

HUNTER'S HEART

CHAPTER EIGHT ~ BY KAY HIVELY

Old Drum was dead. The words pounded in Sam's head.

Drum's master was very angry. He asked Sam's father if he had heard anything in the night. Mr. Pittman said he heard Old Drum howling. He said he also heard shots being fired. Then Sam spoke up to say he had heard the same thing.

Mr. Burden said the howl that Sam and his father heard was the last call that ever came out of Old Drum. He said a farmer had shot Old Drum. The farmer had waited in his barn and shot the great dog as it walked onto his farm last night. The man accused Old Drum of killing sheep.

Sam's father told Mr. Burden about the animal that Sam had seen last night. He said the animal was creeping along beside the sheep shed. Then Mr. Pittman described how they had scared the animal away. Sam said the animal had a long, white, furry tail.

Old Drum's tail had very short black hair.

The two men discussed what might have happened in the night. They agreed that Old Drum may have been out hunting and had picked up the sheep killer's trail. Old Drum, they thought, may have followed the killer to the neighbor's farm. But the sheep owner shot Drum rather than the real killer.

Mr. Burden thanked Sam and his father for the information and then drove away in his wagon.

Sam was shocked to think that someone had shot Old Drum. He knew in his heart that Drum was not a sheep killer.

Two days later, Mr. Burden came back to the Pittman farm. He said he was going to hire a lawyer and go to court. He said he would ask for money, but mostly he wanted to clear Old Drum's name. He asked if Sam and his father would tell the sheriff about the animal they had seen the night Drum was shot.

Mr. Pittman said they would help in any way.

Then Mr. Burden invited Sam to look in the wagon. Sam looked over the side of the wagon box and saw a young pup. Mr. Burden said this was Drum's pup – the only one of a litter that survived. He said the pup was a boy and he looked exactly like Drum did when he was born. And, he said, the little hound even had Drum's voice.

Sam thought the pup was the best looking dog he had ever seen. He reached down and patted its head. Then Mr. Burden told Sam the pup was his now. He said he wanted Drum's offspring to be raised by a boy. He said he was sure Sam would take good care of the pup, play with it, and train it to be a great dog. He also said he was sure this little guy had a hunter's heart – just like Old Drum.



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. Old Drum was a real dog. The trial over his death was held in the courthouse in Warrensburg, Mo. Find Warrensburg on a map. On the internet find a picture of Old Drum's statue on the courthouse lawn. Learn how the statue was erected.

B. Find a copy of a speech titled "Tribute to a Dog." This speech was given at Old Drum's trial. Read the speech and share it with others. Tell why you think this speech is a good one.

Show Me Standards Met: G1:2; G1:4; G2:1; G2:4; CA:1; CA:2; SS:7