

# the little horse mystery

## Chapter Four by Kay Hively

Every Sunday morning Nathan got up early to help his father milk their cow. Looking out his bedroom window, he could see the sun coming up. It was going to be a beautiful day. Quickly he stuffed his legs into his work pants and headed downstairs.

Nathan found his father in the kitchen waiting for him. Together they went out the kitchen door and across the back porch. Together they headed toward the little barn where Daisy the milk cow lived. Mr. Curtis carried the milk pail.

As Nathan started down the steps of the back porch he spotted something stuck in a tiny space between two steps. Reaching down, he pulled a little wooden figure out of a hole on the steps. Nathan had never seen it before. It was a small hand-carved horse. Its tail was nice and full and everything on its face was just perfect. It had big round eyes and a broad nose.

With the little horse clutched in his hand, Nathan caught up with his father and showed what he had found. Mr. Curtis took the horse and looked closely at it. Nathan asked his father how it could have gotten in that hole on their steps. Mr. Curtis cleared his throat and looked down at the ground. Then he said he did not know where it came from or how it got stuck between the steps.

For the first time in his life, Nathan knew that his father was telling a lie. Nathan was shocked.

Mr. Curtis put the horse in his pocket and started back toward the barn. Nathan and his father milked Daisy as they always did, but neither of them said a word. Nathan knew something was wrong. He could not imagine what it might be.

As they always did after Sunday breakfast, the Curtis family walked into town to attend church. Nathan wore his brand new shoes and sat between his parents in a long pew. But, for the first time in his life, he felt uncomfortable in church. His father was quiet and seemed to have his mind somewhere far away.

Back at home after church, Nathan's mother served a delicious dinner, but everyone ate in silence. Something very strange was happening in Nathan's family and he did not know what it was. He was sure it had something to do with the wooden horse. There was some kind of mystery to the little horse.

After he had eaten, Nathan changed into his old clothes and went to the parlor to study his lessons. He had arithmetic problems to work, and his teacher had given him a book to read.

It took more than an hour to do the arithmetic. Then, just as Nathan started reading the book, his father walked into the parlor. Mr. Curtis lit a lamp and sat down by Nathan.

"I have something to tell you. It's about the little horse," Mr. Curtis said.



Author Kay Hively and Illustrator Billie Gofourth-Stewart are both of Neosho, Missouri. Produced in partnership with this newspaper and the Missouri Press Foundation with support from Verizon Foundation. Copyright 2002.

## Classroom Extensions

### Things to Think About and Do –

- Have you ever milked a cow? Many things can be made from milk. Make a list of things that are made from cow's milk.
- Using clay or some other art material, make a horse like the one Nathan found on the back step, or make a model of Daisy. Where do you think that horse came from?

Show Me Standards Correlations – G1:1,5; G2:5; G3:5; CA2; FA1; S3

**Next Week: Chapter Five – Nathan Meets Willie**