



## Chapter Seven – by Kay Hively

After having fun with the new sled, John Robert unhooked the rope and removed the collar from Hercules. Mr. Herman had gone to the cabin to help put Christmas dinner on the table, so John Robert cleaned the snow off the sled and pushed it into the barn by himself.

With the sled safely out of the weather, John Robert pulled hard on the barn door. Just as the door shut, John Robert heard a voice calling out. The voice came from the little trail in front of the cabin.

Like a bolt of lightning, Hercules wheeled around and ran at full speed toward the sound of the stranger's voice. John Robert turned to see a man standing on the trail looking toward the barn. The man's arms were outstretched and Hercules was running hard toward the stranger.

For a moment John Robert thought that Hercules was going to attack the man. Instead, the big dog greeted the man, barking with delight and licking his face and hands. The man dropped to his knees and hugged the big dog.



Fear stabbed through John Robert's heart. It was obvious that the dog's master had returned. John Robert's heart sank because he knew Hercules would leave and go with his master.

With the big dog dancing around him, the stranger came into the yard and walked straight

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toward John Robert. Unsure what to do, John Robert called out for his father. Immediately, Mr. Herman came out of the cabin and joined his son, just as the stranger came close. The stranger stuck out his hand to Mr. Herman and introduced himself. He said his name was Reubin Fields and that he was passing through the area on his way back home to Kentucky.

John Robert's father shook the man's hand and then introduced his son to the traveler. The stranger flashed a big smile and shook the boy's hand. Then Mr. Herman introduced Hercules.

The smile on the stranger's face faded. Mr. Herman asked if something was wrong. The stranger said that Hercules was a nice name, but it was not the dog's real name. He said that he had known the dog for many years and had been a good friend of the dog's master.

Unable to be silent, John Robert asked what the dog's name was. The man turned to the boy and said the dog's name was Seaman. When the stranger said that word, the big dog barked, wagged his tail and licked the stranger's hand. Both John Robert and his father could tell that Seaman was truly the dog's name. John Robert had never felt so sad in all his life.

Then Mr. Herman asked the stranger if he would join the family for Christmas dinner. The visitor smiled once again and said he would be happy to eat with them. But for John Robert, all the festivities of Christmas had disappeared.

## Things to Think About and Do

- Pretend you are a newspaper editor. Design a front page and write headlines about what happened to the Herman family in this chapter. Write at least one newspaper story about something in this chapter.
- John Robert lives in Tennessee. Where did the stranger say he lived? Find these two states on a map. List the capital of each and some of the major towns and rivers in each state.
- Can you predict who Seaman's master is? Practice predicting. Read a headline in your newspaper and predict what you think the story will be about. Read and see if you are right. What clues helped you predict?

Next Week: Chapter Eight –The Story of a Legend