

# Black Thunder

## Chapter Seven – by Kay Hively

On Christmas morning, Joey was the first one out of bed. Overnight, more presents had appeared under the tree. After all the family was up and coffee was cooking on the stove, Mr. Cooper handed out the gifts.

Joey liked watching everyone open presents, but the most fun was opening his own. His parents gave him new clothes and a baseball bat. The bat was a real beauty. It had “Ted Williams” printed right on the sweet spot. Joey was so proud of the new bat that all he could do was hug it next to his chest. With his eyes closed he could hear the crowd roaring as he and his bat knocked a high fast ball clear over the fence.

Next, Joey opened grandmother’s gift. It was a dark green sweater with his name sewn on the inside. Grandmother knew he was forgetful and sometimes left his sweaters at school or in church. That’s why she sewed his name inside.

The last two gifts were from Tommy. Carefully, Joey tore away the paper and opened the first package. Inside was a pair of black leather gloves. Joey tried them on. They fit perfectly. They were pilot’s gloves, Tommy said. These were the same gloves worn by most of the Tuskegee Airmen.

The gloves were soft and lined with rabbit fur. Joey had never had leather gloves.

He took his new gloves off to open the final gift. Slowly he removed the bright red paper and found a white box. Taking the lid off the box, Joey found a little P-40 airplane. Gently he picked up the little airplane.

Tommy said he had made the plane himself. He carved it out of a block of wood and painted it to look like the planes flown by the Tuskegee Airmen. It even had a red tail like all the Tuskegee planes. And it had nose art. On each side of the plane was a tiger’s front leg. At the end of each leg were long claws wrapped around the nose of the plane. Under the cockpit was the name “Joey.”

It was a great Christmas. For weeks, Joey had been waiting for it to come, but now that it had finally come, the day went by very quickly.

That night Joey lay in bed and watched Tommy pack his suitcase. The next morning Tommy would be going back to Tuskegee. When Tommy said good night and blew out the lamp, Joey rolled over in his bed and cried to himself. He did not want his brother to go away.

Moonlight came through the window and lit up the wall over Joey’s bed. Joey could see the pictures of Tommy and Dr. Carver. The pictures gave him a good feeling. Somehow he just knew that if Tommy went away to fight in the war, he would be safe.

With this thought in mind, Joey fell sleep, dreaming about airplanes.



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 2004.

## Classroom Extensions

Things to Think About and Do –

- The new baseball bat had the name Ted Williams on it. Find out about Ted Williams and make a list of his achievements.
- Think about what it would be like to fly a fighter plane. Read the poem, “High Flight,” and then write your own poem about flying through the sky. Read both poems to a friend.

**Next Week: Chapter Eight – Black Thunder**