



Ducktective Max and the Missing Farm Animals

By Donna M. Boock Art by Pete Whitehead

The call came into Headquarters just after I'd quacked—er, I mean, *cracked*—the case of the stolen golden goose eggs.

I answered the phone: "Ducktective Max Quacks. What's the mystery?"

"My animals are all gone!" Old MacDonald yelled.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"My cow is missing, my three pigs aren't present, and my sheep is lost!" he said.

"We're on our way." I hung up the phone and jotted in my notebook:

*Old MacDonald's cow,
sheep, three pigs—gone!
Find them!*

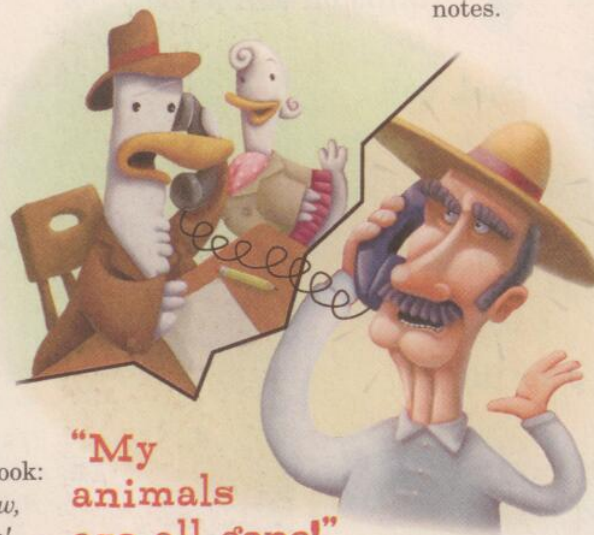
Then I explained the situation to Heather Feather, my friend and assistant ducktective.

"Let's go!" she said.

We went to the pigpen first. We didn't hear an *oink* here or an *oink* there. We didn't hear an *oink-oink* anywhere.

"Maybe they flew south for the winter, Max," suggested Heather, picking up a feather from the ground.

"Since when have pigs grown wings?" I asked. "This looks like a goose feather, and goose feathers don't belong in pigpens. Our first clue!" I pulled out my notebook and made some notes.



**"My
animals
are all gone!"**

"Where would a goose feather come from? Old MacDonald doesn't have any geese," said Heather.

I thought for a moment. "But Mother Goose has plenty of feathers! Let's check her out."

"Good thinking. What's our plan when we get there?" Heather asked.

"Let's just wing it." I took the feather, and we flew south toward

Mother Goose's nest.

"Mother Goose," I called when we arrived.

"Yes," she answered, poking her bill out of her nest. "Who's there?"

"Ducktective Max," I answered, flashing my badge. That's my favorite part of the job. "And my assistant, Heather."

"We're looking for Old MacDonald's missing animals," Heather added.

"How can I help?" Mother Goose asked.

"We found a feather in the pigpen. Is it yours?" I asked.

"Goodness, no! I haven't visited that farm in ages. I'd have to go the long way, with all that construction on London Bridge."

Maybe Mother Goose was innocent after all. One thing still bothered me. I reached into my trench coat. "Then where did this goose feather come from?"

"Goose feather?" Mother Goose laughed. "Max, that's no goose feather. It's one of your tail feathers!" She pointed to a bald spot.

I blushed and stuck my feather in my pocket.

"Thanks for your time," I said, flashing my badge again.

We were on our way back to Headquarters when we saw Little Boy Blue sleeping by a haystack.

"That's it!" Heather cried, her tiny black eyes lighting up. "What?" I asked.

"Little Boy Blue, come blow your horn. The sheep's in the meadow, the cow's in the corn!"

"You're right!" I followed her lead and landed in the field.

Heather turned to Blue and shouted, "Blue, wake up! We need your help!" She told him what to do.

Da-da-da-daaaah! went his horn. And the sheep showed up from the meadow.

"Play it again, Blue," she said.

Da-da-da-daaaah! he played.

And the cow came out of the corn! "One more time," she said.

Da-da-da-daaaah! But no pigs popped out.

"Any idea where the pigs are?" I asked.

"Sorry, pigs aren't my thing,"

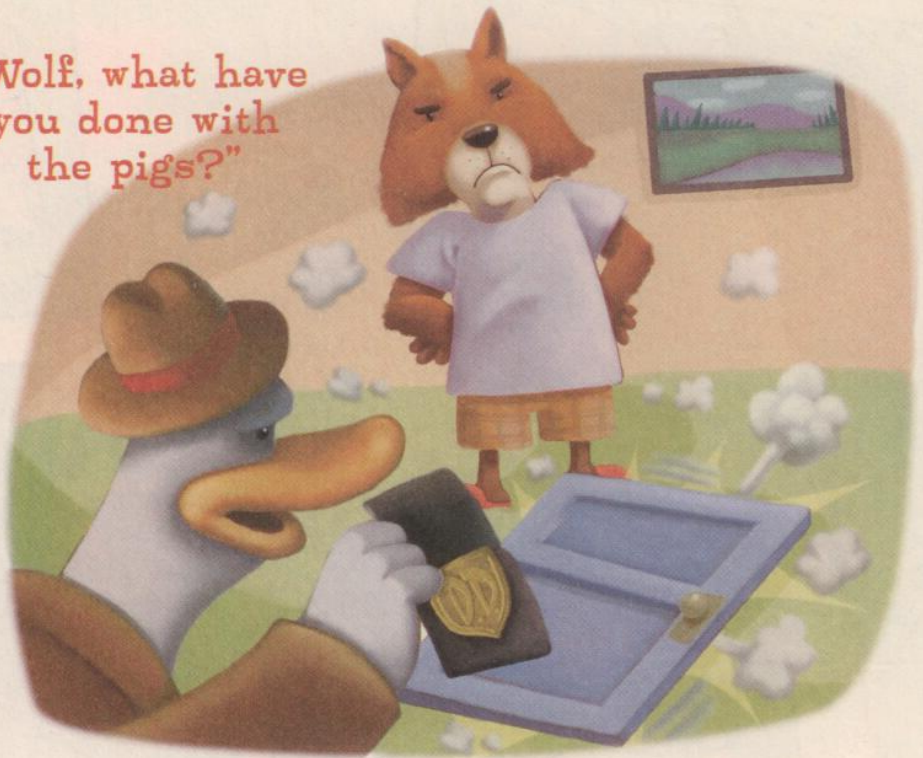
Blue answered.

"Thanks for your help," I said.

"What's next, Max?" Heather asked.

"Mother Goose Land may still be our answer. Are there any stories about pigs?" I asked.

"Wolf, what have you done with the pigs?"



She held up a webbed foot. "This little piggy went to market. . . ."

"You only have three webbed toes. You'll need two more for that rhyme. How many pigs did Old MacDonald say he had?" I flipped through my notebook. "Here it is. He had three pigs."

"The Three Pigs—let's go see the Big Bad Wolf!" she said. So we did.

When we arrived at Wolf's place, we huffed, and we puffed, and we blew the door in. I flashed my badge. "Wolf, what have you done with the pigs?" I asked.

"Nothing," growled the wolf.

"Hogwash. We're taking you to the station for questioning," I said.


On the way, we saw Jack's Construction School. "That's the house that Jack built," I said, pointing to the tall building.

"Max, do you hear that? It sounds like pigs squealing," Heather said.

We went in to check it out. "Welcome to Construction 101: How to Build a Stronger House," Jack said. The three pigs were taking notes in the first row.

"I told you I didn't do anything," the wolf said.

"Maybe you're not such a big bad wolf after all," Heather said.

"It seems we've solved another rhyme—er, I mean, *crime!*" I said, taking out my badge and polishing it on my shirt. 

"Then where did this goose feather come from?"

