**Book 1: Plot notes**

**Keeper: A Prologue (pg. 1-5)**

In this section Keeper talks about how things are different in the old days, when fishing, hunting and trapping were good and people had respect for the land compared to now where people just exploit the land. He talks about the difficulty that the younger generation has maintaining a balance between the traditional and the modern way of doing things. He talks about his discussions with Garnet, and telling him that the old days are never gone because tradition passes that respect for the land on from generation to generation. He says that everyone is a tourist, looking for a guide to help us through life. He talks about how the white man has gotten into the habit of speeding through life, and has lost their connection to the land. He says this confuses young people who want shiny fast things but don’t want to let go of the world that is slower and more familiar. He then introduces the boy (Garnet) and explains that Garnet knows this and is fresh from the city, not really knowing if he is Indian or Anishnabe, and that he is lost, and that this story is about how he finds his way.

**Garnet –pg. 5-8- White Dog reserve part 1**

The narrator describes how to get to the White Dog reserve. He recalls some positive memories about beautiful natural area. He describes the area as containing a feeling of mystery and magic, that comes from the pure wild spirit of the land. He also describes the place as his home now, but that he was gone for a long time. He explains that the people living there are Ojibway, and that most people have never heard of the Ojibway. He also explains that while sociologists describe the people as hunting and gathering Indians, or northern woodlands people, that they call themselves the Anishnabe, which means good people in Ojibway. The reserve is described in modern day terms as being relatively poor, with few jobs except for tourists. The way of life is not as modern as other places. They get water from the lake during the winter, hang up their clothes to dry and use outhouses. Many people do not use electricity very much, if at all.

**Garnet- pg. 9-11-White Dog reserve part 2**

The narrator introduces himself as Garnet Raven. He says his family has lived on the White Dog reserve since Treaty 3 was signed in the 1870’s. The Raven is also the name of the messenger in the animal world and Keeper has told him that he was supposed to be a storyteller because of that. We find out he lives with his mother in a small house. He describes the village, where the only electricity and phones are located in the 6 houses in that area. People are poor, and they have few amenities, including a ball diamond and a boarded hockey rink. They play bingo and enjoy the simpler things in life. He enjoys the small pleasures in life- his mothers wrinkled brown face, and smile, the sun going down, and the magic of the land. He describes the magic associated with the land, and explains that it is not magic how we normally think of it, but more of a spiritual connection that teaches you how to live with each other. It is a common magic that brings everyone together.

**Garnet- pg. 11-16 Garnet gets taken away**

Garnet starts by saying he disappeared at the age of 3. He was taken from him home and put in foster homes, disappearing from his real home until the age of 25. We find out he has been back home for 5 years. He describes how his family used to live the old way. They lived in canvas tents, and trapped, hunted and fished off the land. They were happy. The first words he spoke were Ojibway, and the first sounds he heard were of the land. His mother told him he liked to wander when he was little, and would get out of the tent. They got tired of chasing him so they created a harness so he could wander outside but he still got away. One day some people came from Ontario Hydro and told the family they were building a dam, and that it would flood their traditional trap lines. The family had no say even though they had trapped there for years; no one had ever told them about ownership or title. Since the area was off the reserve it was owned by the hydro company and their family had to move. There were no jobs or houses available on the reserve at the time so they had to move to town. It was hard for the family to adjust to this new way of life. The town was also very racist and first nations peoples were not welcomed or wanted. As a result their parents kept to themselves, and the kids were left in the care of their granny who was 65. The way of looking at family was different between first nations culture and white culture. People were looked after by extended family all the time, unlike in white culture. When the Ontario Children’s aid society saw that the children were being looked after by their granny and didn’t (in their eyes) seem to be taken care of properly, the children ended up on a farm outside of Kenora, in the custody of Children’s aid. About a year later, Garnet was taken away from his brothers and sisters and put in another home by himself. The foster family they had been with took care of a lot of kids. They had to sleep on bunk beds and had to help out around the farm. His brothers and sisters found out he was being taken away but they thought it was better for him not to know so he was just taken away, and didn’t see his family until 20 years later.

**Garnet- pg. 16-20 Garnets experience growing up**

Garnet talks about how by the time he made it back home he was lost. He did not think of himself as Indian and he didn’t want to be Indian. He talks about during his entire childhood he was always the only Indian, and nobody told him who he was, where he came from or what was going on. He was moved around in foster homes for 12 years, staying in each for very short periods of time. He thought of himself as a brown white guy. During the 60’s he tells us that people didn’t learn about first nations peoples, except through television and books. Television contained stereotypes of first nations peoples as savages on the war path. Books were filled with how Europeans had discovered Canada, despite needing a guide to find it, or were carbon copies of the television versions of Indians. First nations peoples were stereotyped as being lazy, drunken bums living on welfare, mooching on street corners and needing direction. He describes a memory of breaking the rules in one of his foster homes and being driven by the man of the house into the Indian section of town, where drunks and dirty looking people were pointed out, and he was told that if he didn’t smarten up that he would turn out just like them. He talks about playing cowboys and Indians, and always having to be the Indian, and breaking into tears, without anybody understanding why, to which he explains that he doesn’t know how to be an Indian. He grew up embarrassed about being an Indian and afraid of meeting a real one, in case he said or did anything wrong. So he pretended to be other nationalities like Mexican, Chinese, Hawaiian, or Polynesian. If that didn’t work he would pretend to be a famous kind of Indian like Apache, Sioux, Cherokee or Comanchee. He didn’t want to be Passamaquoddy, Flathead, Dogrib or Ojibway.

**Garnet runs away- p. 20-24**

He starts out talking about falling in love with the Blues when he is twenty. It helped him deal with the loneliness and moving around that he had been doing. It also made him feel connected to the land. He talks about an Indian country-western singer named Wally Red Sky, who tells him that Indians are more tuned into country because it is about wide-open spaces and riding horses, which is more Indian than getting drunk and crying over lost women, like the blues does. He spent a lot of time feeling bad and when he heard the blues they fit with him, and helped him take the first step to returning home. He explains that he ran away from foster homes when he was 16 and went wandering all over hitch-hiking until he got to Toronto in 1977. He describes how he used to run con games on people and would leave before people caught on. He spent time as a homeless Hawaiian person, a half Chinese guy looking for his father, and a Mexican-Apache boxer who had quit fighting after killing someone in a bar fight. He says this might have had to do with him being a story teller, as he was avoiding being Indian.

**Garnet meets Lonnie Flowers- P. 24-33**

Garnet had just made some money working on a railroad gang and hits Toronto looking for some new clothes and a girlfriend. Then he meets Lonnie Flowers, a tall, rangy black guy who hangs out downtown selling pot and playing pool. Lonnie calls him over to see if he wants to buy some pot and recognizes that he is new to town. Lonnie is very welcoming to Garnet. Lonnie asks Garnet his name and calls him out on pretending to be Hawaiian. Garnet tries to leave and Lonnie tells him to stay. Lonnie starts giving Garnet a hard time and Garnet tells him to leave him alone and that he was minding his own business. Lonnie tells him he is right and introduces himself as Lonnie Flowers. Garnet then tells Lonnie his real name. Lonnie recognizes that Garnet is Indian. For the first time, Garnet feels as if someone knew he was Indian and it didn’t matter to them. They end up in a tavern and we find out Lonnie is a pretty well known and popular guy. Lonnie introduces Garnet to some people as a Hawaiian Indian. Garnet notices how at ease Lonnie is with his friends and wishes he could be that way. At the bar a group of people come in, who end up being Lonnie’s family. Garnet is introduced. Then the music starts and Garnet feels like it is something he has never heard before. Delma, one of Lonnie’s family notices and makes a comment about how he has the blues in a bad way. Garnet is asked what kind of Indian he is. Garnet says he guesses he must be a Canadian Indian and that he was raised in foster homes and doesn’t remember much else. Another guy, Truman, after hearing the story remarks that it seems like “the Indians are the niggers now”. Garnet explains that he doesn’t know his family but he is old enough to be his own person. The others tell him that everyone needs family and that you need to know your family history to know who you are. Garnet remarks how lucky they are to have that connection. They end up dancing and hanging out.

Hanging out at Delmas- p. 33-38

When he can’t find a job and money starts running out Garnet starts staying at Delma’s. He talks to her about being in foster homes, feeling like a loner, and about empty Christmas and the loneliness he feels inside. But he never talked about Indians and never tried to hang out with any. Garnet gets an afro perm in his hair as he tries to connect to his new black family. One day while hanging out with Lonnie they come across a couple of scruffy Indians asking for change. Garnet steps back while Lonnie gives them a couple dollars. Lonnie tells Garnet that he can’t run away from who he is his whole life. Garnet says he doesn’t care about that. Lonnie insists that he will never know if he doesn’t try and find out and that he thinks Garnet is missing out on something important. Garnet still feels embarrassed about being Indian. One day a drug dealer named Curtis and Garnet were trying to sell cocaine. Garnet gets busted by the police and gets sentenced to jail for trafficking for 5 years. He is sent to a work farm at a minimum security prison.

Life in jail- p.38-42

Garnet talks about fate and how mail comes on Tuesdays and Thursdays. One day he receives a heavy brown envelope with a postmark from Kenora Ontario. He opens it up to find a thick letter, and a bunch of pictures of Indians he doesn’t know. He notices some resemblances to himself in the pictures. He reads the letter, and it is from a guy named Stanley Raven who says he is his brother. He told Garnet the story of how he was taken away and how they had searched for years but hadn’t been able to find him. He finds out his brothers is a social worker and had talked someone into looking up Garnet’s file and had managed to track him down. Garnet finds out he has a huge extended family that love him and want him to come home. He finds out about his brother and sister, and his mother, and how she never gave up that her baby would come home one day. He also invites Garnet to write to him and tell him about his life, as well as ask him to come home when he gets out. Garnet describes a cold wind going through him as he read the letter and how he feels like crying for the first time he can remember. He tells Delma and Lonnie about the letter and they encourage him to reconnect with his family. Garnet is apprehensive and nervous. He is worried about not knowing what to do or what to say. Lonnie and Delma tell him it doesn’t matter and that family is family. They encourage him to write his brother. So Garnet agrees to write.

Writing to Stanley- p.43-47

Garnet writes to Stanley and finds out that a room is being set aside for him at their house in White Dog and that everyone is excited about him coming home. He is told not to worry because everyone knew he couldn’t speak Ojibway and that he would need time to get used to things. He finds out his brothers and sisters, even though they had been in the foster system, had gotten to know their family. Stanley writes to Garnet once a month. The more Garnet finds out, the more he looks forward to going home. Garnet is discharged and he is 25. He gets out of jail and spends some time celebrating, and as a result misses the people that were supposed to meet him at the bus station to take him home. As he heads home he starts getting a little scared but he also starts finding things feel more familiar. He describes how people stare at him when he arrives, with his afro picked out to about 3 feet around his head, mirrored shades, a yellow silk shirt, lime green baggy pants and platform shoes, with 3 gold chains around his neck. He finds out it is a ways to White Dog, about 80 km, and that it will cost $60 to get there. The man in the taxi tells him he doesn’t look like to Indians around there.

Arriving in White Dog-p. 47-52

He arrives in White Dog and notices signs along the road with bullet holes that say no admittance without permission. He describes the village as looking like something out of a foreign documentary with houses that looked like they were about to fall down and in disrepair. There were dead looking automobiles everywhere, with scruffy kids running around, missing telephone poles, outhouses and aluminum trailers. As he arrives about 50 people gather around to get a look. When he gets out everyone is silent at first and then they surround him. Kids are giggling and trying to touch his hair. He says “S’app;nin?” and people start talking. Some talk about how much he looks like his brother. One big guy comes up with shiny eyes and tears running down his face, saying Garnet, Garnet, Garnet, Garnet. This was his brother. His Brother says it has been 22 years since he has seen him. Garnet also starts crying. Stanley throws his arm around him and introduces Garnet as his brother. Everyone starts coming up to shake his hand. Humour abounds as good-natured comments are made about his hair and his clothes. Stanley asks why he wasn’t at the bus. Garnet says nothing and his brother says that all that matters is that he is there now.

Keeper-52-57

Keeper starts out talking about how people from the government have been taking kids for a long time. He uses humour to talk about the irony of how the movies always show Indians stealing children but it is the white people who have been actually stealing children. He talks about how he figures the white people think they are doing first nations peoples a favour by raising the kids up proper with a good education, but that all they are doing is raising a whole new type of Indian. He calls them apples because they are red on the outside (First nations) and white on the inside, but says that it is not respectful, especially because it isn’t their fault. He says they have lost a generation of children through residential schools, and then through children’s aid (foster care). He says these schools were the beginning of how they started losing their way as a people and that not only can you not change what a person is, that you shouldn’t. Keeper talks about how people have a right to be who they are and how white people don’t seem to understand that. He says that it isn’t the white people’s fault though because they have lost touch with nature and quit learning the natural way of things. This puts them in a constant struggle for control that they can’t win whereas first nations peoples find the rhythm of the world and learn to walk with it.

He talks about how things have changed from being a lot of first nations peoples very strong in their culture to only a handful. To him this means that his passing down of culture and tradition is much more important because so few know it now. He believes that they need the traditions, and respect for nature to survive. He goes on to say that learning the culture is not enough, that a person must practice it and live the culture, to be strong. Keeper believes you must know the reason why these cultures and traditions exist to be truly Indian. This is what he believes must be passed on and remembered. The white people keep coming in different ways, taking children and introducing new ways, and the only way to stay strong is to remember the old ways, and respect them. This is why he helps Garnet to find his way. He teaches Garnet about respect first and only then does he share other knowledge such as hunting. He learns to be honest before being a storyteller, and learns to be Indian so he can survive.

57-60

Garnet starts out by talking about things he notices about Indians, and how they are laughing all the time. He talks about how lots of times white people view this as them being simple, but that, as Keeper says, laughing is about as Indian and bannock and lard. The teachings are filled with humour because people listen to what you say, and this helps pass on learning. He also talks about teasing being a big part of life and that it is a way of showing affection.

He remembers meeting the family for the first time and expecting a big dinner and family welcome but that it wasn’t like that at all. Instead he enters the home and everyone makes teasing comments about his outfit and his haircut. Garnet remembers Stanley holding on to him, to make sure he didn’t bolt for the door. Then Stanley introduces him to his sister Jane, who greets him with a huge long huge, filled with tears. She asks Garnet if he remembers her but he says he doesn’t really. He gets introduced to other members of the family and he notices 2 things. First everyone seemed to treat him like someone they had always known and like it was as if he was someone they had always known. Second was that his other brother Jackie and his mother weren’t there. He talks about being scared about meeting his mother after all this time, and wonders why she isn’t there. He felt confused.

61-68

He goes for a walk with Stanley and Jane. He tells them he is feeling a bit weird. Stanley tells him it’s ok and that everyone has been waiting for him and want him to stay with them. Garnet tells them he isn’t sure if he can handle being away from the city and staying in White Dog. His brother says there isn’t anything to handle, and that while it might be hard for him to understand, that everyone had been waiting for this day to come and praying for Garnet to come home. He tells Garnet that he doesn’t need to handle himself and just to be himself. His sister tells him he might look more like a parakeet than a Raven but he is family. She says he should stay and let them get to know him. Garnet tells her he doesn’t even know himself.

As they walk Stanley tells Garnet that they (Garnet and his brothers and sister) used to spend time walking and throwing rocks into the lake when he was three, before he was taken away. Stanley tells Garnet that when they threw rocks and it made the loud splashing sound Garnet used to laugh, which made them all roll around and laugh. Garnet listens and says it seems like they seem to remember it like it was yesterday but he doesn’t remember anything. Garnet also says he feels like he is part of a scam where he is the patsy because he just doesn’t remember. Stanley tells him no one wants anything from him except for him to stay. Garnet tells them he doesn’t even know why he came. Stanley says maybe it is so he can find that out. Garnet talks about feeling mad all his life, because he had lost pieces of his life, like missing pieces of a puzzle. He asks them if that makes sense. Stanley and Janet say it does.

Stanley tells Garnet that he has two choices. He can split and figure it was never going to work anyhow or he can start putting the pieces of the puzzle back together. Both Stanley and Janet tell Garnet they will understand whatever decision he makes, but to please keep in touch if he does. Garnet asks for time to think about it. Then he asks where his mother is and asks if she split. Stanley says no and tells Garnet where his mom’s house is and that she will be back the next morning. Garnet asks Stanley if she didn’t want to see him. Janet tells him that his mom is scared of seeing him just like Garnet is scared of seeing her because she’s scared he will be mad, or hate her, or won’t like her or will turn around and disappear again, or that she has lost the right to be his mom. Stanley tells Garnet that his mom never gave up hope that he would make it back home and that she even gave up marrying someone because she refused to leave the reservation in case he came back, because she loved Garnet more.

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| Pg. 68  69  70  71  72  73  74  75  76  77 | * Garnet asks how his Mom knew he would come back because he didn’t know. * Stanley says she just had a feeling. * Garnet says it doesn’t explain why she wasn’t there and that he was scared too. * Jane asks him what he is scared of. * Garnet says he is scared his mom won’t like him because he’s not like them, not Indian and wonders how she could be proud of him when he’s more black than Indian and just got out of jail. He also says he is scared that if she doesn’t like him he doesn’t know where he’ll go if he doesn’t fit in there. Garnet says he wishes Stanley had never found him. * Stanley tells him he has always been Indian and always will be. He tells him he might have learned different but something will wake up inside him again but if he leaves he might never find the missing pieces of the puzzle of his life. He also says their Mom had just as much stuff running around in her head as Garnet does and that it is harder for her because Garnet never had to live with the memory of having a baby and the feeling of being responsible for losing it. * Jane tells Garnet some of the family history. He finds out his mother and father were never married. That instead they lived the Ojibway way and talked about the roles of men and women in marriage as spiritual, mental, emotional and philosophical equals. She also told him about the sacred manner they had to live with each other and the respect that was expected by the Creator. * Garnet finds out his Grandfather, Harold Raven joined his parents in a ceremony. Jane also tells Garnet about the sacred role of children in marriage and that they represented the spiritual union of male and female spirit, and were on loan from the Creator. His Dad wanted the kids to have the mom’s last name because of his respect for the fact that mothers gave life and he wanted them to have her name. Jane tells Garnet how his parents were devastated when he and his siblings were taken away. They thought they had failed and because they didn’t understand the system or speak English very well they didn’t know what to do. Both his parents went a little crazy and started drinking. * After a couple years his mother decided to go back to the reservation and try to move on but his Dad, John Mukwa, wasn’t strong enough to move on. The wounds of losing his children cut him deep and no amount of drinking would take the hurt away. He ended up living on his own in the bush and ignoring everyone, including his mom. * Garnet finds out his Dad was found one foggy morning on the shore of the Winnipeg river. Some thought he fell off the railway bridge but others thought he might have taken his own life. Jane tells Garnet that he was born from love and that all he has to do is want it. She also says they hold on to the missing pieces of the puzzle and will be there whenever he wants to figure them out. Garnet thanks Jane for telling him. * Garnet finds out Meegwetch means Thank you in Ojibway but that it means more, that it means you’ve given me with honour. Garnet thinks about all the things he has been told and all the loss that his being taken away had caused. He wakes up and finds a note pinned onto his door. * The note said that Garnet’s mother and brother would be back at around 9am that morning. Garnet thinks about meeting his mother. He realizes that he wants to know more about her. He waits nervously for them to arrive. * Garnet’s brother Jackie arrives first. He doesn’t say anything but shakes Garnet’s hand. Then he saw his mom and she starts whispering his name over and over while crying softly. |

Garnet Raven is Ojibway and is taken from by child services at the age of two, and separated from his family. He goes from foster home to foster home. At the age of 16 Garnet runs away, hitchhiking and being anything but Ojibway. He finally settles down in Toronto where Garnet meets Lonnie Flowers and his family. They introduce Garnet to blues music and the way of family, as well as fitting in. After a while Garnet starts dealing drugs and gets busted. He spends five years in jail. His long lost brother writes Garnet a letter while he is in jail saying that everyone misses him and they want him to come home. When Garnet gets out of jail he goes to White Dog and lives with his Mother. He feels like a fish out of water.