Keeper and Kid

by Edward Hardy



About the Book

Eight years ago, James Keeper fell in love with his upstairs neighbor in Boston, a sassy pastry chef with gray eyes and a fierce attitude. They got married, found a dog, and shopped for cilantro. But conflicting schedules and a real estate deal gone bad took its toll on the twenty-somethings in love. One divorce later, the hand-me-down chairs were separated, the potato masher custody settled, and Keeper moved to Providence to work with his best friend selling antiques at a quirky shop called Love and Death.

A new job, a new love, and a new life now in place, Keeper is in a comfortable situation. Business is steady, Leah (the new love) is intriguing and passionate, and Keeper?s friends always turn up for Sunday evening Card Night.

But one phone call from his former mother-in-law changes everything. And so days later, Keeper comes away with a son he never knew he had, and life all of a sudden takes on a new meaning.

Leo, the precocious three-year-old who sports Keeper?s square chin, is more than a handful --- he eats only round foods, refuses to bathe, thinks he?s a bear, and refers to Leah as ?that man.? For a guy who never thought he?d be a parent, Keeper is thrown headfirst into fatherhood --- and has no idea what to do. As Keeper and Leo adjust to the shock of each other and their suddenly very different lives, Keeper begins to let the people in his life in, in turns strange and heartwarming, funny and painful. But some, like Leah, aren?t so eager for change.

In this humorous and poignant novel, Edward Hardy explores the depths of modern love, parenthood, and compromise. **Keeper and Kid** is the story of how a normal guy receives an unexpected gift and in turn must learn to ask more of others and himself. A coming-of-age story for the guy who thought he had already grown up, **Keeper and Kid** is a sharp and witty account of what we do for love.

Discussion Guide

1. Keeper has an interesting off-beat job. How does it mesh with his personality? How does it work to advance the events in the story?

2. Keeper?s life is changed overnight. What has he lost?

3. ?I guess I?m not the person I thought I was.? Why does Keeper say this?

4. Is Leah?s reaction to Leo?s arrival realistic? Does it echo anyone else?s reaction to a new and disturbing situation?

5. What part do animals play in the story?

6. Can you relate to Cynthia?s keeping of such a secret? What role to secrets play in the book? What makes people give them up?

7. What role does Grace play in the story?

8. Card Night plays a role in the story too. What purposes does it serve?

9. What is the fascination with The Wilsons? Would you be as intrigued if you were at Card Night?

10. Both Keeper and Leo are trying to navigate unknown territory where they don?t know the language. Are there places in the book where their voyages truly intersect?

11. Why do you think Keeper is so bad at asking for help when he needs it?

12. How does Leo?s book, the one Cynthia made, help Keeper get a handle on who Leo is?

13. ?...it looks like life has flattened out and presto, some completely cool object pops up right in front of you.? Is this in any way an analogy for the story?

14. How do Keeper?s parents figure into the story? Should they have appeared earlier? Why do you think they didn?t?

15. The ?wooing? of Leah - Keeper?s plan to get her back, did it work in any way?

16. How are hospitals and injury used to advance the story?

17. What does the return of Fred foretell?

18. What does Keeper gain from the upheaval of his life?

19. Can you think of an alternative ending that would be satisfying?

20. What do you think these characters will be doing in five years?

Author Bio

Edward Hardy is the author of the novel **Geyser Life**, grew up in Ithaca, N.Y., has an MFA from Cornell, and has published stories in *Ploughshares*, *GQ*, *Witness*, *The Quarterly*, *The Massachusetts Review*, and other literary magazines. His work has been included in **The Best American Short Stories**.

Critical Praise

"A wonderful journey of thoughtful, reluctant fatherhood. Highly recommended."

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