



Keetoo

*A story about the
life of a small boy*

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Preface

Several years ago, about 25 I think, I decided that I wanted to write a fiction book. I thought about it for several days, and then one day, I sat down, started to write, and before I knew it, I was on an adventure that I will never forget. I can't imagine how all these things came to my mind, but I just kept on writing, and surprising as it was, before long I had a book.

The story line is to bring about the picture in our mind of the river of life. This story all takes place on and about the big river, and over and over again, we find that quite often, very early in life, difficulties face us that take great courage and determination, in order that we may succeed in our life, and that the final outcome can be successful. We have to learn early on, to listen and remember the words of those that are wise, and have gone through the storms of life, and try so hard to pass on the lessons of getting through this life, with the least amount of difficulties. We learn to whisper to ourselves, over and over again, to remind and remember these things as we face the tasks that we will surely encounter on our journey. Also very early on, we often suffer the lose of things that are dear to us, things and people that we are just sure that we cannot do without, and we fall off of the cliffs that we walk too close to, and learn to grab hold of anything that can save us, careful to remember the stories that have been told to us by them that are old, and seasoned in their journey. We have to ultimately find the source of all our strength, clinging to those that seemingly come into our lives, often without any effort from us, we just stumble into them, and find that for some reason, they were placed in our way to save us. Finally in our seeking we come to understand what the plan is, and that truly there is a God, and we see what He has for us to accomplish while we are here in this world. We need to come to the right understanding of Him, and learn to trust what He says, and follow the lead of His teachers and His teachings, and ultimately in the end, we find ourselves, and our own direction in our lives, and in the final days of our journey, if we do these things, very often the Father of us all, turns over the great responsibilities of guiding the ship ourselves as we have learned from those before us, and bring about the successes of life to many others. Now, I hope you like the story of KEETOO.

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Chapter 1

From Out of Nowhere

He was just standing there beside the river, looking into the distance, as if he were expecting someone, no one in particular, just someone. He wasn't very tall for a boy of 8, and thin as a sapling, lean from a few hard winters. His hair was short, even though it hadn't been cut for some time now. His brown eyes sparkled from the sun shining on the water, yet showed the sadness possessed by the last 4 years, of little or no happiness usually enjoyed by a boy of 8.

His mother had been a young girl of the village of Kai, a small

village located just a few miles east of the great river and at the bottom of the mountain Canti. Kai was at the end of nowhere, and very few people ever came to the village, as it had very little to offer. Only the soldiers of the civil war, a few years back had taken the time to scout out the area around Kai and that wasn't for any good to the people of the village. It was on one of those nights, just about 9 years before, that the village was raided. Nobody knew where they came from, they just came. As if searching for some unknown enemy, and when they were satisfied that no enemy was there, they seemed to feel maybe they should create one. 5.

The young girls of the village of Kai were not beautiful, especially those whose lives were filled with lack of food and good shelter, lack of just about everything that seems to be the necessities of living. But they were happy in their own way, dancing around the fire in the evening and laughing as they ran along picking the early spring flowers.

But Noni was different. She had the usual wants and needs of the other young girls, but she always seemed to take another minute to put her long black hair

into place, and lock it with the special curved bamboo stick her father had made for her when she was only 12. Now she was past 16, and taking on the look of a young lady.

She never knew who they were the night she heard all the noise. She only knew they seemed to come from everywhere, not like the soldiers they had ever seen before. They were strange looking men, some half uniformed and some only with a few clothes on their bodies. But they all had guns, and they didn't seem to be looking for anyone, just rambling through. Their strange smiles and

laughing made her nervous and she wanted to be somewhere else, just anywhere but here. Maybe up near the mountain where she had spent nights with her father and some of the others when they would gather their wood supply in the fall. Suddenly she felt a hand grab her arm. It was harsh and cold, not like anything she had experienced before and he dragged her away into the night.

It was late after sunrise the next morning before she awoke. Lying there on the sand by the brook, she could faintly remember the night before, and the things she didn't understand or want to remember. She only

knew that it seemed to be over and she had found her way back to the village not far away, where she was met by her father, who took her into his arms, and wept.

As the weeks and months went by, it became very apparent to Noni and several of the other young girls that they were changing and becoming something very different than they were familiar with. But, they were used to changes and life seemed to them to be just an endless lack of everything and a need for the usual necessities. As for Noni, she was now with a need she could not seem to understand. She had never had a

mother, as her mother had taken a sickness, along with many of the others, and died when she was small. So, she had a need for the usual mother's care and teaching that other young girls were able to find. But even without the help she needed so desperately, by her father's care and understanding came the baby she had thought would never seem to appear. And because of the sorrows and fears that had brought him her way, she named him Keetoo.

Chapter 2

Just a Child, But So Grown Up

Now as Keetoo stood there looking into the distance, the thoughts of the past 4 years went back through his mind. The bad winter 4 years ago when it seemed the rain would never stop, and the flooding that came and washed everything away. Never had he seen so much water before. Some of the people of the village vanished and he never saw them again. Huts, belongings, and people were all washed away. Worst of all was Noni, his mother. She was only trying to help some of the others

who were going down with the flooding waters, but she slipped also into the dreadful waters with Keetoo standing there looking on, and crying, not knowing just what it was that was happening. Suddenly she was gone, never to return again.

It was lonely, not having a father, not even knowing who his father was. Just Grandfather, and now even he was sick with the fever, as were many of the others. It must have been the water. Not only was it mean and terrible, it had sickness in it. Then Grandfather was gone, passed suddenly in the night, without even saying goodbye. Keetoo had

no one he could call his own flesh and blood. The few others were very busy now, because of the great flood. Even though it had been gone for some time, still it seemed that things would never be the same again. And so it was that Keetoo had journeyed to the big river, some 5 or more miles away, looking and exploring, as a child will sometimes do.

Keetoo had never seen the people from the north until that day, by the big river when he was only 7 years old. He had traveled the distance a few times before, and seen nothing. But this time, as he neared the river, he had heard voices. They were just sitting

there along the shore, eating something. They were also talking in voices he did not understand. But they were laughing and smiling, and with his small amount of learning, he seemed to understand their friendly nature, and ventured a little closer.

He didn't see the man who had walked up behind him, and so when he turned and there he was, it frightened him, but he didn't move. The man had something in his hand, but it didn't look like anything Keetoo had ever seen before, and the man held it out as if to give it to him. Worried that he might be doing something he shouldn't be doing,

Keetoo just kept standing still, until the strange man slowly reached out and took Keetoo's hand and placed the object right in his palm. Keetoo smelled of it and looked back at the strange man. Then the stranger made the sign to Keetoo to eat it. Keetoo slowly raised the object to his mouth and took a small bite. It was very sweet and good, the taste, so Keetoo took another bite. Looking at the stranger with that certain twinkle in his eye, Keetoo smiled his approval as he went on eating. The stranger smiled back and pointed at the object and said, "Apple!" He repeated it several times, until Keetoo finally said,

"A-a-a-pull". "Yes", the stranger said, "apple". Keetoo smiled again. Then the stranger smiled and pointed at his chest and said, "Jim!". He repeated it over and over again carefully as Keetoo watched with his sparkling eyes until finally Keetoo looked at the man and said, "Jeeem". Jim nodded his approval, smiling and pointed at Keetoo and said, "Your name?". Keetoo didn't understand what he meant. About that time another man and woman came to see what all the commotion was, and Keetoo went running into the brush and was gone out of sight. Too many strange people just seemed to over do what Keetoo

was able to get through his young mind, so he hurried back to the village, still holding what remained of the apple. Still fresh in his mind were the moments of joy he had shared with his seemed-to-be, newfound friend, Jim. Those few moments were still in his mind as he stood there looking as far as his eyes could see, up the river. Maybe this time, at the big river, he could again see this stranger that had given him so much happiness. If he could just explain to him somehow, that the seeds from that apple had been sown at the village by his distant older cousin with the hopes that someday they

might all share in his good fortune. But, even if the seeds from that apple never produced any fruit that he could eat and share with his friends, the seeds of kindness that the stranger Jim had sown in little Keetoo's heart, were already full grown.

Chapter 3

Adventure Beyond the Camp

There it was, very small at first, breaking into view around the distant corner. Was it a merchant ship, long and wide, with its many wares stacked all over the deck? Or, was it some kind of military boat? It was large enough, and Keetoo could tell it was larger than any he had seen on any of the other times he had visited the big river. Suddenly Keetoo was more excited than any other time he had been to the big river. As the boat came closer and closer, Keetoo could tell it was a merchant ship, with many of its

wares for trading as it traveled up and down the river. But this one seemed so different. There were lots of people, and there was noise and music and dancing. Closer and closer, Keetoo moved toward the big river's edge so that he could get a better look. Then suddenly, before he knew it, the rock on which Keetoo was standing, began to slide. Down, down towards the river he began to slide. He looked desperately for something to grab on to, but there was nothing. Then it happened, like a bolt of lightning, out of nowhere, a rock about the size of Keetoo's head, hit him in the side. Spots were in his eyes,

bells were ringing in his head as into the water he went, rolling rocks and all. Keetoo was barely able to keep his mind on treading the water, as his older cousin had taught him sometime back. The pain in his side was like the fire he had been told about so many times, burning away at his insides as he worked his arms and legs, trying to keep himself up above the water. He could see the large boat now nearly upon him, but not aware of the danger of the boat, his only thoughts were about his fate. If only the pain in his side were not so great, he could probably work his way back to the shore, and find his

way back to the village. The current was just too much for Keetoo, with the injury to his side, and now it was carrying him farther and farther out into the big river. The people on the boat had not seen Keetoo fall into the river, but one of the deck boys, going about his tasks of carrying things about on the boat, suddenly cried out! Everyone rushed to the side of the boat. A life ring was tossed out to Keetoo, and he was so frightened that he tried to get away from it. Then before anyone could decide on the next move, over the side went the deck boy. He was about 17, and very strong. His heart was

pounding away, at the sight of this little lad, drifting away from the only safety that was now available to him. Quickly the deck boy grabbed the life ring, and began to sidestroke towards Keetoo. By now Keetoo was beginning to understand that they were trying to help him. As the deck boy slowly began the rescue, Keetoo could only think about the awful pain in his side. The bright sunlight slowly began to darken, dimmer and dimmer it become, until it was dark and Keetoo thought of nothing.

Chapter 4

Safe At Last, But Where?

It was noon the next day before Keetoo opened his eyes. The pain in his side seemed to be very slight now, that is until he tried to raise up from the bed he was on. There it was, that awful pain, but only when he tried to raise up. All around him things were so strange. The bed he was on was so soft and smooth. It felt like the fluffy clouds Keetoo had seen on the big mountain so many times. And the furniture in the room was so shiny and clean. The mirror on the dresser was like

the water pool at the brook, where Keetoo had looked at himself with fascination when the sun was in the background.

Then a stranger came into the room and noticed that Keetoo was awake. He came over to the bed, smiled at Keetoo and handed him a cup of water. He helped Keetoo rise up and take a drink. There was that awful pain again. Keetoo didn't know, but he had broken two ribs, and the Captain of the boat had decided that it would be best to take him to the doctor at Anacarto. It would be about a day and a half trip, so the Captain had put Keetoo in his own cabin. The

Captain smiled at Keetoo, and said, "My name is Andy." Pointing his finger at himself, he said, "Andy". Keetoo immediately remembered the actions of his long ago friend Jim. Keetoo smiled and took another drink of water. He was hungry, but didn't know how to say so. And about that time, the Captain went to the door and opened it. In came the deck boy, with a tray of food like Keetoo had never laid eyes on. All this activity seemed to be so magic. The food smelled so good, and Keetoo struggled through the meal with each bite bringing back the awful pain in his side again.

Keetoo enjoyed the attention he was getting, making the memory of the village and his distant cousin grow faint in his mind. In a couple of days, he was up and around, having seen the doctor in Anacarto, who wrapped him up in a tight band, and gave him a piece of sugar candy. What a treat that was, and now they were on their way down the river again and Captain Andy had kind of taken in Keetoo as his own. Captain Andy kept saying, as soon as they went back up river, he would see if he could find Keetoo's village.

Chapter 5

Son of a Captain, Wow!

Well, weeks run into months, and having passed the place where Keetoo was found several times, Captain Andy had decided that probably nobody really remembered just where the place was that Keetoo had fallen in the river, and was plucked up by them as they had gone by. At the time of the excitement, the Captain had been sleeping, and no one took the time to awaken him until they were well down the river. Now the deck boy who had saved Keetoo had taken another job in Anacarto as a bus

boy in a restaurant. Time slowly slipped away as Keetoo went about his work as an errand boy on the boat. Captain Andy slowly began to teach Keetoo how to speak his language, and he learned very soon to speak just like all the rest aboard the boat. As quickly as the sun rose and set each day, Keetoo began to learn the ways of his new master, whom he now called "Daddy Andy". The boat was now becoming the little world that Keetoo loved very much, and most of all, the wheelhouse. Keetoo studied with great wonder the large wheel that made the boat go exactly where Capt. Andy wanted it to go. Once

in awhile, the Captain could be persuaded by Keetoo's persistence, to let him take the wheel for a short distance. Keetoo's eyes would be big and bright, as Capt. Andy would say, "Six degrees to the starboard side, quickly now." Keetoo, with all the excitement of a newborn day, would very quickly try for six degrees starboard, and after much difficulty, he would finally look at the Captain for the smile of approval. Often, evening time would find Keetoo sitting on a box at the rail, looking into the distant shores, wondering.

The past was becoming so faint in his mind, as six years had

passed since that dreadful day when life held so little for him. Yet that very thing had brought him so much happiness. Time had run so many things together, it was hard for him to remember the place where he had grown up as a child, and the many changes that had taken place after the flood, and the loss of his mother Noni. Yes, "Noni", Keetoo said to himself, in his own native tongue, "Noni". He never wanted to forget that name. And Jim, he wanted to remember that name, because it was the smile, the sharing and joy of the stranger Jim that had brought him time and again to the big river. So many things were so

unclear. Keetoo needed to say these things to himself, over and over again, so he would not forget.

Chapter 6

His New Friend, Tippy

It was foggy outside the cabin window, as Keetoo awoke and begin to stir around, getting ready for the day's work. After a quick bite of bran and milk, Keetoo stepped out on the foggy deck and walked to the wheel house where Capt. Andy was carefully directing the big boat up the river in the awful fog. Things seem to be going fine, so Keetoo began going about his duties on the boat. First he must feed his dog that Capt. Andy had brought him on his fourteenth birthday. Keetoo had wanted a dog for a

long time, and now he had someone he could talk to as he did his work, and Tippy followed along, looking on with his questioning eyes as if always asking why Keetoo was doing something. This morning, Tippy would look out from the boat edge wondering where everything had gone. All he could see was white haze and occasionally the riverbank, or a small island. Soon they would be reaching the trading post at Anteeta, where they would be stopping for the rest of the day and night. They would be taking on a load of cotton for transport up to the large cities to the north.

Suddenly, Keetoo went sailing on his hands and knees forward on the floor of the boat. Things were falling and sliding everywhere. Tippy went sailing by Keetoo with a howl of bewilderment, wondering what in the world had happened. Then it was still, a deathly still, just for a second or two, before men started hollering and running everywhere. Somebody screamed, "The boat! She's breaking in two!" Tippy had made his way back to Keetoo, and was trembling with fear as the boat began to list to the starboard side. Things began to slide again, and Keetoo was able to see it just as it came at him, a large crate of

nuts, sliding towards him, which pushed himself and Tippy over the side of the boat. Keetoo, Tippy and crates all went overboard.

Keetoo didn't know which one hit the water first. He was just thankful that the boxes didn't fall on top of him or Tippy. The water was icy cold as Keetoo and Tippy pulled themselves up and onto one of the floating boxes. Down the river they went, as Keetoo tried to paddle the box like a boat, but he just couldn't move enough water to make the heavy box go any direction but down the river. Keetoo decided to just ride the box until he was able to see something, as the fog was

so great, he was not sure just where he was going. Soon, even the boat was out of sight, and Keetoo was very afraid that he was in big trouble. One thing that consoled him was the fact that Tippy was with him, this along with the fact that he was not hurt, as he well could have been. He was still afraid for himself, and for the others, especially for Capt. Andy. Keetoo just hoped and trusted, as Capt. Andy had taught him to do. "Something will happen to correct this problem," Capt. Andy would always say, so Keetoo was just waiting for that something to happen pretty soon now.

Chapter 7

All Is Not Lost

Happen it did, as no sooner did Keetoo begin to think all was lost, when suddenly the fog was cleared and gone as he looked down the river. Keetoo just rode along waiting for the proper time to land this makeshift boat he was able to find in the cold waters of the river.

Not only was it something for him to ride, it was also something for him to eat, if only he could find a place to land. Tippy had just laid down and decided to take a nap in the warm sun and dry out. Slowly the

river took a turn and the boat box slowly drifted into a small sand bar, under a small group of willows. Keetoo checked the water with one foot, and found the water to be only about a foot deep. Gently he slipped off the box and so did Tippy. After they slid off the box, it started floating again, and Keetoo was able to guide the box into a small eddy, and lodge it so it wouldn't drift away. Then he found 2 small poles, which he laid along beside the box, and rolled it up and on the poles so he could drag it up out of the water.

Evening came sooner than Keetoo had wanted, but soon he and Tippy were tucked away in a cozy little brush shelter, eating nuts from the box and wishing for something else. Suddenly the events of the day begin to catch up with him, and he began to shake and shiver almost into shock. What had happened was now clear in his mind. They must have ran into a sand bar in the river and this caused all these problems. What had happened to Capt. Andy and the rest of the crew? He had not seen anyone else fall from the boat, nor had he seen anyone go floating by. Oh how he hoped they were ok, and

especially Capt. Andy. Darkness drifted into sleep, and as Keetoo was so tired after all the work and worry, he slept very soundly. Only a few times did he awaken for a moment or two, and think about Capt. Andy and the others, wishing with all his might that somehow all would be ok, and tomorrow would bring forth good news and a reunion with those he had grown to love so much. Somehow in his mind, he just knew all would turn out ok, and that he must stop worrying and just let things take their course and see. After all, at least he had Tippy, and plenty of nuts to eat.

Chapter 8

What Is That In The Darkness?

Suddenly Keetoo awoke, wide awake, wondering why he had awakened? Soon he heard it again, it was Tippy, growling that deep down growl he always made when things were not like he thought they should be. Slowly Keetoo moved away from the place he was lying, closer to Tippy, who was only a short distance away. Tippy moved over beside him and Keetoo felt the hair standing up on the back of his neck. He knew well something was close by. Then he saw it, eyes, only a flash, then he

didn't see them anymore. What was this thing moving around out there silently, as if to be sizing up this strange situation? Keetoo put some wood on the coals and soon the fire caught and flared up. Now he could see a little farther out into the dark. "Don't look at the fire," he remembered his grandfather had said, "or you won't be able to see very well." Strange that he should suddenly remember Grandfather. Probably he would need to remember many things that Grandfather had said, if he were to survive the next few days. As for now, Keetoo was glad he had Andy's fancy lighter in his pocket. Lucky for him, he

had put it in his pocket after lighting the cook stove that morning before the boat had made the sudden unexpected stop.

Tippy calmed down, and for the moment it seemed that whatever it was out there, it had decided to move on down the river. Daylight seemed only a little while away, so Keetoo dug out some more nuts and decided to dine on the leftovers from the night before. There were, of course, plenty of nuts, but it sure would be nice to have some eggs and side meat, like he and Andy had eaten for breakfast so often, but for now, Keetoo was just glad he

had anything at all. Today he would have to try and put something together to catch a fish, as these nuts were going to get mighty tiresome.

After daylight came, and Keetoo had looked all around a bit, he decided that it would be best for him to just wait awhile for another boat to come along. Lots of questions began to pop into his mind as he sat restless on a large log beside the box of nuts. "Be very careful of strange boats," Capt. Andy would say, "You never know when mean men might take you and sell you for a slave." Right now, there was one thing Keetoo was sure of, he didn't want to be

anybody's slave. What should he do? Surely if Capt. Andy was ok, he would come looking for him, or would he? It seemed so many doubts were already in his mind, and it had been such a short time ago that everything was so wonderful.

Chapter 9

Rescued, Maybe?

It was mid-afternoon before Keetoo saw anything on the river. He had just about finished his fishing trap, when he heard the sound of a smaller boat coming down the river. Feeling sure he could find out some news about Capt. Andy and the others, he hurried to a clearing where he could be seen, and began to wave to the men on the boat. At first, it seemed they didn't even see him, and might just slide right on by. The current of the river was helping them along, and after all, they might think he was just

another beggar along the riverbank looking for a free handout. Then the boat slowed down, went on past him, and then came back up the river, so they could use their power to keep a steady pace in the current. One of the men waved and hollered to Keetoo, "What is the problem?", he asked. Keetoo looked over very carefully, not knowing whether to run or talk. Suddenly he said, "I'm from the River Dog, the boat that went down, up the river." The man on the boat went inside the cabin and came back out again. Then he yelled to Keetoo, "Are you ok?" Keetoo yelled back, "I'm ok, but I'd like a ride back to the rest of the

crew. Capt. Andy is my father.” Now he knew that Capt. Andy was not really his father, but he seemed like a father, and he was sure Capt. Andy would want him to think of him as such. Soon the men had brought the boat over close enough so that Keetoo could wade out and climb aboard. Tippy stood as if refusing to board this strange boat, but with some friendly coaxing by Keetoo, he finally came aboard.

The men seemed friendly enough, but Keetoo could not be sure just yet. Slowly the boat began to move, and Keetoo noticed they were headed down river. “Why are we going down

river," he asked. "To get some fuel.", the man who had introduced himself as Jake, had said. "You are nearly 20 miles down from that accident, and we don't have enough fuel to get you back up there. It's only a few miles down stream to Haskett Village, and there we can get fuel and return." "Anything I can do to help?", Keetoo asked. "Not for now.", Jake exclaimed. "Maybe later." Keetoo settled down on an empty box and begin to size up the boat he was now a passenger on. It wasn't very big, didn't have much of value on board, and generally left Keetoo wondering just what it was for? Seemed better for the

moment though that he would not ask too many questions. After awhile, dusk began to settle in, and soon Keetoo begin to see the lights of the village not far off. Couldn't be too soon for him, as he was not feeling too welcome on this boat anyway.

Chapter 10

Danger is Everywhere

Darkness had closed around them before they had completely finished fueling and tying up for the night. Keetoo had tried to help at everything he could as they were rushing about. Tippy just walked around looking puzzled and wondering what was going on. Everything to him was so strange. Jake was on the other end of the boat talking to his partner, and by the way they were acting, Keetoo was sure they were up to no good. Keetoo had already sized up his surroundings very carefully, and made his plan.

Suddenly he broke as hard as he could run, with Tippy right on his heels. He could hear the yelling and rushing of the two men, as they made their break. Lucky for Keetoo, one of the men had stumbled on some rope left on the dock, and had almost fallen into the river. By the time they had recovered themselves back together, Keetoo and Tippy were long gone. Zig-zagging around through the alley ways and the houses in the village, trying to lose the men that were after them, and Keetoo was not sure where he was at. Running as fast as he could, he rounded a turn and ran right into someone going

in the opposite direction. Crash, bang, and then quiet, as Tippy stood looking on, wondering what in the world had happened? For a moment, Keetoo was not sure if he was caught, or just involved in a mishap. Quickly he jumped to his feet, and hurried over to help the woman he had crashed into back to her feet - not saying a word, in hopes she might speak first. And in waiting, he could see what language she spoke. Then she smiled, and Keetoo's heart begins to settle back to its normal beating pace. "My, my, you are surely in a hurry, aren't you?"

Pleased that she spoke his language, Keetoo quickly replied,

“Oh, I’m ever so sorry, I’m so sorry.” “Now there, my little man, don’t go getting all upset. One must have a few slight crashes in life before he learns to watch his steps.” Keetoo stood speechless for a moment, and then all the problems came to him at once. Lost, afraid and confused, and now he must explain his plight to this woman whom he had carelessly ran into, and knocked down. Dimly he hoped that she could help him someway, so slowly he began to explain to her his plight, looking all around, knowing that any minute he might be looking at his enemies, who by now must be getting very close. “Come with me.”, the

woman spoke quietly. Then she hurried between two buildings close by and opened a door and went inside. Keetoo stopped at the door, worried for himself and especially Tippy, who was not too sure he wanted to go in this strange house. "Bring him on in.", the woman spoke kindly, and Keetoo motioned for Tippy to go on in by the fire which was burning warmly. Tippy made himself at home, and Keetoo stood waiting for the signal that he could too. The woman, who appeared to be in her middle 60's, smiled at Keetoo and took his coat, and motioned for him to warm himself also. Keetoo's heart was beginning to settle down to normal again.

“My name is Sarah.”, she said, “And what might yours be?” Keetoo, with that old familiar twinkle in his eye that had melted the hearts of many people by now, and won their instant love, spoke up and said, “My name is Keetoo.” Not in the same smooth language that Sarah spoke, but then he said, “I am not from this land, but was raised by someone from this land.” And with many words Keetoo began to unravel his life before this kind woman, whom misfortune had delivered him to so timely. Sarah also began to tell Keetoo some of her life and her experiences, and right away Keetoo knew that he had been

directed by someone much higher than himself to this woman of the village that was now so kind as to share her home with him, and to take care of his special needs in this difficult problem that he had encountered. Somehow he was just sure that all would end well, as he remembered all the other times in his short life that fate had delivered him to great difficulties, but then somehow, someway, he seemed to always be delivered from the difficulty. Right away, he was learning to love this woman that he met by crashing into her while escaping from those who intended to do him harm.

Chapter 11

Sarah, The Lifesaver

A few days with Sarah proved to be exactly what Keetoo needed. Cleaned up and rested, Sarah had even dragged out of storage some clothes she had stored, and that fit Keetoo like they were made for him. Sarah had explained to him that she too had had a son about his size, but he had drowned in a swimming accident when he was young. She was pleased that Keetoo was now wearing his clothes, as it seemed to bring back memories to her, and she smiled at him each time she looked at him. Keetoo was

able to help her around the house, and even do some outside work for a fisherman named Toby, whom he had become acquainted with while visiting the docks. Keetoo also learned that Capt. Andy had been killed in the shipwreck, and Keetoo surely needed the attention of his new friend, Sarah, to help him recover from the terrible fears that filled his thoughts each day. Seems that life had dealt him so many blows, sometimes he wondered how he could sort them all out. Only if he was busy, was he able to keep his mind off the grief and on better things. Tippy even seemed to be growing accustomed to this new place. Sarah was becoming fond

of Keetoo, and she had begun now to call him Kee. He liked his new nickname, because it didn't have that unfamiliar sound that people were not use to hearing. It sounded more grown up, he thought. Even Toby was beginning to pick it up. More and more, Keetoo was helping and becoming involved in Toby's fishing. It seemed by helping and working together, they were able to accomplish so much more, and Toby now wanted Keetoo to become his fishing partner. But Keetoo had not fully decided, because Aunt Sarah, as Keetoo had began to call her, had asked him to start school in the fall. Keetoo also wanted to do some

traveling down the river and see places he had been with Capt. Andy. So many things he wanted to do, and life seemed to be slipping right on by as Keetoo was approaching his 17th birthday.

One morning, as Keetoo came walking down to the dock to help Toby, there he was talking to a man in full uniform. Now, even though Keetoo had not seen the men that were responsible for his being in the world, he had heard the stories many times. He remembered that they were at least partially uniformed. He stopped for a moment just to size up this strange situation,

expecting yet another one of those moments, when he was just not sure what to do. The man was smiling and visiting with Toby, as though they were friends. He seemed like a pretty nice man, so slowly Keetoo made his way down to where they were. "Good morning, Kee.", Toby said. "Meet my older brother, Nix." Keetoo reached his hand to the stranger and shook his hand and smiled. "Good morning, sir.", Keetoo said back to him. "You are a soldier?", he asked. "Well, sort of.", Nix said. I'm a River Patrol captain. We have been having some problems up river, and they sent me to do some investigating. I'm on my way

back down river to Anacarto.”
“You don’t say,” Keetoo spoke in a curious voice. “You know the town?”, Nix asked. “Very well, sir. I have been there many times.” Keetoo remembered the young man that had jumped overboard to save his life, and also remembered that that man had went to work in Anacarto, and wondered if he might still be in that area. “Sounds like you have been around some,” Nix added. Keetoo gave him a brief rundown on his life on the River Dog, and especially about his gratitude to Capt. Andy. Nix looked at Keetoo for a moment and then spoke. “Kee, how would you like to help

me out on a very important mission? Sounds like you know the river pretty well, so I think I could use your help. What do you say?" After a couple of hours of discussion and careful consideration, Keetoo had decided to do some river patrolling with this new friend, Nix. Aunt Sarah had even voiced her approval, and bags were packed for the early morning departure. It was hard for Keetoo to go to sleep, knowing that tomorrow he was off on a venture that he felt would be something he would not easily forget.

Chapter 12

Better Than Keetoo Imagined

Sunrise came at 6:00 a.m. the next morning, and Keetoo was waiting at the dock. Nix had said he might be a little late as he had some things to do in town before he left. Toby was already on his run for the day, so Keetoo was left to think. He thought about how exciting this new job was going to be, and how much he wanted to help Nix. But he also hated to leave his new friends, especially Aunt Sarah. She had been so good to him and at times Keetoo had felt she was substituting him for the son she had lost. On saying

goodbye, she had begged a promise that Keetoo would return, which of course, Keetoo would not have thought otherwise, seeing all the help she had been to him these last four years. Without her, Keetoo was sure he could not have received the schooling he so desperately had wanted, and Aunt Sarah had been careful to make sure he was doing well with his work. Her help had also made it possible to learn as much in four years as most of the others had in eight. This knowledge would no doubt prove valuable to him in helping Nix. He would miss Toby, and the many hours they had spent

together. Toby had taught him so much about taking care of himself. "You have to look out for yourself, kid," Toby would say. "There won't always be someone there to look out for you." Keetoo had learned this already over the years, but it seemed there had always been someone looking over him. Even when he was all alone, there was that little voice of his grandfather, or his cousin speaking to him from the past. How he hoped that this time spent in the village of Hasket, would speak to him in the future. "Remember the system," the teacher at school would say. "Two plus two will always equal four."

“No matter what you’re doing, good always wins over bad,” Aunt Sarah would say. Even the little storekeeper’s words rang in his ears, “The line you draw for others will always be used on you. So draw a fair line.” This had proved good advice to Keetoo many times in dealing with his schoolmates and friends. So, he was sure it would work in his newfound adventure. Nix had said that the work they were going to be doing was easy, but it would take lots of time and patience. Keetoo sat trying to sum up the past few days and also what this new work might be, when down the street just a short distance away, came Nix.

Chapter 13

Adventure Is Exciting

Keetoo's heart, began to beat fast as Nix appeared. "Is everything ready?" Nix asked. "As far as I know," spoke Keetoo. "Even Tippy is anxious to go." "Well," Nix said, "I think Tippy will enjoy this work too, even if he is getting a little old and slow."

The sun felt warm now as they began down the big river. Even Tippy had found him a place to lie down out of the way, but careful to get where he could see everything going on. Nix was busy with some paperwork in the cabin. This pretty much left the

operation of the boat to Keetoo. This boat was small compared to the River Dog. Even Toby's boat was larger than The Rat. Funny Nix would have his boat named, The Rat. Most of the folks that Keetoo had known didn't care for rats. But if that's what Nix liked, there must be a reason. Keetoo had learned to navigate the river well, as Capt. Andy had been sure of that. Now and then they would pass another boat going up river, and they would just wave and move right on along. Nix had said to take it easy, because they had plenty of time. Keetoo had noticed that occasionally Nix would look very carefully at

something on the shore, as they were passing by. Keetoo never bothered him with a lot of questions, remembering the words of Aunt Sarah. "When you're around older folks, just listen. If they want you to know something, they'll tell you. Otherwise, you will just be considered noisy." Well, Keetoo was very curious, but he didn't bother Nix. Once in awhile, Nix would say, "Take it over a little closer to the starboard side." Keetoo would take it over to the right side, as he had learned from Capt. Andy. Once they stopped for a while and had some lunch. Now Keetoo knew they didn't

need to stop for lunch, but he stopped anyway. Nix looked around some while they were stopped. Tippy enjoyed it though, as he found time to look around himself. They had only traveled about 25 or 30 miles now, so this meant they were only a couple of hours from Anacarto. Nix didn't seem interested in getting there before sundown. After lunch, Nix ran the boat and Keetoo just stood close by, hoping he might talk a little bit about their work. Finally he said, "Kee, police work is very dangerous at times. Sometimes you have to pretend you are someone else. When we get down here to Anacarto, I want you to

stay out of sight until I'm off the boat and gone into town. Then you watch carefully. When you can see that no one is watching, you slip off the boat and come on in to town. I will have a room already rented at the Spek Hotel. Ask the clerk for a key to Nix's room, and he will give it to you so you can go right on up and go to bed. I will be there later and fill you in on what we are going to do."

Keetoo felt his heart start to beat fast again, as all this sounded so thrilling, but also kind of scary. But, he was in it now, whatever it was, and he would do his best.

They were getting close to town now. Dusk had settled and Keetoo was down in the hole. Tippy was not excited at all, as he was just contented to find a place for the night. Nix had said it would be best if Tippy stayed on the boat. Finally the boat docked and after the usual tie up and chitchats with those around the dock, all was quiet.

Chapter 14

Finally In Anacarto, But Why?

Keetoo waited for what seemed to him an hour or more, then finally he patted Tippy and quietly told him to stay put. Tippy wasn't interested in going anywhere soon. For now, he was contented to just stay in his nice warm spot. Keetoo slipped slowly up out of the hole and to the window of the cabin. There he could see all around. Seemed that everyone was gone, and all was quiet, so Keetoo slowly and quietly walked down the dock and off to one side, as not to be seen leaving the boat. Town was

busy, lots of noise and laughter. Keetoo wondered where the restaurant might be, the one the deck boy said he worked at, but he knew he must do as Nix had told him to do, so he put it from his mind for the moment. Just as he was about to cross the second corner, Keetoo saw Nix come out of a side door down the street with two other men. They had turned away from where he was, so he was sure they didn't see him. Nix had told him exactly how to find the Spek Hotel, so he walked slowly on down the street in the right direction. It wasn't the best place in town, but it was ok. Keetoo asked the inn keeper for a

key, as Nix had instructed him, and the inn keeper gave a key to Keetoo just like he knew exactly what was going on. Keetoo was lying on the bed thinking about how he wished he knew as much, when he heard a knock on the door. Keetoo's heart began to pound away, as he knew that surely Nix had a key, and if he wanted in, he would come on in. Keetoo's heart was pounding so hard, even though he knew better than to answer the door, he wondered if the person there might hear it also. Did he lock the door? Keetoo tried to think back. Yes, he remembered locking the door. For a short time, nothing

happened. Then soon, Keetoo heard steps moving away from the door, and down the hall. Seemed like the night would never pass, and Keetoo wished that Nix would come. He ran over the time he had spent with Nix, searching for something that might tell him that he never should have agreed to this mission. Just when he was finally about to doze, Nix unlocked the door and came in. He spoke very quietly to Keetoo, to see if he was ok. He told him things were going along fine, and that he would explain everything in the morning.

Keetoo tried ever so hard to sleep, even recounted his life, he went over his childhood as a boy, as he often did. He didn't want to forget about his past. Finally he dropped off to sleep.

Chapter 15

River Patrol Work, I Don't Know

Nix was already up and dressed when Keetoo awoke. Nix smiled when he saw how Keetoo was hurrying about to get dressed. "What's the matter, Kee? Didn't you get enough sleep?" Keetoo smiled back and said, "Pretty much." "Well, things won't be so bad now. What do you say we go down to the Wapee Restaurant and have some breakfast? I found out last night, that everything is clear, and over breakfast I'll explain it all to you." This sounded real good to Keetoo, so he was ready to go in no time

at all. Over breakfast, Nix explained to Keetoo that they were on a mission to find some thieves. Seemed there had been some men involved in stealing cargo from the boats while they were docked there at Anacarto, so Nix had been asked to look into the matter. The thieves would take the cargo up or down the river for a few miles, and hide it somewhere until things cooled off. Things had been quiet for a couple of days, so the thieves were probably out of the area for now. They would stay around for a few days, but not spend any time together. This, Nix thought, would let them work

independently, hoping the thieves would not know there were two of them watching for their return. Nix said, "Keetoo, you should slip by and check on Tippy, and maybe take him with you around town and see if you might find the deck boy who saved your life." That was fine with him, so he thanked Nix for breakfast, and told the waiter the food was really good. Keetoo was a hungry boy, and most anything would have tasted good to him this morning, but he didn't need to know that. The waiter had given Keetoo some advice on where the other eating places were, and soon he was on his way to check on Tippy and look around some.

Tippy was fine. Seemed to be enjoying the new adventure as much as Keetoo was, but he was ready to take a walk and look around the place. Keetoo was now really glad that Tippy was along, as it gave him some company and someone to talk to, even if he didn't understand all he had to say. At least he didn't disagree, and he was willing to go anywhere Keetoo wanted to go.

As he walked about town, looking things over a bit, he noticed that the town had grown since he had been gone, and a few new places had been built. He wondered through some of the new shops, hoping to just run into the deck

boy by some miracle, but it was not to be. He went to the place where the deck boy was supposed to be working, and they said he had left a few weeks before, and they were not sure just where he had gone, so Keetoo was left without much hope of finding him. Keetoo remembered the words of Capt. Andy, as he had often told him, "Just be patient. Time has a way of bringing about things we think are impossible, but when we are willing to wait, and keep on hoping, sometimes we are surprised when things do work out." And how many times had he proved those words to be true.

So for now, he was just going to be patient, and wait for a clue. Who knows when that might be?

Chapter 16

Things Can Really Change Fast!

Later on that afternoon, Keetoo met Nix at the place where he had indicated to him he would be, and they took separate ways to the boat, Keetoo slipping in ahead of Nix, and finally Nix coming along behind. They untied and slipped away from the dock, and began on down the river. Nix had not said just where they were going from here, but Keetoo felt ok with just being along, doing whatever he could do to help. Before nightfall, they

had made it to an area where there were some large trees alongside the river, and Nix decided that they might just make camp along the river and watch the boats going up and down in the late evening. Possibly they might see who he was looking for. That was fine with Keetoo. He was missing being out under the stars, as it had been some time since he had done so. Soon they had a nice area to stay at, and Nix built a fire and they just sat by the fire and chatted awhile. About nine o'clock or a little later, they heard a slow hum of a motor in the distance, and Nix knew for sure that it was a small boat, so

they just stayed out of sight, and waited. They had made camp behind some bushes and trees so that their fire was out of sight, and they could just move a little, and see the distance across the river, and also up and down for at least a half mile. Finally, in the moonlight, they could see a small boat, coming up the river very slowly. Nix wanted Keetoo to move to a location where he could see from a different angle, so Nix moved to some trees about 30 feet or so from where Keetoo was. Nix made his way into the bushes and waited, but Keetoo noticed that he had taken his rifle with him, and he was getting a little excited as

though this might turn out to be something pretty scary. Finally the little boat came into full view for Keetoo, and he was not sure just where Nix was, or what he might be getting ready to do, so he just sat tight and waited. Keetoo noticed that Tippy was not far away, and also anxious to see what was about to take place. He was very quiet and did not present a problem, so Keetoo didn't bother to say anything to him. As the boat came closer and closer to where they were, it slowed down more and more, until it was finally just running the motor fast enough to stay in one place against the flow of the

river. It appeared that there were three men on board the boat, and one was looking very hard at where Nix and Keetoo had tied their boat, and seemed as though he was trying to see if he could recognize it. Slowly the men came closer and closer to where they were tied, and the man, looking intently, said quietly to one of the others, "I think that is the patrol boat that we were told about in Sparko." Now Keetoo knew this little village, and from all he had heard of it, there was nothing good in Sparko. Capt. Andy had said that nothing good comes out of Sparko, and Keetoo knew from the tone of his voice that he meant

every word of it. Still he could not see Nix, and he was getting a little anxious, not knowing where Nix was, or what he might be getting ready to do. So he was very quiet. Slowly the boat came close enough, so that it was obvious they were planning something like boarding Nix's boat, or at least doing it some harm.

Finally, out of nowhere, came gunshots, bang!, bang!, two then two more, and men were yelling and scrambling all over the other boat. Nix had hit one of the men, and they were trying very hard to fire at the place where they thought the shots were coming from, but Nix was hidden pretty

well, and they were just not able to find their mark. Keetoo could tell that Nix had moved his position, and he was now able to see them much better than before, and he fired two more shots.

By this time, the other boat was frantically trying to get away, and feeling their escape would be faster down river, going with the current, they turned downriver, and gave it full throttle. This was a big mistake, as this gave Nix a big advantage. He could now see them far down the river, and if they had gone up river, he could not have seen them but for a short distance. He fired two more shots, and the motor went dead on the

fleeing boat. Nix must have hit something in the engine section, and the motor stopped running. Of course they had the current to move them on down the river, so they just drifted away, out of sight.

After a short time, Keetoo made his way back to the fire. Nix came in also, and asked if he had enjoyed the excitement. "Well," Keetoo said, "if you are asking if my heart was beating fast, yes, it was. But I was a little nervous, not being able to see you, and be sure you were ok."

Nix was fine, and indicated that they would just get some sleep, and make their way on

down the river carefully in the morning. After a bite to eat, Tippy and Keetoo found a good place to sleep, and sleep they did.

Chapter 17

What Town Is This?

Early the next morning, they set out to go on down the river, not knowing just where they might see the boat they had seen the night before, but knowing that it could be just about anywhere along the way. Nix did not seem to be worried about it, so Keetoo just acted like it was ok with him. Finally Nix said to him, "You know, they might have just shut that motor down last night when they were down river a distance. Maybe I didn't hit anything after all." Keetoo just acted like it didn't matter to him, and went about

doing whatever needed to be done. He figured that Nix knew enough about things like this, that it wouldn't do him any good to worry one way or another. Nix had said they were going to slide right on by Sparko. No sense stirring up trouble that they didn't need. Keetoo knew it was a long distance to the next village of any size, so he just settled down for the ride, and Tippy did the same. Keetoo found himself half lying down, with a soft sack of old clothes at his head, and let the sun settle his mind so that he could think. He was reminded of something that his grandfather had said, when Nix said, "No sense stirring up trouble that

you don't need." Grandfather used to say, "Look as far down that trail as you can before you go running down into something that you are not ready for. Ask someone about places, before you go hiking off to a place that might be more than you had wished for." It seemed so good to Keetoo, to think about back at the village, and when he was just a boy growing up. It all seemed so far back now. How he wished that sometime soon, he could go back and find the village to see how things were, and what had happened to his family. It seemed that time had slipped away so fast, and so mysteriously, that he had not been able to do so.

Keetoo knew in the years that he had been on the River Dog he could probably have found it, if only he had tried. But life with Capt. Andy was so good, and the only view that he had been able to remember when coming to the river, before he fell in, was from the bank. He had not been able to see from the river looking towards the bank, so the place where he had fallen was so vague to him. He also was not comfortable with the fact that he had not been able to go back up river to the place where Capt. Andy had lived, to visit with those who knew him and ask what had happened. He needed to know the facts about the

mishap and what had happened, and where some of the others were? As he lay there thinking of all these things, finally he fell asleep, and when he woke, they were at a little village, docking up, and preparing to fuel the boat. Nix said it would just be a moment or two, so Keetoo didn't need to stir, but Keetoo thought maybe he might just look around not too far from the boat. This was such a small place. Even though they had passed it many times on the River Dog, they had never had occasion to stop, as it would have been too small for them to dock anyway. Nothing like checking out different places, and speaking to different people.

“Just be careful,” Nix said, “and be ready to go in 15 minutes.” Keetoo didn’t go far, just a little ways, and ran upon a young man who was selling something special to eat. Keetoo had a little pocket change, so he bought a small amount of the man’s wares, and then went slowly back towards the boat, getting ready to leave.

Soon they were on their way down the river. Tippy had stayed on the boat, anxiously waiting for Keetoo to get back on board, and when he did, Tippy immediately was interested in what he had to eat. Keetoo gave him a little bite, and he turned up his nose, as if to say, “no, thanks.”

Nix was eating a sandwich and offered Keetoo one also, but he was not hungry now. He said they were going to be traveling all night, and make their way down river as far as they could during the night. He wanted to be in Barbakoo by early morning, and it would take good timing in order to do so. Keetoo offered to help by taking the wheel for the remainder of the daylight, so Nix could get a nap. Nix readily said, "Ok," and Keetoo was at the wheel. It felt good to be in control of a boat again, even if it was just a small one. He had often thought that someday he might also be a captain of a larger boat, traveling up and down the big river,

but the opportunity had not come along, so here he was, pilot of a small one. Keetoo knew the river well, so he just ran the deep water and ran along as quickly as he could. Darkness came much too soon, and Nix was up and about before Keetoo was really ready for him to be. But, he was the responsible type, and Keetoo knew all the time that he would not sleep long.

The night went by slow, but finally daybreak came, and they were very close to Barbakoo. Keetoo had been there many times before, and he knew the town well. He also knew that this town was large enough that he could probably find someone

who knew what he wanted to know. Anyway, soon he would find out.

As Nix slowly brought the boat alongside the dock, Keetoo noticed that people were gathered on the dock, and seemed to be gathered around something pretty exciting. What could bring all these people down to the dock? Keetoo could hardly wait to find out.

Chapter 18

Words Keetoo Had Never Heard

After the usual finishing up with the docking and getting ready to go into the town, Nix said to Kee, (*seems that everyone now called him Kee*), and he kind of liked it, making him feel grown up. "Kee," Nix said, "Let's go see what all the excitement is about." Keetoo just followed Nix over towards the crowd and found himself listening with the others, as someone spoke of a man called Jesus, and said words like "gospel" and "salvation", and other words that Keetoo had never heard before. Some he was not even sure were

in his native tongue he had spoken as a boy. Nix on the other hand, was not interested at all, as he had heard this man before and had decided that he was some kind of wizard or something. Keetoo told Nix to go on, he would find him later at the Handlebar Café, where they had agreed to have something to eat. Keetoo just stood and listened for a while, somewhat interested, but not sure what to think, so he went on into town to find Nix. When he reached the Handlebar Café, Nix had already ordered. Keetoo quickly just ordered his usual, and then asked Nix what they were going to do next? Nix said they

would just visit the main office where he worked, and see if they had anything special they wanted him to do, and also to file the report on what had happened to them while they were camped up the river. Keetoo just decided to wonder around the town and meet Nix at the hotel where they had agreed to stay. He had decided that a little exploring would be fun.

Chapter 19

Looking For The Past

Life with Nix over the past few months had grown boring to Keetoo, and besides, it looked like he would never get to go back up river to see Sarah and Toby. So, after another few patrols with Nix down the river, Keetoo decided that he was going to look for something that would take him back up the river. He had inquired about several jobs, but none seemed to be what he wanted, because he wanted to stay on the river, but also go up river, and nothing he inquired about offered either of the two. One

day, he was hanging around down on the dock, and a large boat, carrying freight up river, just happened to stop by at just the right time, and Keetoo took his chances with speaking to the captain of the boat. He waited what seemed like an eternity at the off ramp and asked several of the deck hands if the captain would be coming off the boat, and each time they would say, "I don't know for sure." Keetoo decided to take his chances and wait. Finally, after about an hour, Keetoo saw a man that looked more the captain type coming towards the off ramp. He put on his best face, and waited until the man came to

the end of the off ramp, and then he put out his hand and said, "Hi, my name is Keetoo. Most folks call me Kee. Are you the captain of the boat?" This man, who truly was the captain of the boat, was very impressed with Keetoo's hardy handshake, and said, "Yes, I am the captain. How can I help you?" Keetoo said to him, "Sir, I am the son of the late Captain Andy Barto, the captain of the River Dog that was wrecked a few years back, and I am very much in need of work, and I am familiar with anything you might have to do on your boat, and even have navigated many times, of course under the supervision of my

father, sir. Could you use even a hard-working deck hand? I would be willing to do most anything, and would make you the best of hands, sir." Captain, Frost was very much impressed, and said back to Keetoo, "You, my good man, are very well trained. If you are just half the working hand as you are the gentleman, you will be my best hand. My name is Captain Frost. You will address me as such, and you will report to Mr. Hadley at 5 a.m. in the morning. We leave at 6 o'clock sharp. He will be easy to find, and he will be expecting you. See you in the morning." And with that, Keetoo didn't know whether to jump up

and down, or run off the dock into the cold river. Finally he settled down, and went back to his room, and began to gather his things. Tomorrow was going to be the beginning of something special, and he could feel it already.

Chapter 20

Heading Upriver, Yes!

Keetoo hardly slept a wink, as he was so excited about his new job. He was up at four and headed down to the dock. He stopped by the Handlebar Café and had a bite of breakfast, and told the waiter there to tell Nix he was now working on the big boat called, The Logan. He was not sure what he would be doing, but at least he was headed up river, and Nix would know what he meant by that. The waiter said he would be sure to tell Nix, and Keetoo was off to the river dock. He was 20 minutes early, and as

the captain had said, Mr. Hadley was there, barking out orders to the other hands. When Keetoo finally made his way up to him, he reached out his hand, and Mr. Hadley said, "So you are my new man. The Captain speaks highly of you. Your name is Kee?" Keetoo started to say, "Keetoo," then quickly changed his mind and said, "Kee, sir." "That's a good name, and by the way, the captain knew your father, and speaks very highly of him. Too bad about what happened. He also wants to see you right away in the cabin."

"Wow, the Captain wants to see me in the cabin. What could this be all about?" Very quickly

he went to the cabin, where Captain Frost was busy with some paperwork, and seeing he was busy, Keetoo just made sure he knew that he was present, but did not interrupt. After a minute or so, the Captain came over to Keetoo and said, "Good morning Kee. How are things this morning?" Keetoo gave him a hardy handshake, and said, "Very well, sir. I'm reporting to you as directed by Mr. Hadley, and ready for anything you wish of me, sir." Captain Frost smiled at Keetoo and answered back to him, "First of all, let's drop the "sir" thing. You can address me as 'Captain,' and I will address you as

'Kee.' Will that work?" "Yes, sir. I mean, yes, Captain. That will be ok with me." Captain Frost was quick to let Keetoo know that he was well acquainted with his father, and that he also knew the circumstances in which his claim as a son were, and that he was pleased that he felt this way, as Captain Andy had expressed it to him in a conversation they had engaged in before his sudden death. It seems that he and Captain Andy were old time friends, and even though they were not on the same boat, they spoke with each other whenever they could. This made Keetoo feel very close to Captain Frost, now

that he knew that he was a dear friend of Captain Andy's and the past of Keetoo was already known.

After showing Keetoo around some, and getting him acquainted with the others aboard his boat, he began to work with Keetoo, preparing him for the job in which he had planned for him in the future. Keetoo was not sure of that plan, but he felt sure that Captain Frost was sure of it, and this gave him a good feeling.

Each day, at the end of the day, Captain Frost would always make sure that Keetoo was around when he brought the day to a close, and seemed to take

extra time showing Keetoo what had to be done, and the things that were important in closing the daily logs and records. Keetoo took all the time necessary to learn all that Captain Frost was trying to teach him, even though he was not sure why he was doing so. Finally, after a few weeks on board The Logan, Keetoo realized that Captain Frost was preparing him to captain a ship of his own in the future, and might even be preparing him to take his place on The Logan itself, but he just kept on doing the best he could, and left Captain Frost's reasons to himself. After all, being a captain of his own ship, wow,

what a thought for Keetoo! But as he thought about it, why not? He had spent most of his life onboard a boat of some kind, and he knew the river like the back of his hand, at least for the 200 miles they traveled week after week over these last few months. So, if Captain Frost wanted to teach Keetoo to captain a ship, it was just fine with him.

Chapter 21

Surprising Things Can Happen

One day, as they were docked at the village of Haskett, taking on a small load of cotton, Keetoo again had some time to visit with his dear friend, Sarah, as he had been able to do so many times in the past year. Sarah had fixed him his usual favorite dinner, and was cleaning up the dinner dishes, Keetoo helping right alongside her in the kitchen. She mentioned to him that she had made an acquaintance with someone that she would like for him to meet. That was fine with Keetoo, as he knew that anyone

Sarah was a friend to could easily be a friend to him. She told Keetoo that this person was someone that Keetoo had probably never met, and that he was interesting, and she felt that Keetoo might enjoy his company and some of the things he had to say. Keetoo assured her that he was very interested in meeting this man, and when might this meeting take place? She said, "Tomorrow, if you don't mind." So, it was set. Tomorrow he would meet the friend of Sarah's, and already he was looking forward to doing so.

Keetoo spent the night aboard ship, knowing that Captain Frost had a few things for him to do. And seeing as how the departure had been delayed for a day or so, maybe this would all work out after all. Keetoo's sleep was not very sound, as it seemed that all the things that had happened during the day, the delay of the loading, the extra things he had to do for the Captain, and most of all, the dinner with Sarah, and the coming meeting with her friend, kept his thoughts occupied.

During the night, Keetoo had a dream. Now dreaming was not uncommon to Keetoo, as he had had many dreams during his days

as a child, having to deal with some of the horrible things he had gone through and such. And he had dreamed many things as a man, being in his 20's now, and all the responsibilities he shared. But, this dream was different, because he dreamed something that he never thought he might dream. He dreamed that he had again met the man on the docks, that he had met a long time back now, the one who was speaking of someone called Jesus. His meeting with this man had only been brief, and in fact, he didn't even remember his name. But very clearly in the dream, he called his name Tom, and even

visited with him about some of the things Tom had been talking about, and was surprised to find that he was very interested.

The next morning Keetoo was up and about early, and in fact, didn't even remember the dream, as his mind was on other things, and also knowing that he had told Aunt Sarah, as he always called her, that he would be at her place promptly at 9 o'clock in the morning. She said she would prepare a late breakfast, and after breakfast they could visit with the friend that she wanted Keetoo to meet. So, off he was to Aunt Sarah's, and all he had on his mind was that wonderful breakfast she was capable of

fixing, and how hungry he was.

Arriving a little early, they said the regular good mornings and the normal chitchat of a boy of 25, and his dearest aunt. But soon there was a knock at the door, and Aunt Sarah went to answer it, as she was sure it was her friend coming to meet Keetoo just like she had planned. As she did so, and as the man stepped inside the room, Keetoo had this very unusual look on his face. Aunt Sarah noticed it right away, and said to Keetoo, "Have you met Tom already? Tom, this is Keetoo. He likes to be called Kee. You know, he's all grown up now, and 'Keetoo' seems so child

like now and all. Kee, this is Tom, my good friend, and also my distant cousin." Keetoo shook his hand, and immediately said, "Tom, are you the same man that I met some time back on the dock at Barbakoo? You were speaking some things to a group of men who were standing by, and I too stopped and listened for a few minutes, and then went on. Are you that same man?" "Yes, I am. "In fact, I have done so many times before. It is my life's work, to tell all that will listen of the man called Jesus, and how he came to save the world, and how that His father is the God of all the world, and that he came to save people

just like you, Kee." Wow, this was almost more than Keetoo could imagine. Not only did he know this man already, but just the night before, he had dreamed of him and had called his name Tom.

Sarah quickly insisted that they go on into the living area to sit and talk. After being seated, Keetoo hesitantly said to Tom, "Tom, I am very surprised, and also a little confused. You see, only last night I dreamed of you. I had no reason to do so, and even had forgotten all about you and our brief meeting on the dock in Barbakoo. I even called your name in this dream, and you mentioned to me in the dream

that you had something to tell me, but we never seemed to get to the part where you were telling me what you had to say. So, now that we are face to face, and I am not sure why, I am very curious, as you might know, what could be the purpose of our meeting?" Tom looked at Keetoo with a smile that Keetoo was not sure of, and slowly Tom began to speak. "Kee, I know some of the things that I am going to say to you are going to be the strangest things you have ever heard. You see, Kee, I am already aware of some of the things of your life, because the God that I am speaking about has already revealed them to me.

Your aunt Sarah has told me nothing, and I have asked her nothing. But for some reason, God has wanted me to know about you for a long time. I too, have dreamed about you, and in this dream, God revealed to me that you are going to meet someone in your past that you will find unbelievable. In fact, I think it is your mother." Keetoo was so astonished he sat for several minutes, not knowing just what to say. Finally he spoke, "Tom, my mother suffered a very tragic death, and has been gone for several years. I did not confirm that, as it was nearly impossible to do so, and besides that, I was

but a child. My life has been so different, and so unbelievable, that of course anything might be possible, but it would take a miracle for this to be." Very quietly Tom began to speak to Keetoo and say, "Kee, believing the impossible is what Jesus is all about. His life was all a miracle too, and this is why so many do not believe the things he said and did. There are so many things you do not know, and I do not have time to tell you all of them now, but this one thing I am going to ask you to do. I am going to ask you to have faith. I know you have not heard that word before, so I am going to try to

explain it to you." With that, Tom began to try very hard to explain to Keetoo about having faith, and believing in God, and trusting in what He says. Keetoo listened carefully, but when it was all done, Keetoo was not sure that he understood anything at all. Tom then gave Keetoo a little book. It was just a New Testament, but it was a start. He asked Keetoo if he could read the language it was printed in, and Keetoo assured him that he could. He also promised Tom that he would read the book and try to understand what it was saying. Tom said to him, "One more thing, Kee, I want you to try to speak to

this Jesus every time you want to know something. Just talk to him like you would talk to me, only it will be in your mind. You will not always speak out loud, but each day, you should find some time to be alone and speak to Him out loud and ask Him anything you want. We call this praying, and you will read about it in the book. Test your faith, and see if He answers you.”

Finally it was time that Keetoo must go, and he assured Tom that he would try. He also hugged Aunt Sarah, and assured her that he was glad that he had met Tom more formally, and especially because he was a

relative of hers, and that made him a relative of his. He took his little book and quickly made his way back to the ship, only he was different. He could tell he was different just because of the way he felt. Somehow, he felt that this man Jesus was somehow right along with him now, and it felt good.

Chapter 22

Reading The Little Book

The next few days were somewhat the same, going about his regular duties on board The Logan. But somehow Keetoo felt as though he was more grown up now than at any time in his life. He felt that he was aware of things that he had never been aware of before, and he was trying to put to use the things that Tom had told him, and also reading some in the little book each day at the end of the day, and also sometimes when he first got up in the morning. Captain Frost had

noticed a difference in Keetoo also, and mentioned to him that he felt like Kee was learning things much faster than most, and that he really appreciated his attitude towards himself and the others that were around him. Keetoo did not mention anything about his meeting with Tom, nor did he mention anything about the book. Certainly he did not mention that he was speaking to someone that you could not see about things that he needed to know and learn. But somehow Keetoo knew that things were different, and he was beginning to believe in the God that Tom believed in, and to learn more and

more about his man called Jesus as he read about him in the book. He had found out that just by asking sometimes things would be shown to him, things that he needed to know about navigating the ship, and things about what to do about a disagreement between the workers, and what decision to make concerning what to do about things that Captain Frost had asked him to do. So many things, and yet, it seemed he knew so little.

Chapter 23

It All Comes Together

Things were going along pretty well over these last few weeks, and Keetoo was sure that he was learning more and more, and trying to be so careful not to allow his new experience get in the way of his work. Sometimes the days were long, but he kept up well and was amazed that he was not tired as he had been in days past. He could tell that his mind was clearer and his smile had changed.

One day, as Keetoo was going about some duties that he had scheduled the day before, but

was not able to get to them, and being in a hurry, he tripped over a bucket that one of the deck hands had left in a walkway, and fell and hurt his arm pretty bad. He tried to work it out, but somehow the pain would not go away. Captain Frost had noticed that he was favoring one arm pretty much, and said to him, "Kee, what have you done to your arm." "Oh, its nothing," he said, but all the time knowing that something was wrong, and probably needed some medical attention. It wouldn't be long till they were at the little village of Anteeta, so he just did the best he could, trying not to fall behind

in his work. Captain Frost assured him that he did not have to do all that he thought he needed to do, and when they arrived at Anteeta, he was going to have the arm looked at by the doctor there who had a fine reputation.

Docked and tied up, Captain Frost immediately took Keetoo to see the doctor, who lived in a small but very nice home in the village. They both walked right in, and the doctor's wife met them and said the doctor would be with them shortly. In a few minutes the doctor came in, and with a brief introduction proceeded to look at Keetoo's arm. "I don't think it's broken, but it

needs to be put in a sling," the doctor said. Keetoo had never had his arm in a sling, so he was a little amused at what the doctor recommended, and waited patiently while he made a sling with some special cloth and put Keetoo's arm in it so that he could not use it any longer. Keetoo tried very hard to convince both the doctor and Captain Frost that he was fine. Just a day or two and he would be back to normal. But the doctor insisted that he not use it, and in fact, would like to see him again over the next few days. Captain Frost said, "This will not be a problem. Kee can stay here in Anteeta for a few days, and I'll

pick him up on the return trip.” After some words with Keetoo, the deal was settled, and Keetoo was put up at the local boarding house, and Captain Frost and the ship were on their way.

The next day, Keetoo came as was scheduled to see the doctor. Again, when he came to the house, the doctor’s wife answered the door, and welcomed Keetoo into the office area. “Have a seat, and the doctor will be with you shortly.” He noticed that the wife was somewhat younger than the doctor, and wondered why such a young woman would marry an

older man, but that was none of his business, so for the moment, he put it out of his mind. In a moment or two, the doctor came, looked carefully at Keetoo's arm, and said, "It looks good, Kee. I think you were right. In a few days you are going to be good as new." For a moment, Keetoo was silent, as if in deep thought. The doctor did not know exactly what to think, but he waited for a moment or two, and then said to Keetoo, "Mr. Kee, was there something you wanted to say to me?" Keetoo had that gleam in his eye that all who were well acquainted with him knew well, and finally he said to the doctor,

“Doctor, your wife reminds me of someone that I use to know. Is she from this area?” The doctor looked a little puzzled, and after thinking for a moment, he said to Keetoo, “Would you like to hear the story of where my wife comes from?” “Yes, sir, I believe I would,” Keetoo immediately said. “I would love to hear her story.” The doctor stepped to the doorway and spoke into the kitchen area and said, “Honey, would you come to my office for a minute?” “Just a minute,” was the reply, and after just a short time she entered the room. “Honey, Mr. Kee here would like to hear your testimony.” “Are you sure?” she asked.

“Yes, he has asked to hear it, and I think it would be a good idea for you to tell him yourself.” Keetoo was all ears as the doctor’s wife began to tell the story of her life. Keetoo was careful not to interrupt, as his faith was still weak, and he did not want to give in to disappointment and ruin the day. So carefully he listened, as she detailed the story of her life.

“I was born in a village up the river, but I do not know exactly how far. I was born and raised by some wonderful people, people that I loved dearly. My life was a hard life, a life that most would never speak of. However, it had its

good times, but most of all the bad times. When I was just past my 16th birthday, a terrible thing happened to me, something that I have never explained to anyone except my father. When I was 17, I bore a son and loved him dearly. When he was just a small child, a flood came quickly upon us, and as I was helping others flee the raging waters, it caught me by surprise, and swept me away also. Only I was blessed, because I was spared for another day. I grabbed onto a log, held on as tightly as I could, and even though it seemed that I would be torn from it at any time, for some reason I did not lose my grip."

“Then a worse thing I feared happened to me, as I was finally swept out into the big river, and for sure believed that my doom was near. But, along came a large boat, and someone on that boat by some miracle saw me clinging to the log, half dead, but still unwilling to let go. All of a sudden, this man tied a rope around his waist and jumped overboard, frantically swimming towards me, and just at the right moment, he grabbed me. And with the help of the others on board the boat, they pulled both of us onto the boat, and I was nursed along until the boat came to Anteeta, where we are now.

With the help of my husband, the doctor, my life was saved. After about a year of recovery and getting on my feet, the doctor and myself were married, and have been for these last 15 years. We have two lovely little girls, and we are most happily married. As she was finishing her story, Keetoo started to weep. Now Keetoo had never cried since he had fallen into the river. All these years he had gone, and not a tear, but now he just could not help it. With tears running down his cheeks, he looked directly at the doctor's wife, and said, "Noni." She said, "Yes, what is it Mr. Kee?" Keetoo looked at her

through his tear-filled eyes and said, "Noni, I am Keetoo. I am not Mr. Kee." Noni fell to her knees before Keetoo, and with tears of joy and a smile that only a mother could have, she began to hold Keetoo at the waist and sob and sob, as she said, "Dear God, you brought it to pass. You brought it to pass just like you said you would, and I didn't believe it. I am so sorry, dear God. I will never disbelieve again." The reunion was so overpowering that even the doctor was crying, and two little girls were crying. And to this day, the testimony of Noni and Keetoo is heard all up and down the river in all the little gatherings that Brother Tom, as

he is called now, has established in all the villages. And for years to come, the testimony of Noni and Keetoo was the best of all to folks far and wide. And now, even you know it, because I have just told it to you. And as Keetoo captains the big ship, The Logan, after the retirement of Captain Frost, each time a new man comes on board or there's a short stop at one of the docks, again and again, Keetoo is asked to tell his story. And that he does.

The End
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