattering of stars

while the wind whispered secrets through the trees. Suddenly the world was a different and mysterious place, filled with the promise of adventure.

Today, however, Maxwell sat outside his kennel, staring at his basket and his bowl full of food. His friend Paisley had gone away on holiday with her owner, Rosie, and although Maxwell knew she would be back, it made him think of all the adventures he'd



had with his friends. He didn't know why, but he felt as if something was missing. Life seemed too quiet now, too comfortable.

"Are you all right?" asked Restreppo, wandering through a gap in the hedge.

"You seem distracted."

"I know," said Maxwell, "but I don't know why. I seem to have everything I want."

"Then maybe it's time to want something different," said Restreppo. "Something that isn't food or a roof over your head."

"Wise words, Restreppo," said Mr B, the bulldog who was sitting on the lawn next to Madison. "I know, let's talk about me. Guess what *I* want."



“No idea,” said Madison. “A slap on the head?”

“Come on, Madison. I’m being serious. You have to guess.”

“Not interested.”

“I’ll tell you anyway,” said Mr B. “I want to be a singer with adoring fans throwing lovely gifts at me and telling me I’m fabulous. Can you imagine?”

“No, I can’t,” said Madison.

Mr B sighed and pressed a paw to his chest:

*“Here I am, all alone,  
A little dog without a bone,  
But hear me sing so soft and sweet  
Oh what a lovely, lovely treat...”*

Officer Marshall opened his bedroom window and threw a Size 10 boot, knocking Mr B back into the flower beds.

“Oh look,” said Madison. “Your first adoring fan.”

“Officer Marshall seems upset,” said Maxwell.

“It’s this case he’s



investigating,” said Restreppo as Officer Marshall slammed the window shut again. “Recently he’s been staying out all night, and this morning I heard him talking about some missing animals.”

Madison frowned. “What kind of animals?”

“Not sure.”

“Missing from where?”

“Don’t know.”

“Wow, you’re good. Those police-dog exams must be really tough.”

At that moment the front gate swung open and a small creature with sandy-coloured fur scampered through the



entrance. He had a stripe down his side and a tiny homemade satchel looped over one shoulder.

“Hello,” he said. “I’m a squirrel. Are you squirrels? You don’t look like squirrels.”



“Another detective,” said Madison. “That’s all we need.”

“We’re not squirrels, we’re dogs,” said Maxwell.

“Dogs!” said the squirrel as if this was the best news ever. “Excellent!”

He took a piece of bark from his bag and began to scratch on it with a stick.



“Are you *sure* you’re a squirrel?” asked Maxwell. The squirrels he had seen before had always come in a much bigger size.

“Sure I’m sure,” said the squirrel. “My name’s Ant and I’m searching for a story. So far I’ve written: *I met some dogs.*”

Madison peered over his shoulder. “Short story, is it?”

The squirrel shrugged. “I don’t know what else to write.”

“You could write about a brave police dog solving a mystery,” suggested Restreppo. “Or Mr B wanting to be a singer.”

“I would *definitely* read that,” said Mr B.

“My friend Ridley once said that if you really want something, then interesting things will happen,” said Maxwell. “Is there anything you want, Ant? Apart from a story, I mean.”

Ant thought for a moment. “Back home we’ve got these big squirrels who sit in the trees telling us how delicious their hazelnuts are. Then they throw the shells down and bounce them off our heads. And I always think, *What I wouldn’t give to try some of those hazelnuts one day.*”

“I saw a bunch of squirrels in the park just now,” said Madison. “They were messing around on the swings.”

“That’s against the law,” said Restreppo.

“Like Mr B’s face,” said Madison.

Maxwell sighed.

He turned to look at his bowl of food and his comfortable kennel.

Then he looked at the open gate and the dark streets beyond.

“OK, Ant,” he said. “Let’s go and find you some hazelnuts.”

