

SPIN, SPUTTERS AND POUT

CHAPTER TWO by Kay Hively

The next day Jacob helped his father with the furs. It was cold so they worked hard to stay warm. Mr. Stark was big and strong. He packed the furs very tight and tied them together in neat bundles.

When the bundles were tied, Jacob helped load them on Janie and Butch. Then he and his father started up the river road to meet the fur buyer. Patches followed along behind the horses.

Jacob liked the horses. He worked with them when he helped his father in the fields. In summer, Mr. Stark was a farmer, raising cotton and corn, but in winter Jacob's father was a fur trapper.

Several times each winter, fur buyers came down the Mississippi River in keelboats. Jacob's father said there were pirates on the river who would steal furs. Mr. Stark always sold his furs to Captain Bell because he was an honest man.

Captain Bell had sent a letter saying he would meet them on December 14, 1811. And, sure enough, soon after they arrived at the meeting place, Jacob spotted the keelboat. After the boat reached shore, Jacob and the men formed a "bucket brigade" to load the furs. After the work was done, the captain invited Jacob and his father to come on board and eat with the crew. As they ate, Jacob's father and Captain Bell talked about the river, the weather and the keelboat.

Jacob heard the captain ask about thunderstorms in December. Jacob's father said he could never remember such a thing. Captain Bell said he had been hearing thunder in the distance. It was a strange thing, he said, because the sky was clear.

When Jacob and his father left the boat they waved good-bye to their friend. They watched as the boat headed upriver to New Madrid where the captain would unload his cargo.

Since all the furs were sold, Jacob's father said it was time to go home.

Jacob climbed up on Janie, and Mr. Stark rode on Butch's big strong back.

Jacob's father said Captain Bell had paid a good price for the furs this year. He said that would mean a fine Christmas.

As they were riding along beside the river, talking about Christmas, Jacob and his father heard a loud rumble of thunder. Janie and Butch became startled and broke into a wild gallop. Mr. Stark jerked hard on the reins of both horses and yelled loudly at them.

Janie and Butch finally came to a stop, but both horses looked scared. Even Patches was scared. Jacob didn't know what it was, but something strange was going on.



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CLASSROOM EXTENSIONS

Things to Think About and Do –

- A. In what year did this story take place? What kind of furs do you think Mr. Stark was trapping? The fur buyer came down the river on a keelboat. What is a keelboat? Draw a picture of a keelboat loaded with bundles of fur.
- B. What do you think about the thunder Jacob, his father, and the men on the boat heard? Some people say that thunder sounds like an apple cart rolling over. On a sheet of paper, write what you think thunder sounds like. Do you know what really causes thunder?

**NEXT WEEK: CHAPTER THREE
– THE BIG FISH**