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ANCHOR TEXT | SHORT STORY

## NOTES

**3. moccasins** (MOK uh suhnz) *n.p.* soft shoes traditionally made from animal hide.

Martin chases the dogs away. Then, with the neighborhood watching, he and Grandpa greet each other. Grandpa is wearing a tall black hat with a feather in it, a black suit, a bright red shirt, and a bolo tie, which is a kind of tie made of a cord and a large ornament at the throat. Martin notes to himself how Grandpa's appearance is not out of place on the reservation, but it is very much out of place in Martin's neighborhood. And this embarrasses Martin deeply.

Martin notices that Grandpa looks tired, so he guides him by the arm inside. Martin's mother is shocked to see him and asks how he got there. She wants to hug him but stops herself because showing affection by hugging is not considered correct to the Lakota, so she greets him happily by shaking his hand. Cheryl next appears and is also very happy to see Grandpa. Their happiness makes Martin ashamed of his embarrassment. Grandpa hugs Cheryl, who is still young enough to be hugged in Lakota culture, but then he collapses.

**He had fainted. Mom and I carried him into her sewing room, where we had a spare bed.**

**After we had Grandpa on the bed, Mom stood there patting his shoulder. "You make Grandpa comfortable, Martin," she decided, "while I call the doctor."**

Martin loosens Grandpa's tie and opens his shirt collar. He can feel a small leather pouch that hangs from his neck. After speaking with a doctor, Martin's mother returns and says that Grandpa may be suffering from heat exhaustion, which is a condition caused by being too hot and tired.

After the doctor visits, Martin's mom tries to feed Grandpa soup. Grandpa doesn't like the idea of being fed, but Martin's dad, who has returned home from work, explains that he has suffered heat exhaustion and convinces him to allow himself to be fed.

**Grandpa relaxed, and between sips of soup, he told us of his journey. Soon after we visited him, Grandpa decided that he would like to see where his only living descendants lived and what our home was like. Besides, he admitted sheepishly,<sup>4</sup> he was lonesome after we left.**

The family feels guilty. Martin's mother is all the family that Grandpa has left, which is why the family visits Grandpa for one week every summer. Grandpa explains that he had ridden on buses for two and a half days to reach the city where Martin lives. When he arrived in the city, he began to walk. He stopped to rest on the steps of a downtown building, and a police officer helped him to get onto the bus that took him to Martin's street. Not being able to see the house numbers on both sides of the street while he walked on the sidewalk, he decided to walk in the middle of the street. That's when the little kids and dogs began following him.

The family feels bad for Grandpa because of his long journey. But Martin also feels proud of him.

**I knew everybody felt as bad as I did. Yet I was so proud of this eighty-six-year-old man who had never been away from the reservation but who had the courage to travel so far alone.**

4. **sheepishly** *adv.* in an embarrassed way.

## NOTES



Grandpa doesn't want to be a burden on the family and offers to pay for groceries with the money he keeps in his boots. It's money he has saved for a long time for his funeral. Martin's dad says that he is not a burden and wishes that the family had brought him back with them when they visited in the summer. But Grandpa says the timing was not right. He also says, looking at Martin, that he has come because it will soon be time for Martin to have the medicine bag.<sup>5</sup>

**We all knew what that meant. Grandpa thought he was going to die, and he had to follow the tradition of his family to pass the medicine bag, along with its history, to the oldest male child.**

Martin doesn't know what to say. He realizes that the medicine bag is the dirty leather pouch he had seen around Grandpa's neck when he was trying to make him comfortable earlier. He can't imagine wearing it, but he knows he will have to take it.

Grandpa stays with the family for two months. Martin's friends want to meet Grandpa, but he makes excuses to keep them away. Martin's sister, however, has her friends over. Her friends think Grandpa is great. One day, after school, Martin's friends insist on meeting Grandpa. When they get to Martin's house, Grandpa is dressed very impressively and makes a great impression on the boys. When Grandpa and Martin make eye contact, Martin can tell that Grandpa has known all along that Martin was afraid that Grandpa would embarrass him in front of his friends.

**My buddies passed in single file and shook his hand as I introduced them. They were so polite I almost laughed.**

Martin's friends listen respectfully to Grandpa and ask to come back to see him again. Martin feels proud of Grandpa. That night, Grandpa calls Martin to his room and says that when Martin gets home from school tomorrow, he will give him the medicine bag.

The next day, Martin meets Grandpa in his room. Grandpa explains the history of the medicine bag. His father went on a vision quest, or journey to seek spiritual guidance. He went alone to a high butte—an isolated mountaintop with steep sides—and stayed there for three days before he had his vision. When he had his vision, he saw "the white man's iron." He doesn't understand the vision, but when he comes down from the butte, he finds the remains of a campfire and a broken shell of an iron kettle. He understands this to be a sign and takes a piece of the iron kettle for his medicine bag, which he had made years ago.

Grandpa then explains that when he became a man and his father was old, the medicine bag was handed down to him.

**"I kept the bag until my son, your mother's father, was a man and had to leave us to fight in the war across the ocean. I gave him the bag, for I believed it would protect him in battle, but he did not take it with him. He was afraid he would lose it. He died in a faraway land."**

Again Grandpa was still, and I felt his grief around me.

**"My son," he went on after clearing his throat, "had no sons, only one daughter, your mother. So the medicine bag must be passed to you."**

5. **medicine bag** *n.* bag used by some Native Americans that contains items for healing.

## NOTES



## NOTES

4

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4