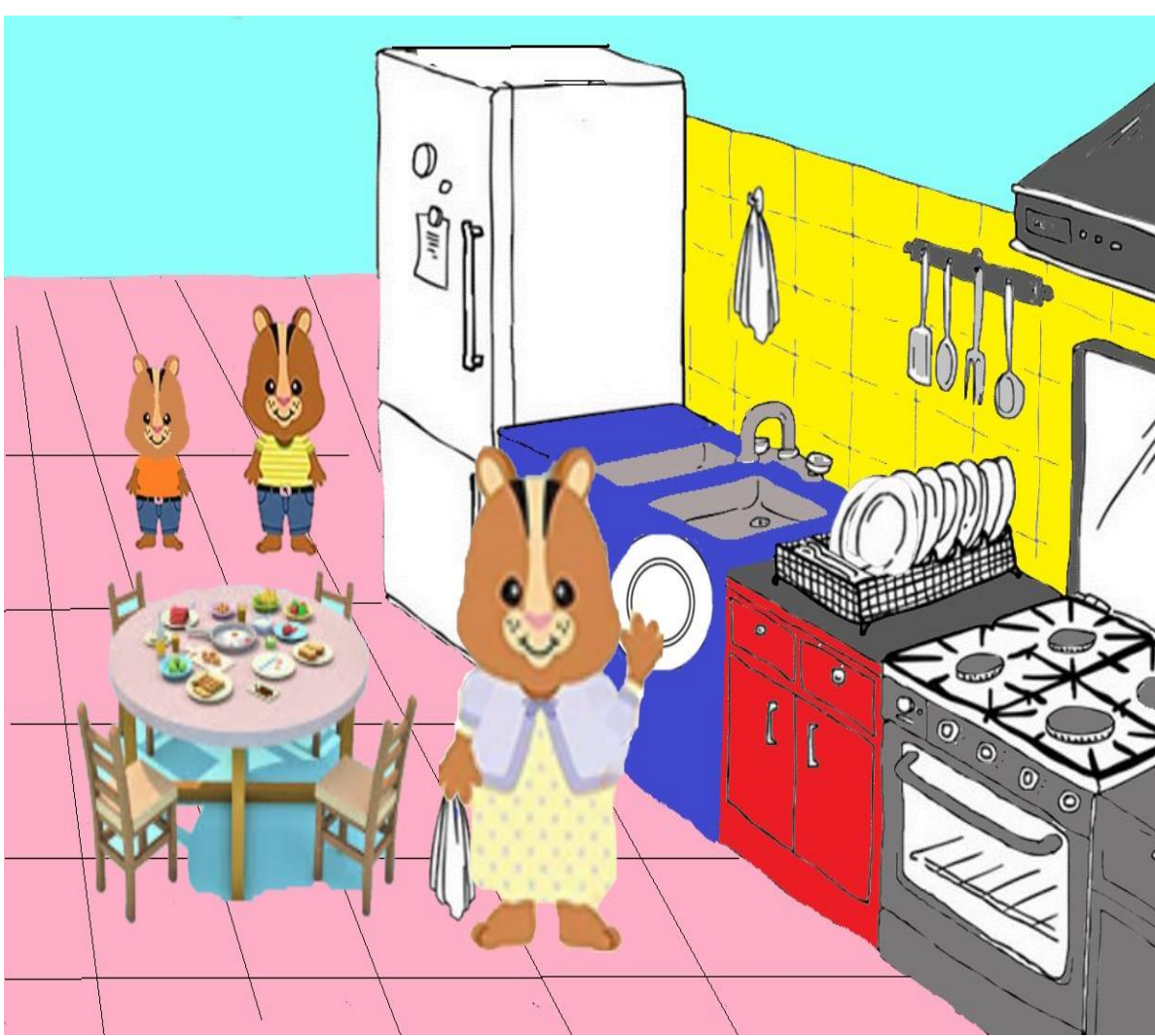


The Adventures of Charlie The Chipmunk “In Search of A Family”



By
Timothy Ewing



Chapter 1:

“Mama, can we go outside and play hide and go seek?” asked Charlie with his little brother Christopher close behind him. “Yes, Charlie,” said his mother, “but just promise me you don’t go outside of our yard, so I can keep an eye on you. I have a lot of work to do around the house today, so I’m going to be very busy” she concluded as she began washing the dirty dishes from breakfast. “We promise, Mama” the two small chipmunks said in agreement as they rushed out into the yard.



Charlie and his brother had fun for hours going back and forth hiding and finding each other. It was now Charlie's turn to hide once again. Christopher closed his eyes and began to count. "One, two, three, four." Charlie scrambled as he searched for a place to hide. After a few seconds, he found the perfect spot: a tiny opening in the bottom of a huge oak tree. Charlie thought to himself, no one would ever find me here. This is the perfect hiding spot.

As Charlie rushed over to hide, he noticed that the tree was just a little bit past the boundaries of the yard. Charlie wrestled with himself over what he should do. If he stayed in the yard, he knew his brother would find him, however, if he hid in the tree, though he'd be the champion of hide and seek, he'd be disobeying his mom's orders to stay in the yard. As Charlie heard his brother yell, "Ready or not here I come," he quickly ran down the dirt trail and hid in the big oak tree.



Chapter 2:

Tired from all his excitement with his brother, Charlie decided to take a quick nap. Charlie found the shade from the inside of the tree to be very refreshing and thought he would just sleep for a little bit then get home before dinner. No one would ever know that he disobeyed his mom's orders and he'd be the best in the whole forest at hide and seek.



A few hours had gone by and it was now dark. Charlie's mom and dad had given up their search and went home for the night. Charlie awoke alone and afraid in the big oak tree. Charlie had tried to find his way back to the house but could not remember which trail he had taken.



Day after day, Charlie would try to find his way home, but each time he ended up right back where he started at the big oak tree. Every night before bed, he prayed that there would be someone to care for him, love him, and take him in as their own for he missed his family very much.



Chapter 3:

One day he decided to go on a trip, a trip to find a family. He packed up all his belongings and was on his way. Excited about his new adventure he hummed a quiet tune to himself as he scurried down the small dirt path. He followed it around the bend and down the hill until he came to the opening at the crystal blue river. There he came across a family of ducks, a mother with little ducklings swimming close behind in row.



Charlie ran as fast as he could, took a huge leap and.... SPLASH!!! Into the water he went. Paddling his little paws as fast as he could, he desperately tried to catch up with the ducks that seemed to glide over the water with ease. Finally, he got close enough to hear the conversation of the mother with her ducklings.

"I love you Simon" the mother quacked. Just as quickly as she spoke, the little duck quacked back, "I love you too mama." Down the line the mother said the same thing to each duckling, "I love you Alex, Cindy and Jane, I love you Willy, Molly and Wayne. I love you Suzie, Mary and Andy, I love you little Billy, Amber, and Randy" All together they said, "We love you too Mama."

As the little chipmunk struggled to stay afloat his heart grew sad, for he saw love, but knew he didn't belong there.

Chapter 4:

Charlie dried himself off and sat down for a bite to eat. He was quite tired and very hungry from his long swim. After an acorn sandwich, and some berries from a nearby tree, he began once again to walk down the winding path.



As he turned the corner, he came to a beautiful tree. It was a tree that reminded him of his very own tree, except this tree was far better. This tree had leaves of red, orange, yellow and green. Charlie decided to stop wide-eyed, in awe of his new found wonder.



As his eyes focused on every aspect of that tree, he noticed on one of the tiny branches a nest. A nest filled with the most beautiful of creatures; a creature painted blue with the most beautiful wings. The creature began singing a song, a tune so heavenly, it filled him with joy and a huge smile came upon his face.



He climbed up the tree but hid behind a small branch. For the next few minutes, he tried to whistle and sing like the creature had done. He tried really hard, over and over again, forming his lips different directions. He tried just about anything to get a sound to come out. Just as he thought he finally had it, all that came out was a whimper so soft, he could hardly hear it himself.



As Charlie continued to practice, he didn't realize that the mother bird was watching him. After a few chuckles to herself, she stopped him and asked, "What is your name little one?" With a smile that stretched from ear to ear he said, "My name is Charlie! Can I be in your family?" The mother bird said, "Why Charlie, you're cute as a button, sure you can be in my family. You're just in time for our flying lessons"

Charlie looked at the mother. Then he looked at himself, at the babies, and back at himself. His smile quickly turned to a frown, for he had no wings. Seeing this, the mother began plucking feathers from her beautiful coat. The babies began to do the same as well. Before long, they had made wings for little Charlie. He was so excited, for he felt he was loved and he was content.



As the mother explained the do's and the don'ts of flying, Charlie listened with his eyes firmly focused on her. He repeated over and over in his head, "Flap your wings gently and let the air current guide you. Flap your wings gently and let the air current guide you, flap your wings gently and let the air current guide you" Then he repeated, "Don't fly too close to the ground for a hungry predator might attack you. Don't fly too close to the ground, for a hungry predator might attack you."

Finally, the mother was finished and they were ready to fly. The mother went first, demonstrating to her little ones just how it was done. Then, she encouraged them one by one to do the same. The little birds struggled at first, but caught on almost immediately, gliding and cheering as they soared high into the air. You could hear the echo in the air, "Hey mom look at me!" "No mom, watch me!" "I'm flying mom, I'm flying!"



Finally, it was Charlie's turn. All the baby birds surrounded the nest, watching in awe and wonder as Charlie began to run across the nest. One by one they all began yelling, “You can do it!” “Come on Charlie!” “Go Charlie Go! Go Charlie Go!” He crept back as far as he could in the nest, ran as fast as he could, and jumped with all his might.

Cheers of excitement surrounded the nest as his arms stretch out. "I'm flying" he thought. "Look at me I'm flying!" He began flapping his wings, harder and harder as he moved through the air.

Looking on, the mother's face turned from delight to sheer horror as he began to fall faster and faster toward the ground. She plunged nose first, as fast as she could fly towards Charlie, as he got closer and closer to the ground.



As she got closer to Charlie, all she could hear coming from Charlie's lips were, "I'm flying, I'm flying, look mom I'm flying" At the last possible second, she grasped him with her beak, flipped him on her back and flew him back safely to the nest. Looking down from the nest, Charlie realized what had just happened and his smile turned back to a frown.

With encouraging words, she said to Charlie, "It's ok, try again. You'll get it." Her soothing words brought back his confidence, as he ran again full speed, diving head first and arms stretched as far as he could reach. All the birds gathered around Charlie once again screaming words of encouragement. "Come on Charlie! You can do it Charlie, go Charlie! Fly Charlie"



As Charlie reached the ledge of the nest, he pushed with all of his might, flapping his arms as fast as his little body could. Just then, a gust of wind swept under Charlie and carried him high up into the air. Cheers from the nest resounded as Charlie looked down and screamed, “I did it! I did it! I can fly!” Distracted by all the thoughts and emotions now running through his head, Charlie did not notice that just as before, he was again headed straight for the ground.



Trying as hard as she could, the mother again tried to rescue Charlie. This time however, it was too late. Charlie had crashed into a little bush nearby. Frantically, the mother yelled to Charlie, “Are you ok?” The tension mounted as the silence grew and he remained motionless. Finally, after what seemed like an eternity to the mother, she saw Charlie slowly open his eyes. “I’m ok mama, but I think I broke my wing.”

The mother stretched out her wing and wrapped it around Charlie. “There, there, Charlie. It’s ok. We can make you a new one. The important thing is that you’re safe. Come with me back to the nest, and I’ll fix you up good as new.”

Charlie sat there in the embrace of the mother for a moment. He looked at his broken wing and his heart grew sad once again. “Thank you so much for letting me be in your family.” He finally said. “You have shown me love and taken me in as one of your own, but I must go now, for I do not belong here.”

With tears in his eyes, he hugged the mother one last time, turned, and walked away.



Chapter 5:



Charlie began walking once again on the dusty path. All he could think about was how lonely he was, and how he longed to fit in. Exhausted from his adventure, he laid his head down on a nearby rock, and fell asleep. It was now getting dark and Charlie was still fast asleep on the rock.



Returning from a long day of fishing, two bear cubs noticed Charlie lying motionless on the rock. “Hey Jimmy, look over there! Do you see what I see?” said the first bear.

“It looks like he’s been banged up pretty bad. Look at all the cuts on his body Benny. Do you think he’s still alive?”

Jimmy answered. “I don’t know, go over there and poke him.” Benny replied.

“No way!” Jimmy yelled, “I’m not touching that thing” “

Are you scared? Benny questioned in a sarcastic tone. “Is little Jimmy afrawyed of a little bitty chipmunk?”

After a moment in thought, Jimmy replied “I’m not afraid, I’ll prove it to you” and began to approach Charlie. “Hello! Are you alive? Can you hear me?” yelled Jimmy. “Hello!”



“Poke him, Jimmy,” Benny yelled from a far. Just as Jimmy was bending down, Charlie opened his eyes and sat up. Both were startled at the sight of each other. “Don’t be afraid, little guy. I’m not going to hurt you,” said Jimmy trying to comfort Charlie who was now screaming quite loudly.



When Charlie realized, the bear didn’t want to hurt him, he slowly stopped screaming and asked, “Who are you?” “My name is Jimmy,” said the big brown bear as he looked down at Charlie. “That’s my brother Benny over there. Are you ok? Those cuts look really bad.” “Where am I?” asked Charlie. “Save your breath, everything will be ok. I’m going to take you home with me and take good care of you.” Too exhausted to argue, Charlie hopped on his back and fell back asleep as the two bears headed towards home.



Chapter 6:



“Look what I found mama!” Jimmy screamed as he entered the small cave in the heart of the woods.

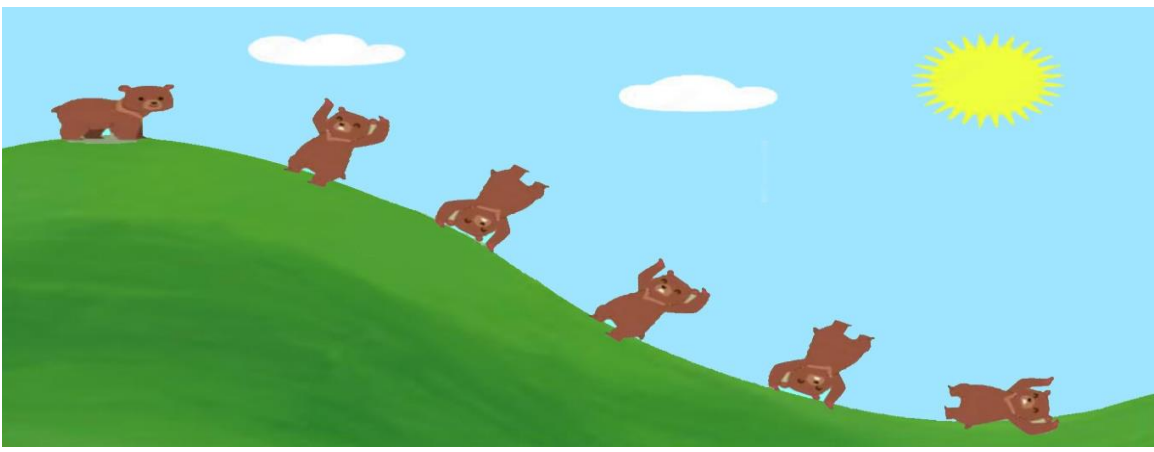
“I found him first” replied Benny.

“Did not!” “Did too!” they both argued back and forth.

“Enough boys,” said the mother bear. “Quiet your voices; you don’t want to wake him now do you?”

In unison they both replied “No, mama.”

“Now go get washed up, it’s almost time for supper. You did get some fish right boys?” inquired the mother. “Yes mama, they’re right here,” said Benny. “Good!” said the mother, “Now run along and get washed up, your father will be home any minute.”



The boys left the house and headed down to the stream. “Tag, you’re it!” yelled Benny as he curled into a ball and rolled down the hill. “Hey! No fair, wait up!!” Jimmy screamed back as he hurried down the hill after his older brother. The two young bear cubs tumbled all the way to the bottom of the hill.



Jimmy jumped on top of his brother, pinning him to the ground. The two began wrestling and rolling around in the dirt. Jimmy and Benny loved wrestling. It was an activity they both enjoyed doing together more than anything else. Even though Jimmy never could beat his brother, it never stopped him from trying. After a few minutes of struggle, Benny finally pinned his brother. “One, two, three!” a voice came from behind them. “Papa!” the cubs screamed in unison as they got up and wrapped their paws around him.

“Hello there boys. How was your day?” Both bears began speaking excitedly at once as their father tried to keep up with them both. “Woah now boys, slow down, one at a time.”



Benny spoke up first as their father began to help them get cleaned up at the stream. “Well mama made us get up extra early today to go fishing so we could have some food for supper. So, we came down here to the stream and you’ll never guess what we saw.”

“Yea, you’ll never guess” echoed Jimmy. “

We saw the funniest looking bird we’ve ever seen” continued Benny.

“Oh yea?” the father questioned with a facial expression that clearly showed his curiosity.

“Yea, it had wings like a bird, and had birds all around him, but he was huge!” again echoed Jimmy.

“He was so huge that whenever he tried to fly, he just fell to the ground” finished Benny.

“Wow! Must have been some bird” the father bear exclaimed.

“Oh yea, and when we were coming home,” Jimmy quickly added. “I saw this chipmunk on the side of the road and he wasn’t moving. He had cuts on his body and I thought he was dead.”

“Interesting,” the father replied.



“I saw him first,” yelled Benny. “Did not!” “Did too!” “Did not!” “Did too, did too, did t.” “All right boys!” the father spoke interrupting the boys mid-sentence. “You can tell me all about it on the way home.” The boys went back and forth sharing everything that happened as they walked home.

Chapter 7:



“Honey I’m home!” Yelled the father as he entered the small cave? Martha? “In here sweetheart!” she yelled back from the other room as she finished putting the last bandage on Charlie’s paw. “Dinner will be ready in a few minutes. Boys set the table for one more tonight. We’ve got a special guest eating with us tonight” continued the mother. “Yes mama” the boys spoke in unison as they rushed in excitement to get the table ready.



The dinner table was full of conversation as the bear family began one by one asking Charlie questions. With just as much excitement, Charlie answered each one sharing how he was an orphan, and retelling all of his adventures with the ducks and with the birds.

“Can Charlie live with us mama?” asked Jimmy with a new found love and concern for his new little friend. “Yea mama, can he?” echoed Benny. “Pleeeeeeease!!!” both cubs said in unison, batting their big brown eyes just like a puppy dog.

After a few awkward moments of silence, the mother bear said, “I don’t know boys, I’ll have to talk it over with your father.”

“Please Papa!” Please, please, please!!” the boys began to say again. “He can stay in our room” continued Jimmy.

Looking at each other, mama and papa nodded in agreement and said, “He can stay.” “YAY!!!” the boys screamed as they ran over and gave their parents a big hug.

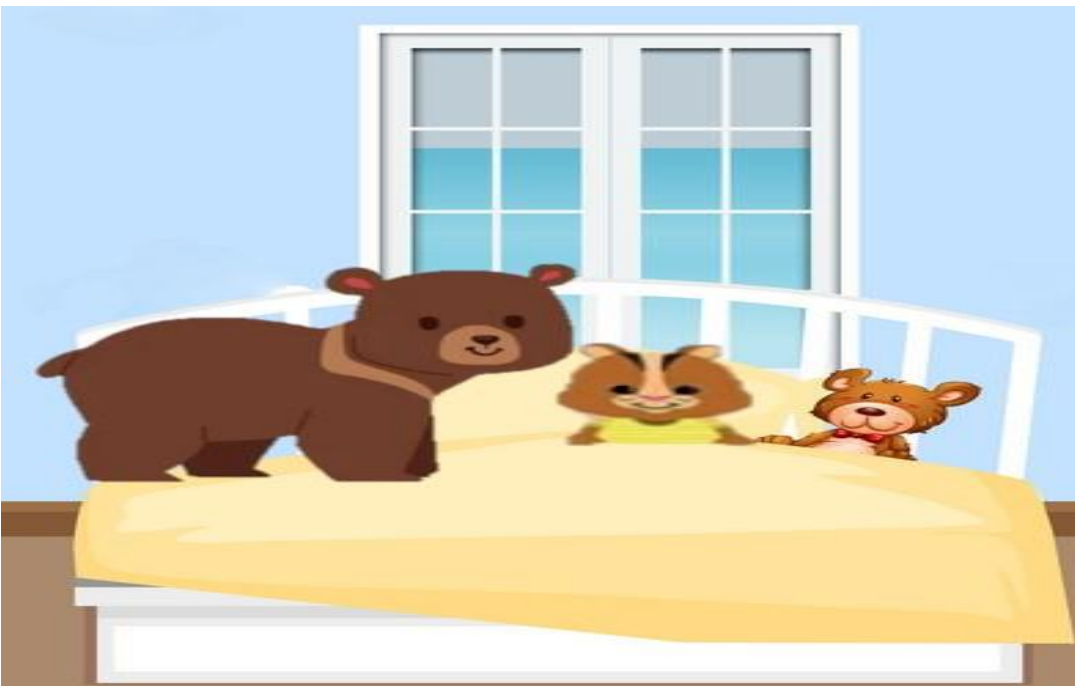
“Now run along and get ready for bed” mama concluded. That night, Charlie fell right asleep with a huge smile on his face. For he was loved and once again he felt like he belonged.



Chapter 8:



“Charlie! Charlie!” two voices yelled in the distance. It was Charlie’s mother and father, yelling as loud as they could as they walked through the woods on their daily search for their son. “Oh, we’ll never find him in this huge forest,” Charlie’s mother mumbled to herself as she continued to scream.



“Charlie! Charlie! It’s time to get up!” an exuberant voice said. As Charlie slowly opened his eyes, he saw Jimmy standing over him with an excited look on his face.

“Do you know what today is?” questioned Jimmy as Charlie stretched and sat up in bed. “Nooooo,” Charlie said as he yawned. “Today is Saturday!! No chores, no responsibilities, no nothin’! Just a day of fun. Now hurry up, we don’t want to be late.” continued Jimmy. “Late for what?” Charlie questioned as he struggled to get out of the big bed. “Don’t worry, you’ll see. It’s a surprise,” concluded Jimmy.

“Where are we going?” asked Charlie as he tried as hard as he could to catch up with Jimmy and Benny who were already down the hill. “Hurry up! We’re almost there” Yelled Jimmy back to Charlie as they turned the final corner and waited by the entrance to the small dirt path that led to the stream.



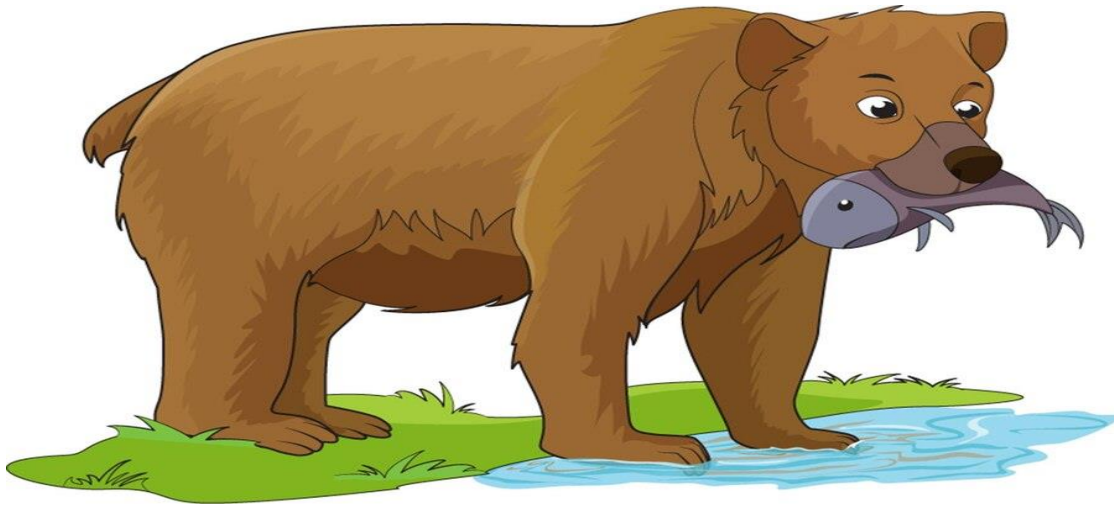
Benny and Jimmy waited anxiously as little Charlie finally caught up. “Now close your eyes Charlie, we’re almost there,” said Benny as he led Charlie through the trees to the opening of the stream. “Ok Charlie, you can open your eyes,” Benny said with excitement.



“WOW!!! It’s beautiful,” shared Charlie as his eyes finally came into focus. “The water is so clear. You can see all the fish and everything” continued Charlie.

“Welcome to heaven on earth!” Benny shared in his best announcer voice. “Yea, heaven on earth” Jimmy echoed trying to imitate his older brother. This is where we come to swim, play, and get all our fish for mama” Benny explained to Charlie. “Pretty cool huh Charlie?” asked Benny as he took a huge leap into the water pushing his younger brother in the water with him.

“Come on in Charlie, the water is great,” yelled Benny to Charlie as he completely submerged himself, coming up out of the water with a fish in his mouth.



“Ever been fishing before Charlie?” asked Jimmy as Charlie finally entered the water. “No, I’ve never been fishing in my whole life” Charlie answered back frantically flapping his arms to stay afloat.

Noticing that Charlie was struggling, Benny quickly swam underneath Charlie putting him on his back. “Hold on tight, I’m gonna teach you how to fish,” said Benny as he had his eyes firmly focused on a fish just a few feet ahead of him.



“Ok, the first thing you need to remember when trying to catch a fish is to be very quiet and still. Any sudden movement will scare the fish away,” shared Benny as he crept a few inches closer to the fish. Then, when you’re under the water open your mouth real wide and use your arms to help trap the fish. Finally, try to get to the shore as quickly as you can so that the flapping fish doesn’t get away,” finished Benny as his eyes focused even more on the fish. “Ready to catch a fish Charlie?” asked Benny waiting with anticipation for the right moment to strike. “I t-t-thiiiiink so,” said Charlie hesitantly not knowing what to expect. “Ready, here we goooooo” Shouted Benny as they both plunged into the water coming up two seconds later with a very large fish.



“Wow!” exclaimed Jimmy as he looked on at Charlie and Benny, who had a huge fish in his mouth. “That fish is huge!” continued Jimmy. “After placing the fish on the ground, Benny asked, “Are you ok Charlie?” Benny had noticed that Charlie had a sad look on his face. “What’s wrong Charlie? You just caught a fish; you should be happy!” Jimmy questioned with a puzzled look on his face. “I didn’t catch a fish, Jimmy, Benny did. I don’t think I’m cut out for this whole fishing thing. I can’t even swim,” Charlie said to Jimmy. “Is that what you’re so sad about Charlie?” asked Benny laughing a little to himself. “Fishing is very hard to do Charlie. It took me years of practice before I could catch fish as easy as I do now. Don’t worry, with practice you’ll get it” continued Benny. “The key is to start small and work your way up to the bigger fish,” Jimmy explained to Charlie trying to show that he was just as intelligent as his older brother was. “Oh, ok then” said Charlie, still a little sad but cheered up by the encouraging words of the two bears.

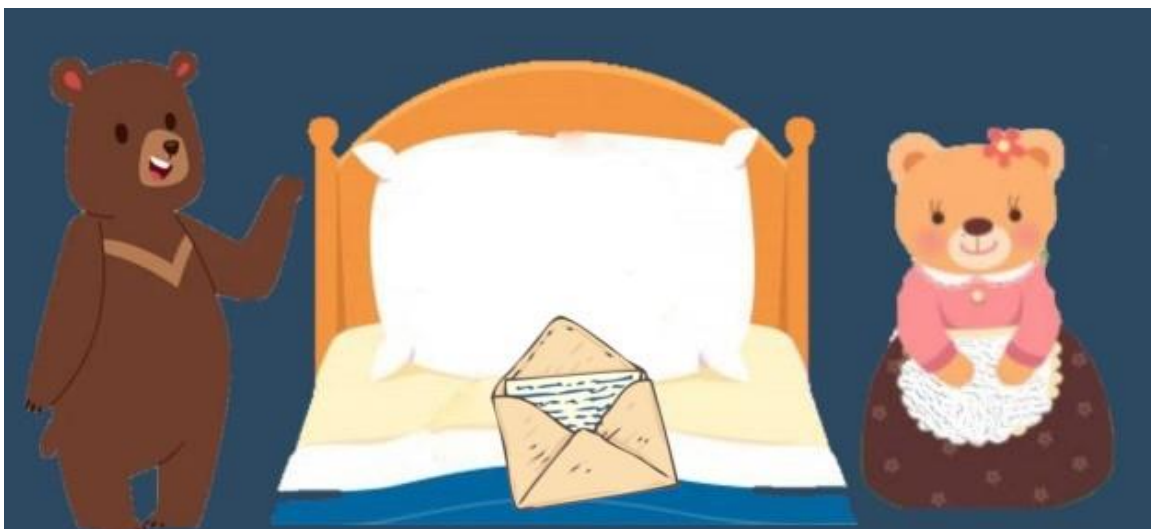
“Forget fishing for today. We have enough fish at home. It’s Saturday, let’s have some fun!” exclaimed Benny as he and Jimmy began playing around in the water. Charlie’s sadness quickly turned to joy as he played for hours in the water.



That night, Charlie tossed and turned in his bed. Though he was happy being with the bear family, deep down inside he once again began to question whether he truly belonged. Charlie remembered the fishing experience and how he didn’t even like fish. He then decided that bright and early in the morning he would leave the bear family and go back to his old oak tree that he missed and loved so very much.

Chapter 9:

“Charlie! Charlie! It’s time for breakfast,” yelled Benny from across the room. “Charlie?” again spoke Benny with a puzzled look on his face as he looked down on the empty bed. “Momma, Papa, Jimmy, come quick, Charlie’s missing,” Benny screamed in the loudest voice he could muster. “Benny, what is it?” questioned his mama as she rushed into the room. “Charlie’s missing.” Benny told his mother with obvious panic in his voice. “Quiet down, you don’t want to wake up your younger brother now do you? I’ll get your father and we’ll go look for him. Everything will be ok,” said the mama bear trying her best to comfort her son.



“Look at this mama, it looks like a letter,” Benny said to his mom. “What does it say mama?” asked Benny as he handed the paper to his mama. Putting on her glasses, mama bear cleared her throat and began to read the letter Charlie left the two boys.

“Dear Benny, Jimmy, Mama, and Papa,

Thank you very much for letting me stay at your house and for taking care of me when I was hurt. You have been so kind to me and have made me feel very special and loved. I felt like one of the family.

However, you are bears and I’m a chipmunk. I just don’t fit in your world. So, I have decided to continue on my journey to find my real family. I will miss you all very much and think about you often.

Love always,
Charlie

“Go get your brother Benny and I’ll get your father. We’ll all go look for Charlie, ok?” said Mama bear to her son. “Yes, mama.” Benny said in reply. So, the four bears left their cave and went in search of Charlie.

Chapter 10:



“Charlie!” “Charlie!” “Charlie!” “Charlie!” the four bears screamed as they searched the forest for their little lost friend. The sun was high over head as the search continued into the early part of the afternoon. The bears had been searching for little Charlie for over three hours but couldn’t find Charlie anywhere.

“Mama, I’m hungry, can we stop for lunch” asked Jimmy as he stood in the shade of a tall oak tree that stood nearby the family. “That sounds like a good idea Jimmy,” the mother bear answered as she took some food out of her bag and handed it to Jimmy, Benny and Papa bear who were close behind. “I hope we find Charlie soon,” said Benny with concern in his voice. “I’m really worried about him,” continued Benny as he reached for another sandwich. “We’ll find him boys,” assured Papa bear. “We just have to be patient”

“Charlie!” “Charlie!” A strange female voice screamed from afar. “Did you hear that?” asked Jimmy. “Hear what?” questioned Benny as he began to look around through the forest. “Charlie!” a voice yelled again. “There it is again,” said Jimmy. “Someone is calling for Charlie.” “Over here!” yelled the Papa. “Over here!” he yelled again.

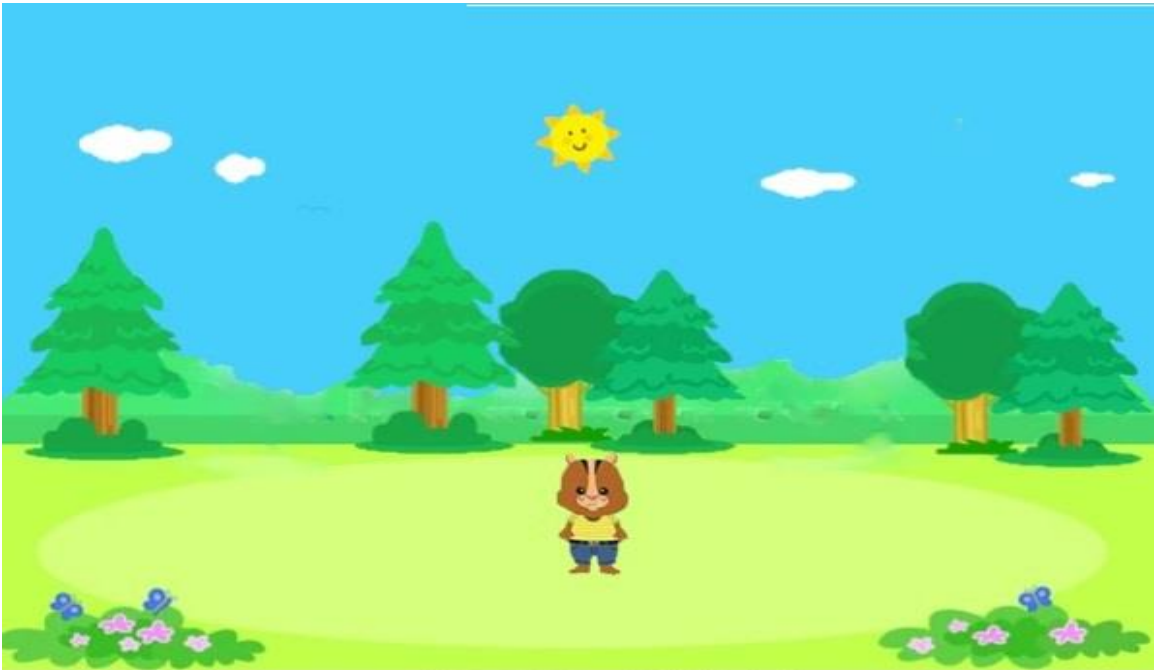


“You have my Charlie?” screamed the female voice as she emerged through the bushes with her husband close behind clearly out of breath from their sprint. As she stood in front of the bear family, her face turned from an excited grin to a look of pure terror. “Calm down ma’am, it’s ok, we’re not going to hurt you.” “Yeah, we’re not going to hurt you,” yelled Jimmy. “We’re looking for him too,” continued Jimmy to the mother chipmunk. “Let me explain,” shared the mother to the still very confused chipmunks. “Here sit under this tree and I’ll tell you both the whole story,” the mother bear said, guiding the mother and father chipmunk to the tree.

For the next hour, the mother bear explained the whole story of how Charlie came into their care, how she took care of him, took him in as her very own and how just this morning Charlie had left their cave. Charlie’s parents sat quietly as they listened to the mother bear speak and share all her stories of Charlie. In her heart, Charlie’s mom was relieved that her son was still alive, and that he was ok, but was still sad that he was missing. When the mother bear had finished, Charlie’s parents thanked the bears for their kindness and for taking such good care of Charlie and then went back through the bushes in search of their lost son.

Chapter 11:

The next morning, Charlie was awoken early by the bright light of the rising sun. He had spent the night in a nearby field on a soft cushion under the branches of a pine tree. Charlie was still sad that he left the bear family, but knew that it was for the best.



The rumbling from his little tummy told him it was time to search for food. It had been almost a whole day since he had eaten last and he was really hungry. Charlie looked around at the field he was in, and wondered where he was going to find food.



After walking for quite awhile, Charlie finally came to a small dirt trail. As he looked down the path, his eyes lit up as he spotted a huge apple tree full of delicious ripe juicy apples. Charlie ran as fast as he could towards the tree, for apples were Charlie's favorite food. His eyes grew bigger and bigger as the tree grew closer and closer. Then, just as he was about to reach up and grasp hold of the apple, the path he was walking on collapsed.

Charlie began falling faster and faster down into the hole from the road he was walking on. Thud! Finally, Charlie landed at the bottom. "OUCH!" a voice screamed from within the hole. Charlie, startled by the loud voice, began looking around to see where the voice was coming from, but couldn't see a thing because it was dark all around him. Charlie heard the voice again. This time it said, "Would you please get off my paw, I need it to dig."

Charlie reached his paw down and felt the fur of this strange animal. Quickly he jumped off the animal and ran as fast as he could in the opposite direction. However, what Charlie didn't realize was that he was headed straight for a dirt wall. "Stop, come back, the voice yelled again. "You're going to hit the..." BANG! It was too late, Charlie did not hear the voice and went head first into the wall.

After a few minutes, Charlie finally regained his senses and opened his eyes. Charlie stood still in awe, as he looked at all the tunnels and underground passageways that were before him. "Are you ok? You hit your head pretty hard," asked the strange creature.



"Where am I and how did I get here?" asked Charlie, as he continued to look all around at all the caverns and underground tunnels. "You my son, are in my new dining room. All these tunnels are parts of my home. Over there is my kitchen, to your left is the bathroom, and all those to your right are my kid's bedrooms. The first room over there is the three boy's rooms: Geoffrey, Gill and Gregory's. Gina's room is below the boys and under Gina's room is Gloria's. Together we're the Gopher's. Oh, my name is Gary. It's nice to meet you.... hmm, I seemed to have forgotten your name. That's what happens to you when you get old, you forget things," said the gopher. "That's cause I never told you sir, it's Charlie," Charlie said with a small giggle. "It's nice to meet you too," continued Charlie to the father gopher.

Looking at his pocket watch, Gary said to Charlie, “My wife Grace should be home soon to make supper if you’d like to join us.” “I would love to come for dinner, I haven’t eaten in a whole day, said Charlie whose tummy was now growling quite loudly. “Well, ok then, you better get washed up for dinner. I’ll set an extra plate,” said Gary to Charlie. “It will be our pleasure to have you as our guest of honor tonight, continued Gary as he headed toward the kitchen.



As Charlie was getting cleaned up, his heart was once again happy. He thought to himself, I must be pretty special to be the guest of honor. I’ve never been a guest of honor before. Charlie held his head up high as he began washing his hands and his face. Distracted in all of his happy thoughts, Charlie didn’t realize that the five children now were all staring at him from behind the bathroom door. They all laughed as Charlie began singing and dancing in front of the mirror. The littlest gopher, Gregory, wanted to get a closer look, so he decided to sneak behind Charlie. One by one, the others all began tip toeing behind Charlie just as Gregory had done. Soon, all five of the gophers were behind dancing and acting silly just like Charlie. Their giggles soon grew to a roaring laugh. As Charlie turned around, the five children scrambled to hide, but it was too late.

Charlie, not knowing what to do said, “Hi, my name is Charlie, would you like to be my friend?” Immediately, Gregory said, in the quietest but cutest voice Charlie had ever heard, “Sure I’ll be your friend.” Then one by one the others followed one by one all agreeing to be Charlie’s friend. After introducing themselves to Charlie, they all went to the kitchen, for it was now time for dinner.

Chapter 12:



The dinner table was buzzing with excitement as Charlie began telling the gopher family all about his adventures in the woods with the ducks, the birds, and the bears. Just as before, Charlie explained to them how he was an orphan and how he was on a quest to find his family; whoever that may be. Charlie enjoyed the attention he received from the gopher family and happily answered all the questions they had for him.

That night, Charlie had the most fun as each of the children took turns showing him around their house, through the tunnels and other caverns they had dug and created. That night Charlie was exhausted from all of his exploring and fun with the gopher kids and fell right to sleep.

The next morning Charlie woke up to a dark cold empty room. After a few minutes, Charlie finally crawled out of bed and headed for the kitchen. The smell of apple pie lingered through the air. “Why good morning, Charlie,” said the mother gopher.

“Did you sleep well? You looked really tired, so I let you sleep late today,” she continued. “I slept very well Mrs. Gopher,” the bed was so soft and cushiony.” Charlie answered. “Good, I’m glad to hear it, here take a seat, you’re just in time for lunch. And if you eat everything on your plate, I’ll let you try a piece of my apple pie.”



So, Charlie began eating the green leafy like substance on his plate. Charlie was surprised at how good it tasted and asked if he could have seconds. “I see you like my cabbage casserole,” said the mother gopher. I picked it fresh from the garden last night” she continued. “This is dewishious,” Charlie said with a mouth full of food. “My mommy used to make me really great breakfasts like this for me all the time” continued Charlie. “I sure do miss her a lot,” Charlie concluded as he finished the last bite of his breakfast.

“Are you ready for some apple pie?” asked the mother gopher. Charlie’s eyes lit up as she placed the biggest piece of pie he’d ever seen on his plate. “I sure am. Apple pie is my favorite dessert in the whole world!” Charlie said excitedly as he quickly shoved the first spoonful of pie into his mouth.



“So, tell me more about your mother Charlie. It sounds like you miss her very much” Mrs. Gopher said. “I do miss her, a whole lot. She was the most wonderful person in the world,” said Charlie. “In the morning she would make me breakfast, just like you did today for me. Then she would sit down with me and teach me about all kinds of cool stuff about life and things in the world. She would sing to me, read me stories, and play lots of games with me. Then at night she’d tuck me in and give me a goodnight kiss. Sometimes, she’d even bring me a late night snack. That was my favorite,” continued Charlie who now was now smiling quite big thinking back on all the times with his mother. “She sounds like a great mother, Charlie. I’m sorry you got separated from her,” said the mother gopher trying to comfort Charlie whose smile turned back to a frown as he realized how much he missed his mom.

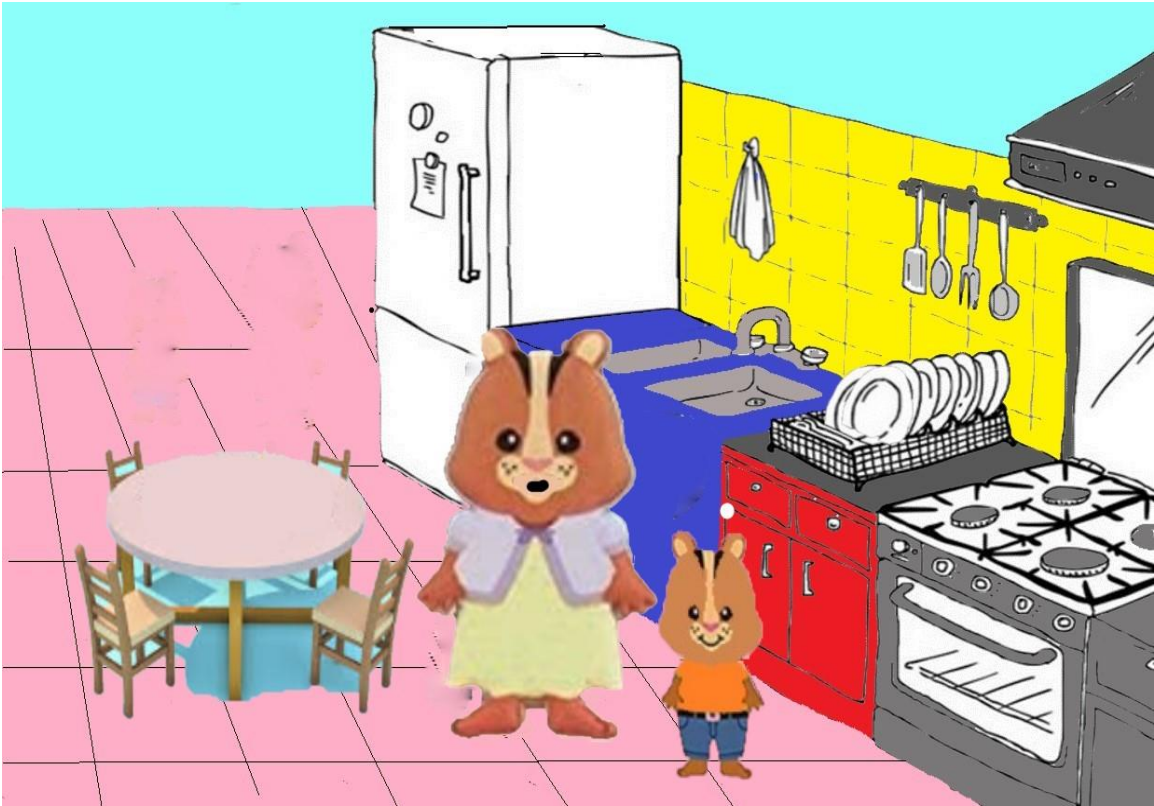
“Can I ask you how you got separated from her?” questioned the mother who now was very concerned for Charlie. Charlie replied, “Well, one day I remember I was playing outside in the woods with my brother. My mom told us to stay close to the house so that we wouldn’t get lost. Well, we were playing hide and seek and it was his turn to be it. So, I went in search of a place to hide. As I was running, I saw this path and decided to take it. I followed it to this huge oak tree. I then went inside the bottom of the tree and hid. I was tired from running and decided to take a nap. The next thing I remember was that it was morning. I tried looking for the path I took to get to the tree, but I couldn’t find it. I was lost, and very afraid. As a result, I just decided to go back to the tree. I figured eventually my parents would find me and bring me home safe. However, they never found me. That oak tree has been my home ever since” finished Charlie.

“That’s quite a story Charlie,” said the mother gopher. “I just want to go home,” said Charlie. “Wherever that is” he continued. “I’m sure your mom is worried sick about you and is looking for you even as we speak,” said the mother gopher to Charlie as she now was getting things from her cupboard and placing them in a bag. “You’re welcome to stay here with us Charlie, but I think you won’t be truly happy until you’re back with your real family” continued the mother as she handed Charlie the bag of goodies.



Charlie took the bag and thanked Mrs. Gopher for all of her kindness, love, and most of all for the wonderful breakfast. Charlie waived goodbye as he left the tunnel and emerged from the ground to the blinding sunlight above. Charlie, now was more determined than ever to find his family and began screaming as loud as he could, “Mama! Mama! Where are you Mama?”

Chapter 13:



“Mama! Mama!” yelled little Christopher as he ran into the kitchen where his mom was making breakfast in the kitchen. “Can I go with you and Papa today to look for Charlie?” Christopher was Charlie’s younger brother who for some reason was very insistent on going to search for his older brother. “Calm down Christopher,” said his mother to him.

“You never wanted to come with us before to look for Charlie, what makes you want to come with us now?” asked his mother who now was quite curious at her little one’s request. “I know mama, but yesterday, I was talking with my friend Joshua who said that he thought he saw Charlie with a family of gophers. He showed me where he saw them and I wanted to go with you to help,” continued Christopher.

“Wait a second, slow down, let me get this straight. You think you know where Charlie is?” asked the mother chipmunk. “Yes, Mama, I think I do.” “Why didn’t you tell us sooner? Honey, come quick, Christopher thinks he knows where Charlie is,” screamed the mother upstairs to the bedroom where her husband was.



“What is it sweetheart? What’s all the yelling about?” asked the father chipmunk who now was out of breath from sprinting down the stairs. “Christopher thinks he knows where Charlie is” explained the mother. “Well, why didn’t you say so, what are we waiting for? Let’s go!” yelled the father as he rushed out of the door with the other two chipmunks following close behind.

Chapter 14:

Christopher led the way as the three chipmunks searched for Charlie. The two parents ran as fast as they could trying to keep up with their young energetic son. “We’re almost there mama, I promise” yelled Christopher as he turned the corner and headed down the hill. The mother and father followed close behind as they raced closer and closer to a big apple tree that seemed to be right in the middle of the pathway. Christopher stopped right in front of the tree and said, “It was right here mama, Joshua said he saw him right here.”



“This is just an old apple tree Christopher, there’s nothing here but apples” said the father chipmunk to his son. “No papa, look, there, in the ground, there’s a door!” said Christopher now even more excited than ever as he began to knock as loud as he could on the front part of the door. “Hello? Hello? Is anyone there?” yelled the mother chipmunk who began knocking on the door along with her son.



“Who’s there?” asked a female voice from behind the door. “My name is Cynthia and I’m looking for my son, Charlie, have you seen him?” Immediately the door flew wide open and out ran the mother gopher to greet the chipmunk family. “Yes, yes, I have seen your son. He was just here about an hour ago. I sent him off looking for you” continued the mother gopher. “Which way did he go?” asked the father chipmunk who now was more anxious than ever to find his son. “He went over there down the hill past the field with all the flowers in it.” “Thank you so much,” said the mother as the family of chipmunks raced off in the direction of the flowery field.

Chapter 15:

“Charlie!” “Charlie!” “Charlie” yelled the mother, father, and baby chipmunk. “Charlie!” The mother screamed again. Her heart was racing as she thought to herself, I’m going to find my baby, I just know it.

Meanwhile, Charlie had taken a break to eat a few snacks out of his bag. Though he was pretty full from the big breakfast, he thought to himself, there’s always room for a little more apple pie. So, he sat on a nearby rock and ate the remainder of the apple pie Mrs. Gopher had made for him.



After he was finished, Charlie gathered up his things and headed back on the trail. “Mama! Mama!” He yelled as he looked around at all of his surroundings. That oak tree looks familiar Charlie thought to himself as he ran as fast as he could to it. “It is, it is the tree I used to play in all the time,” said Charlie out loud to himself as he began climbing the branches just like old times. Charlie thought to himself, if I stay here, my family will have to find me. So, Charlie sat and waited hoping that his family would find him and take him home safe and sound.

Chapter 16:

After a few hours, Charlie began to grow tired. He decided he would take a nap to help pass the time. While he was asleep, Charlie had dreamt that he was at home with his mother, listening to stories, singing songs and playing games. Then he dreamt that he was outside with his brother, playing, scampering and having fun. Then he heard from afar, his mother calling him home for supper. “Coming Mama!” he screamed, over and over again, as he got closer and closer to the house.



“Did you hear that?” said the mother chipmunk to her husband. “It sounded like Charlie” continued the mother. “Charlie!” “Charlie!” “Charlie” the three chipmunks screamed again. “Mama, I’m coming” they all heard in reply. Excitedly, they all ran toward the sound of his voice. “It sounds like it’s coming from that acorn tree,” said the father as he ran even faster towards the sound of his son’s voice. “Charlie!” his father screamed once again as loud as he could.

The screams of the three chipmunks had grown so loud that it had awoken Charlie from his sleep. Still groggy from his nap, Charlie wasn’t sure if he was still dreaming or if the voices he had heard were real. He began calling out loud, “I’m right here Mama! I’m right here Papa!”

As his eyes began to come into focus, he saw running toward him his mother, father, and baby brother. This has got to be a dream, he thought to himself. He rubbed his eyes again, and saw his family once again getting closer and closer to him. Realizing it wasn't a dream, Charlie jumped out of the tree and ran as fast as he could towards his family.

Charlie's father was the first to reach Charlie. His mother and brother were close behind. Charlie gave the biggest hug to his mom, dad and brother and began to tell them all about his adventures.



That night, Charlie's mom and dad read him a story, tucked him into bed, kissed him goodnight, and gave him the biggest late night snack he'd ever seen. Charlie was happy once again, for he was truly loved, cared for, and finally home where he belonged.

Using the Bible story from Luke 15:11-24 and the Charlie story, answer the following questions in your group.

Discussion Questions:

- How did Charlie become separated from his family?
- How is this similar to the son in the Bible?

- When Charlie was alone what did he try to do to fill the emptiness inside of being alone?
- What did the son in the Bible do?

- How did Charlie feel when he lived with the different animal families? What did he ultimately say to himself each time?
- What feelings was the son having while he was tending the hogs? What did he say to himself?

- What feelings were Charlie's parents having before he came home?
- What feelings was the father in the Bible having before the son came home?

- In both stories, even though both Charlie and the son sinned and disobeyed their parents, why did their parents forgive them and welcome them back?

- What did the father do to celebrate his son's return?

- Who does the father in the story represent?
- Who does the son in the story represent?

- How does this story relate to us?

A special note from the author:

The Bible teaches us that we are like sheep and sometimes stray away from God. We have disobeyed God sinned against Him. Sin is anything that we think say or do that displeases God. Because of our sin, we're separated from God alone in the world. We have a void in our heart that nothing can fill but God. We may find happiness in things from this world from time to time, but no matter what we try to do to fill that void, we will ultimately still feel empty and that there's something missing because the only thing that can fill that void and emptiness is God.

Despite our sin, God never gives up on us. He keeps searching for us and calling to us. He wants to draw us back into his arms. He even sent Jesus, His Son, to save those who are lost. And He waits, patiently each and every day for us to recognize that He is right there and for us to realize we've disobeyed and come back to Him. He says to us, just come home, come back to me. Let Me forgive you, let Me love you, let me take care of you, let me provide everything you need. It's that simple. But you have to be willing to come home. To come back to the arms of a father who loves you more than you can ever dream of and more.

The ultimate question is this: where are you at right now. Are you alone, wandering around the world with that emptiness and void in your heart? Have you been forgiven at one time, but strayed away from God and doing things your own way? Or are you daily seeking to be in the arms of God. Daily giving your joys, worries, your fears, and your life to God each day and letting Him guide and direct your steps.

If you've never let the love of God into your heart, or if you've strayed from God come home. Let God love you and take care of you today. It's really simple. Just go to God and say to him,

Dear Lord, I know I am a sinner, and because of my sin, I was separated from you, but you came to earth died on the cross and rose again on the third day to take away my sins so that I could have a relationship with you. Come into my life now. I want to know you just like you know me. Thank you for your love. In your name I pray. Amen.

If you prayed that to God, then you know for sure you're forgiven. Your sins are wiped away. Your relationship with God is restored. You are now starting your journey on the straight and narrow. It will be difficult, and there will be times of struggle, but it's worth it. And the awesome thing about it is that no matter what God is always there. He's just a prayer away.

Now you may be saying to yourself, I prayed that prayer already, but I haven't been living for Christ like I should what should I do? Well, you can recommit your life to Christ. Just go to God and say, "Dear God, please forgive me for not living my life the way you want me to. I recommit myself to you right now, and I ask that you help me start living my life for you from this day forward. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

I want to challenge you to seriously think about what I said. Seriously consider God's gift for you. God loves you. He wants to have a relationship with you. But the choice is up to you. Will you come home to God today?