

The Boy Who Tamed Wild Things

by Con Chapman

The turtle came first; a snapping turtle he brought back from the cabin down at the lake; it was big enough to ride upon, it seemed, though none of us—besides the boy—would have dared. The boy had a gift, we understood; he could speak the language of the animals, and so soon there was a skunk that he would walk on a leash.

We were scared until he told us its scent glands had been removed, we wouldn't get sprayed. Still, we wouldn't pet the thing.



The next summer he somehow managed to snare a wolf, or at least that's what he told us it was, we never got close enough to see. He penned it in a wire care, and the animal would howl as we passed its line of sight, a hundred feet away, coming up from the lake on the concrete steps. We knew if the chicken wire failed we'd be eaten, but he fed it rabbits and birds and dog food.



“It ain't hungry for the likes of you,” he'd say, scoffing at our fear. We were glad to go home at the end of the week, and be back in school

where the only wolves were in the story books. When we saw the boy

again he told us he'd let the wolf go, it was too much trouble. He had

a new pet, a raccoon he'd tamed to be friendly. He'd pick it up and set it on his lap, like a cat, until one day the raccoon reverted to its wild ways and clawed half the boy's face off.

