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Barley was only a couple of weeks old, but his eyes were now fully open and happily taking in all the new sights. And his tiny legs had grown strong enough that he could amble to the edge of the clearing to spend part of each day looking out at the waiting world beyond. One morning he was peering out through the tall grass at the rolling acres that ran along the nearby stream when he saw a sight that made him realize there were more creatures in the world than just dogs, butterflies, birds—there were other creatures that were far larger and more interesting that he had yet to meet.

Walking straight toward him was the boy he would come to know as Micah.

Micah was thin and small for his ten years, with dark brown hair and eyes so clear and green Barley could see their color even at a distance.

When Barley first saw him, Micah was carrying a huge basket, twice his size and tied to the boy's back with coarse rope that made ruts in his slight shoulders. The basket was filled with the firewood that Micah's father made him gather and carry. His father didn't need the firewood. The man was a wealthy farmer with a small army of farm laborers at his disposal. But Micah's father forced the boy to do things for reasons his young son didn't understand—or understood to be wrong…

As Barley watched and listened, Micah plunked himself down on his backside in the grass. Once there, the boy put his soiled cheeks into his hands and—believing he was alone and completely unaware that a two-week-old dog was inches away watching his every move—began to cry. As his slender body heaved up and down, he burst forth with sobs as hard and high as a ten-year- old boy can cry when something is breaking him.

Seeing and hearing this, Barley's young heart stirred. Before he knew it, Barley had reached out to the boy by means of an audible yip that was so loud and clear even Barley was surprised when it came out of his miniature mouth.

"Huh?" Micah gasped. The boy froze and held his breath in silence until Barley let loose with another sound. Micah's eyes lit up through his tears, and within a second he'd pulled himself up off the ground, ran to where the noises had come from, and pushed his head through the brush.

As soon as Barley lifted his tiny head and looked up into Micah's eyes, he saw how glad this small boy was to see him and understood how good it was to have someone be glad to see you. That's when Barley learned what friendship was—the feeling that you have always known someone, even if you've never met them before, mixed in with the feeling that you want to keep on knowing them forever.