



Chapter Eight – by Kay Hively

Christmas dinner was a feast, but John Robert had no appetite. The stranger who had come for dinner was a friendly man who brought news and stories. But John Robert knew that when the stranger left, he would take the big black dog back to its owner.

As Mrs. Herman served pumpkin pie, the stranger leaned back in his seat and asked if the family would like to know the history of Seaman — the dog that John Robert called Hercules. At first, no one spoke. But Mrs. Herman politely asked to hear about the dog.

Then came the remarkable story of Seaman.

Mr. Fields said he first met Seaman in 1803 when he joined Meriwether Lewis and William Clark on a military expedition that was going west.

Suddenly John Robert took an interest in the story that Mr. Fields was telling. Even here on the Tennessee frontier, everyone knew of Lewis and Clark. Stories and legends of their journey across the continent were told by everyone. John Robert had even heard about the death of Captain Meriwether Lewis. In fact, the famous explorer had died not far from where John Robert and his family lived.

John Robert knew that Captains Lewis and Clark were American heroes. The stories of their adventures had often been discussed and told by friends and strangers. And now, to John Robert's great surprise, one of the men who had gone with Lewis and Clark was having Christmas dinner at the Herman table.

Mr. Fields told the family that Captain Lewis had bought

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Seaman in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, just before the expedition started. Seaman had traveled all the way to the Pacific Ocean with the men, a journey of more than two years. Everyone on the expedition was a friend of Captain Lewis' dog, the stranger explained. Seaman had been a wonderful watch dog and was always willing to fight for the men.

Around the table, no one ate their pumpkin pie because everyone was listening to the stories Mr. Fields told. He said Seaman fought grizzly bears that wandered into camp when the men were sleeping, and he even lost part of a foot in a fight with a beaver.

Mr. Fields said he had worried about Seaman after Captain Lewis died. Stories had been told that Seaman laid on Captain Lewis' grave for many weeks and then disappeared.

For two hours Mr. Fields told stories about the Lewis and Clark expedition. But the best thing he said was that Captain Lewis would be proud to know where his dog was living. Mr. Fields said that Seaman, like Captains Lewis and Clark, was a pioneer and a legend. Seaman, the Christmas guest said, had gone bravely where others had never gone.

Then Mr. Fields patted John Robert's head and said that the Herman farm was the perfect place for a frontier legend to spend the rest of his life.

A big smile came to John Robert's face. Yes, it was a great Christmas, and the pumpkin pie tasted really good.

Things to Think About and Do

- Seaman was the only dog to go on the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Name 10 people who went on that journey to the Pacific Ocean.
- Do some research and learn about the death of Meriwether Lewis. There is much controversy about how Captain Lewis died. Explain what you believe happened to Captain Lewis and give reasons for your belief.
- Before there were newspapers, news traveled slowly by word of mouth. Do you think the story of Seaman would have reached John Robert differently today? Discuss the variety of ways we get news today.

STANDARDS: G1:2; G1:5; G3:5; SS7; CA3; H/PE 2