

# CHARLIE, THE CHIPMUNK

*Text by Karl Milde*

“Good morning, Charlie,” his mother said brightly. “Time to get up!”

Charlie eased himself out of his cozy straw bed and quickly nibbled the breakfast his mom had left him: an assortment of nuts and berries she and his dad had gathered and brought back to their home under a stone wall. After breakfast, Charlie set out for the day’s adventure. He first peeked out an opening in the wall. He saw no one so he emerged very carefully, stepped out, and quickly ran across the lawn to a nearby tree. “No one is coming. No one is coming” he repeated to himself. But someone was!

In the distance he heard the sharp “Rap” sound. Startled, he ran up the tree trunk to the first branch. He pressed himself into the crevice between the trunk and the branch, trying to make himself invisible. He squeezed in without moving. Hearing no further sounds he glanced down, and there he was. A small dog, frantically wagging its tail. Eying him, the dog barked again, twice this time: “rap...rap.” The sound struck terror in Charlie.

Charlie remembered from somewhere he had three choices: fight, flight, or make friends. At the moment he was stuck in a fourth choice not of his own making: *freeze*. He pressed through his fear and tried the third choice. Looking down again, he said to the dog with a tremulous voice, “*Can’t we be friends?*”

The dog reacted enthusiastically, wagging its tail even faster than before and jumping, trying to reach Charlie. Dogs have no ability to climb trees, Charlie knew,

so his fear melted a bit. He called out again, this time with a stronger voice, “Did you hear me? I’d like to be friends...”

“Of course I heard you,” the dog replied. “See my big floppy ears? I’m a dachshund, dummy. And I’m wagging as hard as I can. If that’s not a ‘yes,’ what is?”

“Oh! Okay then. I’ll come down halfway. You still scare me.” Charlie came down the tree trunk, head first, to just above where the dog could reach. “What’s your name?” he asked bravely.

“Name’s ‘Nathan.’ Like the hot dog, get it?”

“What’s a hot dog?” Charlie asked. He’d never seen one.

“Don’t you know? They’re long, thin, and they’re brown like me. And they’re good to eat.”

“I’m long, thin, and brown too,” Charlie said, “but I don’t like to be eaten.”

Nathan howled with laughter. “I only eat dog food,” he said, and he held out his paw in an offer of friendship. Charlie came all the way down and smiled up at his new friend.

He and Nathan played together until Charlie’s mom called him in for lunch.