Keeper ‘n me plot notes pg. 87-120

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| 87 | * Start of Book 2- Beehahbun * Garnet talks about the lake being a reflector and that a person’s voice can carry for miles. He recalls how they would listen to Myron Fisher and Mabel Copenace talking all lovey dovey on the lake and then tease them by repeating what they said later on. |
| 88 | * Garnet talks about how the lake used to be how they could get a hold of someone on the other side of the lake by yelling across. Garnet says he has been at the reserve for 4 months. His mom cut off his afro after about 3 days. Garnet tells his mom how he used to pretend to be Mexican and she laughs and says if they saw him now they would call him a Mexican hairless. |
| 89 | * Garnet talks about how making white dog his home wasn’t easy and how he feels like a fish out of water, and it being scary. But he gets more comfortable as time goes on. He talks about there not being much to do other than hang around with his brothers and their friends. He talks about it being hard to fit in not speaking the language or having done anything like hunting or fishing. |
| 90 | * Garnet talks about how living with his Ma helps him feel comfortable. He remembers sitting around a fire listening to Wally Red Sky singing his favourite country and western songs. Wally is not a great singer and he compares his high notes to the sounds you hear in the bush in rutting season and his low notes to a moose after four hours of feeding on skunk cabbage. But he says you couldn’t find a nicer guy than Wally. In the middle of Wally’s singing they here voices across the lake. |
| 91 | * They hear a hoo across the lake and then they hear a message for asking if Garnet Raven is there and letting him know that Keeper wants to talk to him soon. Wally wonders what Keeper wants with Garnet. |
| 92 | * We find out that Keeper had been the local drunk for a long time. Garnet had wondered how he got the name Keeper when he couldn’t seem to keep anything. We also find out that Keeper went away to dry out and had come back. |
| 93 | * Garnet remembers meeting Keeper the first day he got to the reserve. He remembers carrying him out of the bush when he passed out and talks about the need to respect older folks. Garnet heads over to see what Keeper wants. He stops by his Mom’s and she says Keeper is looking for him. Garnet asks what for? His mom says he might want to help him find his way around. Garnet asks if Keeper talked to her about him. |
| 94 | * Garnet’s Ma tells Garnet that Keeper and her are friends and were together in residential school, and had been drunk a few times too. Garnet asks where Keeper is. His mom tells him he is in the old cabin around the bay where Garnet’s grampa lived. Garnet tells us about his Grampa who was the oldest person on the reserve when he died (98). He never learned English and was one of the last traditional Ojibway people on the reserve. He had made a sweat lodge near the cabin, made tobacco offerings and held pipe ceremonies. |
| 95 | * Garnet tells us how when he hears talks about spirits and ceremonies that he envisioned drums going crazy, people dancing around in strange get ups, war whoops and planning a raid on unsuspecting settlers. He talks about the hidden parts of his people worrying him the most. Garnet remembers watching his Uncle Gilbert praying and sprinkling tobacco by the base of a pine tree when he took him out deer hunting. The tobacco offering showed respect for the animal they were going to take and a prayer for the hunt to be good. Garnet describes his mom always singing and praying and covering herself with the smoke from smoldering cedar, moss and sweetgrass. Garnet tells us he isn’t much of a religious guy. |
| 96 | * Garnet talks about his Grampa being a big believer and him belonging to a society called Midewewin. Some people called them medicine men but Garnet usually thinks of medicine men as painted up guys with scary faces. Stanley tried to explain it to Garnet but Garnet found it too complicated. He didn’t see the need to do anything like that to be Indian. He didn’t see others doing ceremonies and figured it was ok for him to leave it alone. Garnet sees the lights of the cabin from a long way off. |
| 97 | * Garnet seeks Keeper sitting in the doorway smoking his pipe. He tells Garnet “Ahnee” (an Ojibway greeting) Garnet tells him he is looking good. Keeper says he feels good too. Garnet says it must feel good and Keeper agrees. He says he hasn’t felt like this in a long time. Keeper tells Garnet he used to spend time with his Grampa a the cabin talking. |
| 98 | * Keeper says he knew his Grampa Harold since he was a small boy and that he was the last of the people who really knew about Midewewin. He asks if Garnet had heard about that. Garnet says he hasn’t heard much other than that they were medicine men. Keeper tells him they were the people’s guardians who taught and protected people, and used ceremonies and rituals to keep people healthy. They knew all about the plans, animals, teachings, the world, the universe. They made stories and legends for the people to learn from and made rules for behaving to help people get through things. Garnet asks what happened to them. Keeper says Time changed. |
| 99 | * Keeper says the people changed when the white people cam and started looking to white mens ways and forgetting about the ones who carried the knowledge. Keeper says most of them are gone now and people are just starting to realize they are missing something. Garnet asks him if he means that there isn’t anyone around anymore who knows those things. Keeper pauses for a long while and says “Almost no one” |
| 100 | * Keeper asks Garnet to come into the cabin because he wants to show him something. They sit by the fire and Keeper holds a large hand drum in his arms. He tells Garnet it was his grampas and that before that it was his grampas. It has been passed down for 300-400 years. Garnet asks where Keeper got it. Keeper says Harold gave it to him. Garnet asks who it belongs to. Keeper says it belongs to the people. He tells Garnet that Harold taught him some songs and when he died he made Keeper responsible for the drum and that he was the Drum’s keeper. Garnet asks if that is why they call him Keeper. Keeper says yes, but that it wasn’t really why. |
| 101 | * Keeper says Harold was his teacher. Picked him from all the boys on the reserve and said he had smarts and courage because he had run away from residential school and liked that Keeper wouldn’t let him take him away from there. He says he taught him all about the old ways and the Midewewin. He took him for walks and taught him about plants/animals and the ways of the world. Garnet asks if Harold taught Keeper to be a Midewewin. Keeper says no, because he walked away. He felt he was missing out by not being with friends so he didn’t learn enough to be a real teacher. Then Keeper says that the knowledge was inside him. Everything he gave him, and taught him stayed with Keeper. |
| 102 | * Keeper talks about how it still wouldn’t go away as he got older. He talks about how Harold never said anything to him but Keeper knew what he was trying to say but he didn’t want to hear it. He was busy being drunk and that when Harold died he just kept getting drunker. He tells Garnet that Garnet’s mom told him that he was the drum keeper. Keeper says the Drum holds the heartbeat of the people and when you play it you join the heartbeat of the universe and that it is a blessing from the land. He says that if you are the keeper you have to life life in a good way. |
| 103 | * Keeper explains that he felt very guilty, like he was a traitor. He knew he was responsible for the drum and how important it was for the people and felt guilty for walking away but also felt like he wasn’t worthy anymore. He tells Garnet the reason they started to call him Keeper was because he kept getting drunk and talking about being the keeper of the drum while crying about his grampa. They called him Keeper as a joke. He felt he couldn’t get sober because he thought it was too late. One day he got tired and decided to go away and sober up. Keeper thought about when Garnet came back and trying to find himself. Keeper tells Garnet he reminded him of himself. |
| 104 | * Keeper talks about how funny Garnet looked when he first came. He talks about Garnet being away for a long time and learning different ways. He tells Garnet he needs a guide to help him find his way around and help him learn things Indyun instead of white. Keeper says he also needs Garnet to help him too to guide him to win back the years he lost from being drunk just like Garnet lost years from being stolen. He tells Garnet it took a lot of courage to come back and that he can tell he is smart by how he observes everything around him. |
| 105 | * He tells Garnet is always watching and learning. He tells them they are both looking to find their way back. He says he needs to pay back a debt to give back what Garnet’s grampa gave him and to become the drum keeper, and to find another teacher to pass the learning on. Keeper says he wants to spend time with Garnet to walk around, look at things and be each other’s guides. Garnet thinks about it. |
| 106 | * Garnet thinks about all the pieces missing in his life and he says it sounds good and asks when they can start. Keeper says he can start as soon as the moon goes down. They will burn some edar, smudge and say a prayer. |
| 107 | * Keeper talks about how some people think Indyuns are getting high from smoking pipes. He talks about how when the missionaries came they saw Indyuns praying real strange and thought they needed help from being heathens. They said their way of praying was wrong. Keeper says true human beings have truth inside that is kind respectful and honest and learning from watching nature. He says the world will teach you everything you need to know if you watch long enough. |
| 108 | * Keeper talks about how the missionaries judged their way of life and praying without taking time to learn about it. He talks about how Indyuns pray lots and show thanks to the Creator for everything. He talks about how the missionaries told them to pray differently and out of respect they did, including praying for problems to disappear. When the Indyuns got up the discovered all their land was gone. |
| 109 | * Keeper says that fear is what causes people to try and control, destroy or change something, instead of taking time to understand. He says other people’s fear has made up a lot of Indyuns history. If they had asked them they would have told them they were only praying. He talks about smudging to help face each day’s truth and to remind us of the one great truth, that we all need help, Indyun or not. |
| 110 | * He says that this helps us behave in a good way and following the rules, being good to each other, help each other. He says that it helps you keep centered, your spirit and connects you to everything. He talks about him and Garnet burning cedar and using it to purify your body, heart and mind because it is the place the creator gave us to live. By finding our truth men who face their own truth each day are going to be humble kind and respectful, and know when you need to ask for help. |
| 111 | * Keeper talks about how when he was drinking he wasn’t operating from a center. Negative thinking and booze take you away from your truth and robs your spirit from you, living from head instead of your heart. Head gots no answers and heart has no answers. Everyone looks for a guide to live a good way. Keeper talks how burning up cedar brought him back to his center again. How he first of all got a hollow feeling in his belly that made him feeling afraid. |
| 112 | * Keeper talks how the smell hit something deep inside him and he cried deep and long for Harold, his shame and his fear and when he was done the hollow feeling was gone because he was back in his center. He talks about the need to fight to come back. He says that when you see Indyuns passing the smoke they aren’t getting high, they are getting deep. |
| 113 | * Keeper talks about the first light of morning being a big part of the Indian way and that people called in Beedhabun, first light. They used this time to gather for sunrise ceremonies and offer prayers for guidance through the day and it being a grateful time. Sleeping is usually called the half death, being in a different reality with dreams. Paying attention to dreams you can get a lot of understanding and our brains use dreams to help us catch up on what we miss during the day. The name Anishnabe means the good people and it came around because that is what you are praying for each day. |
| 114 | * Garnet talks about getting up before sunrise each day to spend time with Keeper and get to know the old ways. He talks about importance of living with respect. Keeper says Garnet finally learned the true meaning of “Indian time”. Garnet now does this every day. |
| 115 | * Garnet says that five years later seeing the landscape still has the same effect it had on him the first morning he saw it. Garnet describes the village as he sees it- small cabins, trails, bikes laying around, hides stretched out for scraping, fishing smoking set ups, cast off furniture, rusted swing sets, moose antlers, clotheslines and frozen wool longjohns bobbing up and down in the breeze. |
| 116 | * Around chief Isaacs house- new satellite dish and newer trucks. No trails. Indoor plumbing. Lots of modern buidings where the school teachers live, who come and go every year. |
| 117 | * Garnet continues describing the village. He talks about Doc and Mrs Tacknyk who have lived in the village and try to live with the people instead of trying to get them to change. He describes the community hall with the hockey rink and baseball diamond. |
| 118 | * He talks about the Ojibways being big on hockey and baseball as entertainment. He talks about how people listen to radio for entertainment. He talks about being introduced to his relatives and how everyone knows each other. He talks about the Ontario provincial police having a trailer on the reserve. |
| 119 | * He says that when the police are around no one speaks English and tells them never to look and Indian in the eyes because it is an insult or how moving your hands around a lot makes people more comfortable. They also teach them to speak Indian all wrong. He also talks about how they generally let them take care of trouble on their own and that they appreciate that. He describes the local band office. |
| 120 | * Garnet says most people only go to the band office on cheque day. He talks about welfare not being as insulting a thing when everyone is using it to live. Garnet talks about it being hard to adjust and being glad of finding a job. He talks about people making money off Americans in the tourist season and some of the funny stories there are about what happens when they come. |