

A HUNTER'S HEART

CHAPTER THREE ~ BY KAY HIVELY

Carrying their rabbits, Sam and his father returned to the cabin. Mr. Pittman said he would clean the rabbits while Sam finished his chores.

The only chore left was to let the sheep out of the little shed.

Removing the board from across the shed door, Sam watched the animals file out into the barnyard. The old ram led the way outside. The ewes with the smallest lambs came last.

Already the wool on the backs of the sheep was getting thick. Sam was sure that meant a hard winter ahead. It seemed like just a short time ago that he and his father had shorn the sheep, making them look thin and ragged. Now they were fat and woolly.

Sam knew the sheep didn't like staying in the shed every night, but some of the neighbors had been losing sheep. Everyone guessed it was a wolf or a mad dog that was killing the animals. Sam's father wanted to protect his sheep, so he had fixed up the old shed. Each night the flock was put inside, away from harm.

After latching the gate so the sheep could not get out of the pen, Sam went to the barn to help his father clean the rabbits. Before he got to the barn, Sam heard a wagon coming down the road in front of their cabin. The wagon, pulled by two mules, turned off the road and came into the yard.

Mr. Pittman came out of the barn just as the wagon rolled to a stop. Sam didn't know the man in the wagon, but his father called him Burden. As his father and the stranger talked, Sam walked past the mules to look at the wagon. To his surprise, he found a hound dog sitting in the wagon bed.

It wasn't much of a dog. It was long and lean and had floppy ears. Sam wanted a dog, but he wanted a better looking dog than the one in the wagon.

When Sam spoke to the dog, it jumped out of the wagon. Sam wasn't sure what to do, but the dog seemed friendly. It licked his hand. Sam continued walking around the wagon and the dog followed along behind. Finally, the boy knelt down and patted the dog's head. Once again, the hound licked Sam's hand.

Before Sam could get better acquainted with the dog, its master whistled and the dog jumped into the back of the wagon and sat down. The stranger on the wagon seat said good-bye and urged the mules forward. As Sam watched the wagon turn out onto the road, he waved his hand and shouted good-bye.

The dog rose up on its feet and began to howl back at the boy.

Sam could hardly believe his ears. But there was no mistaking that howl. The dog riding in the back of the wagon was none other than 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. Wool is used to make clothing and other things. Do you have anything made of wool? Draw a wool sweater and decorate it with pictures of things you like.

B. Was it safe for Sam to pet a strange dog? What should a person do if they meet a strange dog? How did Sam know the dog was friendly? How did Sam know the dog was Old Drum?

Next Week: Chapter 4 – Judging others