

A HUNTER'S HEART



CHAPTER TWO ~ BY KAY HIVELY

Before Sam could say a word, the eerie howling sounded again across the snowy landscape. Mr. Pittman scanned the horizon and muttered that Old Drum was also out hunting.

Then Sam and his father moved on down the rabbit track trail. Sam could see that the tracks led to a brush pile that he and his father had made just a week ago. The brush pile was filled with the leftovers from some clearing they had done to expand their cornfield. Most of the trees that were cut down were saved for firewood. The rotted wood and branches that were too small for the fireplace were piled up to be burned later in the winter.

As Sam got closer to the brush pile, he saw more rabbit tracks. The tracks came from many directions, but they all led to the pile of brush. Sam was ready for his part in the hunt. Picking up the biggest stick he could find, he walked a short way around the brush pile. He waited until his father raised the gun to his cheek. Then Sam began beating the brush pile with his stick.

Almost immediately, a large cottontail dashed out of the brush pile and ran toward a line of trees. A shot rang out and the rabbit fell. Sam smiled, knowing there would be meat for supper in the cabin that night. Sam knew his father would not miss. He had been a sharpshooter in the Civil War.

Sam was glad that he and his father hunted rabbits now instead of his father hunting rebels in the war.

Before they left the brush pile, Sam and his father had taken two more rabbits. The family now had meat for two or three days.

On their way back to the cabin, Sam and his father talked about the hunt. Sam didn't mention it, but he was wishing he could use the gun one day. Beating the brush pile to flush out the rabbits didn't seem nearly as important as being a good shot with the gun.

As Sam and his father neared the cabin, they heard the haunting howl of Old Drum again. This time the cry came from down by the creek.

Sam had learned to recognize Old Drum's howling. Drum was the best hunting dog in the neighborhood, and his voice was the most unusual. Old Drum's howl was a sound that no one could forget.

Having a dog like Drum was the dream that Sam had – if only he could make enough money selling furs. Going on a rabbit hunt with a dog would be much more fun than just carrying an old stick. And, a good dog could do a much better job of chasing rabbits out of a brush pile.

Sam was sure that if he got a dog, he could train it to be as good as Old Drum. And everyone said there wasn't a better dog in the country than Drum. But would he ever get a dog?



Author Kay Hively and Illustrator Billie Gofourth-Stewart are both of Neosho, Missouri. Produced in partnership with this newspaper and the Missouri Press Foundation. Copyright 2005.

LEARNING EXTENSIONS

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT AND DO ~

A. Mr. Pittman was in the Civil War. From reading this chapter, can you tell which side he fought on in that war? When did the Civil War end?

B. Have you ever eaten rabbit? Have you ever eaten any kind of wild game? In a cookbook, find a recipe for rabbit and for one other kind of wild game.

Show Me Standards Met: G1:2; G3:5; SS:6; S:3; SS:7

Next Week: Chapter 3 – A visitor