

HUNTER'S HEART



CHAPTER SEVEN ~ BY KAY HIVELY

Sam and his father picked up the firewood that had been dropped in the yard and carried it into the house. When the wood was put away and the shotgun was back up on the wall, Sam and his father sat down to talk.

Mr. Pittman told Sam that he had been very brave to face that wild animal. But his father also said that he would rather lose all his sheep than see his son hurt. Then Mr. Pittman put his arm around Sam and gave him a big hug. His mother leaned over Sam's chair and planted a wet kiss on his cheek. Sam was happy but embarrassed by all the attention.

Sam could hardly sleep when he went to bed that night. He kept thinking about the animal with the long furry tail. He wondered what might have happened if his father had not come to his rescue. Once again, Sam thought that things might have been different if he had a dog of his own.

Finally, Sam snuggled under his quilt, fell asleep and dreamed about the dog he wanted so badly. In his dreams he saw himself and a dog that looked like Old Drum running through the fields, chasing rabbits, bringing sheep to the pen and going fishing together.

But, late in the night, Sam's dreams were interrupted by the sound of a gunshot off in the distance. Sam bolted up in his bed and listened. As he looked out the little window by his bed, Sam heard the howl of a dog. But it was not an ordinary howl – it was Old Drum. Then Sam heard another gunshot and all was quiet.

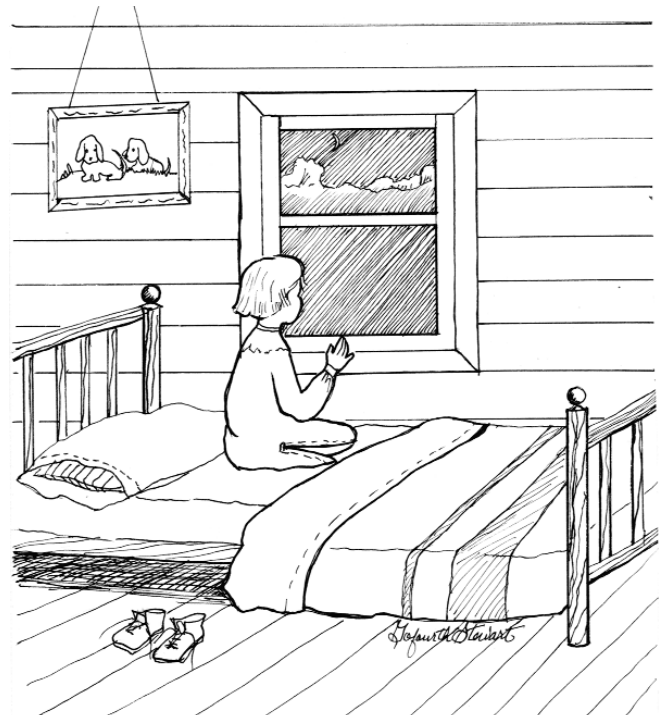
Sam's imagination began to work as he tried to figure out what had happened. Maybe, he thought, Old Drum had discovered the sheep killer. Drum had probably chased it away from someone's sheep and then the sheep farmer had shot the villainous creature.

As he sat in his bed, Sam heard the kitchen door open. Sam knew his father had heard the noise, too. In a few minutes the kitchen door closed and Sam heard his father get back into bed.

Sam waited for more sounds, but the whole world seemed to have gone back to sleep. And, after a few minutes, so did Sam.

Nothing else disturbed Sam's sleep until the sun had risen over the pasture to the east. That was when a wagon, running at full speed, charged into the farmyard. The rattle of the wheels and the pounding of hooves woke Sam. Quickly he looked out his window and saw Charles Burden jumping down from the wagon seat.

Sam pulled on his clothes as fast as he could and raced outside where his father was talking to Mr. Burden. He was hoping to see Old Drum again. But, as Sam approached the two men his father turned to him and said that Old Drum was dead.



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. Have you or a friend ever lost a pet? Write a short poem about your favorite animal. Share the poem with your classmates.
- B. Sam was ready to fight the strange animal near the sheep shed. If you find a wild animal in your yard, what should you do?