

HUNTER'S HEART



CHAPTER SIX ~ BY KAY HIVELY

Sam's mother served rabbit stew for supper. The hot stew and the hot biscuits tasted good on a cold night. At the supper table, Sam's parents talked about how it was too cold for October. By the time supper was finished, it was dark outside. Mrs. Pittman asked Sam to bring in an extra load of firewood. Getting wood for his mother was a regular chore. Sam put on his coat, gloves and cap. Then he opened the cabin door and started out to the wood pile.

Because the moon was so bright, Sam did not take a lantern. As he stepped into the yard, he could see everything clearly. Moonlight seemed to bounce off the roofs of the barn and sheep shed. Sam pulled his cap over his ears and made his way to the woodpile.

Soon his arms were full of firewood, and he began his trek back to the cabin. As he walked, looking up over the wood racked up in his arms, Sam heard a very loud noise. He stopped and turned to look in the direction of the sheep shed.

In the moonlight, he saw something moving along in the shadows beside the shed. Sam squinted his eyes for a better look. Suddenly, the shadowy object stopped and turned its head to look at Sam.

For a moment the animal and the boy locked eyes. The eyes that were staring at Sam seemed to glow in the dark night. As Sam stood fixed upon the strangely colored eyes, he heard an unfriendly growl. Then a set of jagged teeth flashed beneath the two glowing eyes.

Sam knew that whatever was lurking in the shadows was trying to get into the sheep shed. Without thinking about his own safety, Sam dropped his firewood, except for one stick. With a tight grip on the last piece of firewood, he started toward the animal that glared at him in the dark of night.

As Sam approached, the animal let out a chilling howl. Sam stopped, not sure if he should continue. But if the animal was not chased away, he knew it might get into the shed and kill his father's sheep. Sam took another step forward. The animal squared around to face him head on. Sam did not back down.

He raised the stick of wood high in the air, hoping he could bring it down on the head of the animal.

But before he got close to the animal, Sam heard the blast of a shotgun.

In an instant, the animal that was ready to fight dashed away into the woodlot. Sam could see its white tail waving from side to side as it ran.

Sam turned to see his father on the porch, with his shotgun pointed into the sky. Then Sam began to tremble as he thought about what might have happened if he had fought the creature with the glowing eyes.



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. What do you think would have happened if Sam's father had not fired his gun into the air to scare away the animal?
- B. When Sam went out to get the firewood, he could see very well. Learn about the phases of the moon, then make a drawing

of all the phases. Tonight after dark, go outside with a friend or family member and find the moon. Decide what phase the moon is in at your house.

Next Week: Chapter 7 – Tragedy