

SPIN, SPUTTERS AND SPOUT

CHAPTER FOUR by Kay Hively

Jacob's dream about a big fish ended with a massive CR-AAA-CK. He threw back his covers and tried to sit up, but his bed was dancing. Everything around him was smashing onto the floor and falling out of the loft.

At first, all Jacob could hear was a mighty rumble. He was so dizzy he could not get out of bed. Then he heard his mother calling for him to run outside.

Finally Jacob was able to get on his feet, but he fell down again on the hard floor. On his knees, he reached for the ladder, but it jerked away and went crashing to the floor below. The ladder smashed into the fireplace and sent sparks flying.

Jacob heard his father telling him to jump. With one leap, Jacob bailed out of the loft and landed on his mother's dinner table. Immediately, his father grabbed him and they bolted out the cabin.

In the moonlight, Jacob saw a strange world. Everywhere he looked there was destruction. Then he heard his father telling him to run up the hill, away from the river.

That's when Jacob heard a loud roaring sound.

Struggling to his feet, Jacob looked back and saw the Mississippi River rising up the hill. The earth trembled and shook so hard that everyone fell down. All around him, Jacob could hear loud snaps as giant trees cracked right down the middle and fell to the ground.

It became hard to see as the bright moonlight began to fade. Dark clouds filled the sky. Pulling and clawing their way upward, the

Stark family reached the very top of the hill. Huddled together on the cold ground they watched the horror all around them.

In every direction, trees were falling and great holes were opening up in the earth. It was as if the earth was splitting in half. Out of the holes and cracks, sand and even chunks of black coal were spewing high into the sky.

Jacob was scared. Everything smelled like rotten eggs. It was hard to breathe.

As the earthquake continued, all the little family could do was hold onto each other. Jacob prayed that the Mississippi River would not rise to the top of the hill where they were.

Looking down at the cabin, Jacob could see that water covered the roof. He could not see the little barn where Butch and Janie were kept. And Patches was nowhere to be seen! Jacob's mind went crazy thinking about his dog.

In the darkness, the little family shivered in the cold. They had no shoes or coats or blankets. Jacob heard his father say that the devil himself had come to visit.



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 –

- A. What causes an earthquake? If an earthquake came to your town, what would your family do? Why did Jacob and his family climb a high hill?

Help your family make an escape route from your house in case of disaster. Choose a place outdoors where everyone should meet.

- B. Patches did not come up the hill with the family. What do you think happened to Patches? Make a list of five things the family should do when morning comes.

**NEXT WEEK: CHAPTER FIVE
– A COLD, COLD NIGHT**