

SPIN, SPUTTERS AND SPOUT

CHAPTER ONE by Kay Hively

"Patches! Come back here, you silly dog!" Jacob Stark shook his 9-year-old head. All day long he had watched his little dog run wild. He could not understand why Patches would suddenly leap off the front porch and run to the riverbank, barking all the time.

Jacob asked his mother why Patches was acting so funny. Maybe he could hear a boat at the dock in Little Prairie, she said. Dogs have very good ears.

Buttoning his coat against the wind, Jacob headed down to the river to look for his dog. The Mississippi was big and wide and something was always moving in the water. Jacob imagined that all the boats were going upstream to St. Louis or downstream to New Orleans.

Jacob had never been to a city. The only town he had ever seen was Little Prairie. But it was just two miles downstream with only a few houses in the whole town. When he grew strong enough to handle a boat or a raft, he hoped to visit all the towns on the river.

By the time Jacob got to the riverbank, Patches was gone. But he didn't worry. Patches always came home.

From the river, Jacob could see his family's cabin sitting high on a hill.

He had helped his father build the cabin. It had three rooms, a big front porch, and a loft upstairs. Jacob's favorite place was the loft where he slept.

His mother liked the big fireplace and the front porch. She could sit on the porch and watch the river. She could even wave to people on the boats or to people on the little road at the bottom of the hill.

Being careful to stay in sight of the house, Jacob walked along the riverbank looking for treasures that sometimes washed up on shore. Finding no treasures today, he started back up the hill. He could see Patches resting on the cabin porch.

Then Jacob heard a familiar sound. It was his father coming down the river road. He waited for his father and got a ride home on one of his dad's horses.

When they reached the house, Jacob helped unhitch Janie and Butch. These were valuable horses. His father used them to haul furs.

As they worked, Mr. Stark told Jacob he would need help the next day because the fur buyer was coming. Jacob always helped bundle the furs for sale.

When Jacob told his father about Patches, Mr. Stark said maybe there was a bear or a wildcat in the woods.

When bedtime came that night, Jacob carried Patches up the ladder to the loft. If a wild animal were close by, Jacob wanted Patches safe inside the cabin.



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CLASSROOM EXTENSIONS

Things to Think About and Do –

- Why do you think Patches was acting strange? Draw a picture of what you think Patches looks like.
- Jacob lives near the Mississippi River. On a map, locate the Mississippi River and find New Orleans and St. Louis. Write down the states where these two cities are found. By looking at the map, write down the names of ten more towns or cities which are on the banks of the Mississippi River.

**NEXT WEEK: CHAPTER TWO
– WOOD FOR SALE**