



Chapter One - by Kay Hively

Emily Todd stood on tiptoe to get a better look at the deck below. She could see her father stepping over and around the cargo that was being hauled aboard his boat. Tomorrow he would begin his journey to Memphis.

Eleven-year-old Emily liked being on her father's boat. Captain Todd had promised to take her on a run down river, but Emily was afraid she would be an old woman before she ever saw St. Louis or Memphis or New Orleans.

Emily lived on a hill above the Mississippi River. From her house she could see riverboats and keelboats coming and going. When Captain Todd was at home, Emily went with him to the boat. When she got on board, Emily raced up to the pilothouse where she pretended to be a captain. Turning the wheel from side to side, she imagined the river was wild and raging. She could almost see lightning and hear thunder. But, in her imagination, Emily steered a good course and always brought her riverboat into safe harbor.

From her spot up in the pilothouse, she could see almost all of town and even across the river. Today the sky was bright blue with puffy clouds. Tomorrow, she thought, would be a great day to start a run down river.

Oh! How she wished she could go with her father. How wonderful it would be to paddle down the river and see the world!

Life on the river in 1850 was exciting, but there was never any excitement in town. Emily's lip puckered up as she thought about staying home. She was sure that if she were a boy, she would be riding on the river. Emily had never heard of any other girl who wanted to be a river captain. But every boy in town wanted to go on the riverboats. Each time a boat pulled up to the levee, all the boys sneaked away from school and ran down to see the boat.

As Emily daydreamed about being a riverboat captain, she heard someone coming up the stairs to the pilothouse. She could tell by his footsteps that it was her father, but she also knew that someone was with him.

When Captain Todd came into the pilothouse, he put his arms around his daughter and gave her a kiss. Then Emily noticed the boy who had come up the stairs with her father.

Captain Todd said the boy's name was Sam, and that he wanted to be a riverboat pilot. He also said that Sam had a passenger ticket and would be traveling down to St. Louis tomorrow.

Sam was a skinny young man, but he had a beautiful smile and twinkling eyes. Even though he had a mischievous look, the boy removed his cap and greeted the captain's daughter. Emily smiled at him, but in her heart she wished that it was she, not Sam, who was going on the riverboat the next day.

Why do boys have all the fun, Emily asked herself. It just didn't seem fair.



Author Kay Hively and Illustrator Billie Gofourth-Stewart are both of Neosho, Missouri. Produced by the Missouri Press Foundation. Copyright 2005.

Things to Think About and Do

- Draw a map of the Mississippi River. Mark the exact source of the river and include some of the major towns on the river. Include the names of all the states the river touches.
- Do boys have more fun? Write a short essay, giving your answer to this question.

Next Week: Chapter Two – Ankle deep in trouble