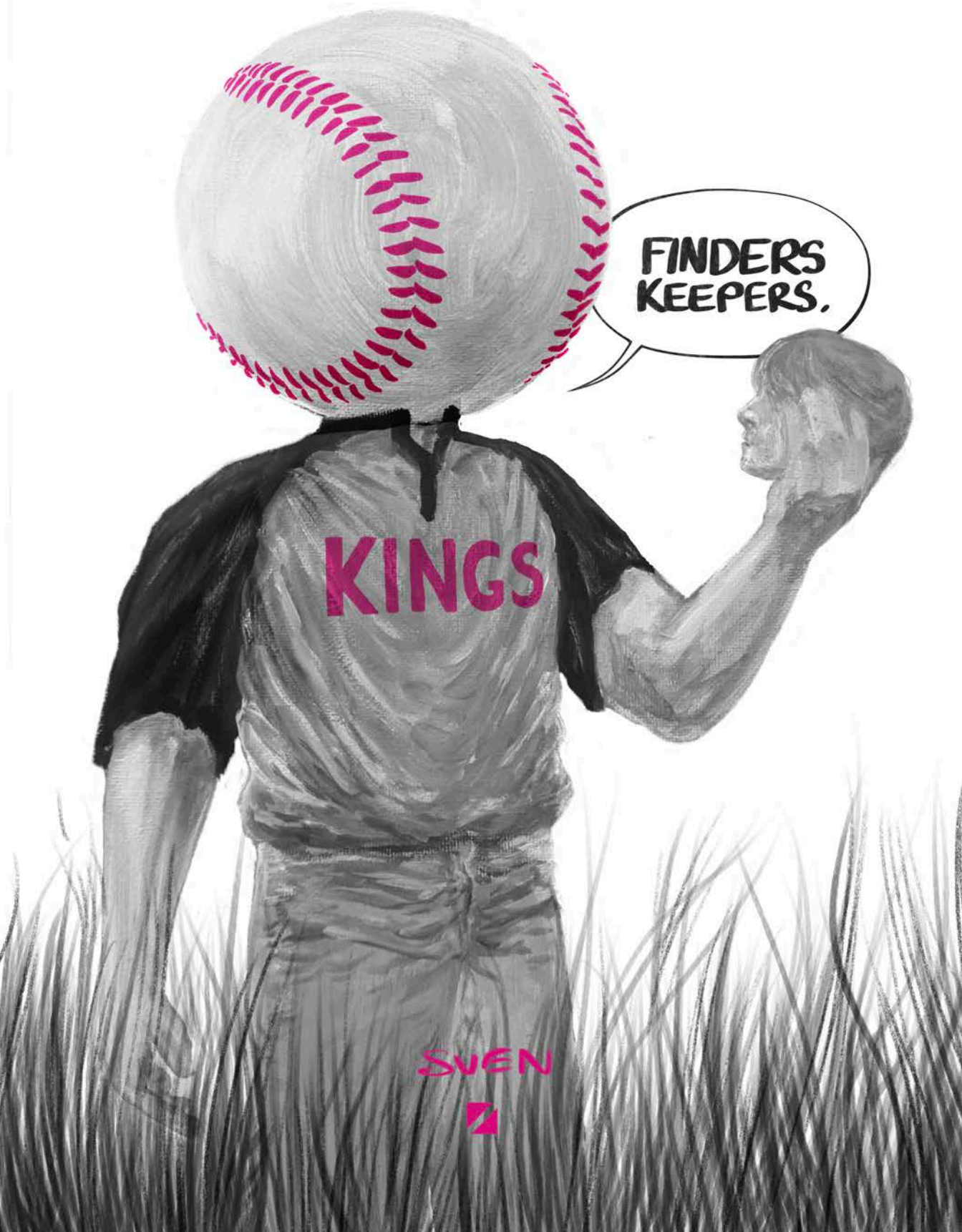


words plural




SVEN





Excelsis

Words & Pictures by Sven




THE SNOW FELL THICK AND HARD. I HAD BEEN ON THE MOUNTAIN FOR LITTLE MORE THAN A WEEK, AND IN THAT TIME IT HAD BEEN MY CONSTANT COMPANION.

CARTER'S MAP WAS LONG GONE, LOST IN A DRIFT TWENTY-FIVE HUNDRED FEET BELOW

I HAD NO MORE NEED OF IT.

I COULD SMELL THE RICHES OF THIS MOUNTAIN

CARRIED ON THE WIND.



STILL, THE SNOW TOOK ITS TOLL.

I HAD EATEN THE LAST OF THE DOGS THREE DAYS PRIOR.



I BEGAN TO DOUBT MY CONVICTION.

THE THOUGHT OF TURNING BACK LAY HEAVY LIKE LEAD IN MY STOMACH.



AND THAT'S WHEN I SAW IT.



IT MUST HAVE BEEN
SOME SORT OF BIRD.

SOME TERRIBLE BIRD.

BUT IT WAS BRIGHTER
THAN THE SUN.

EXCELSIS



MY EYES BEGAN TO WATER
AND ITS HEAT STUNG MY
FROST BITTEN SKIN...

BUT I COULD
NOT LOOK AWAY.



ITS DANCE TRANSFIXED ME...

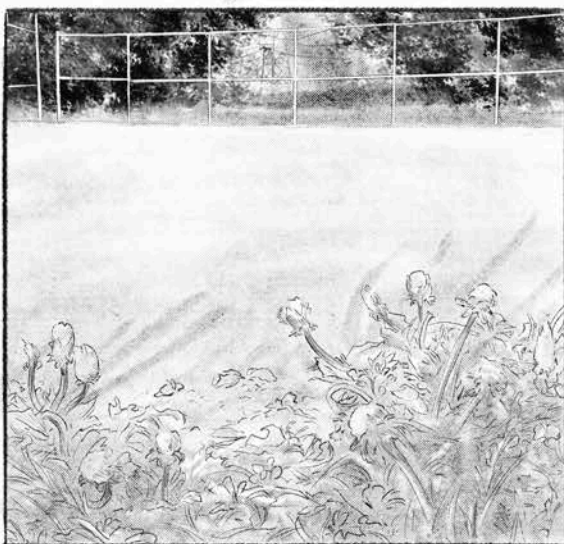


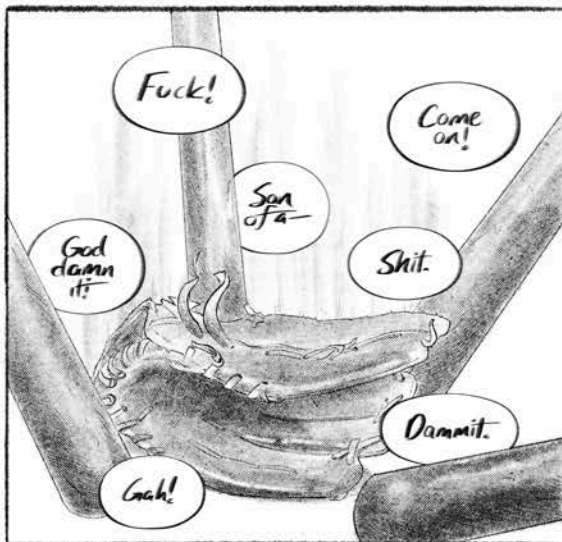
Read the rest in Words Plural #2: Finder's Keepers

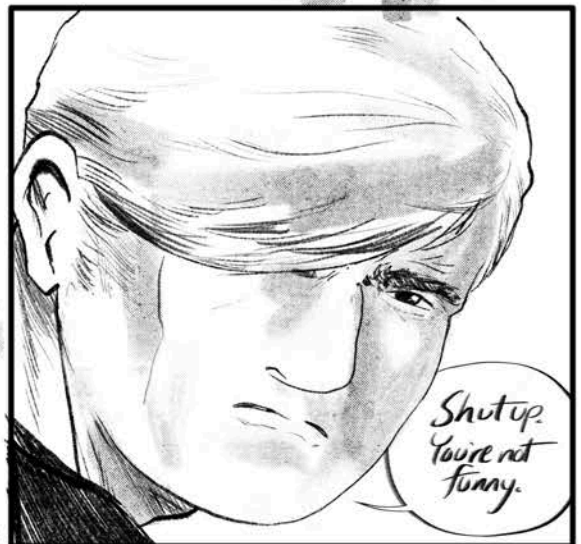


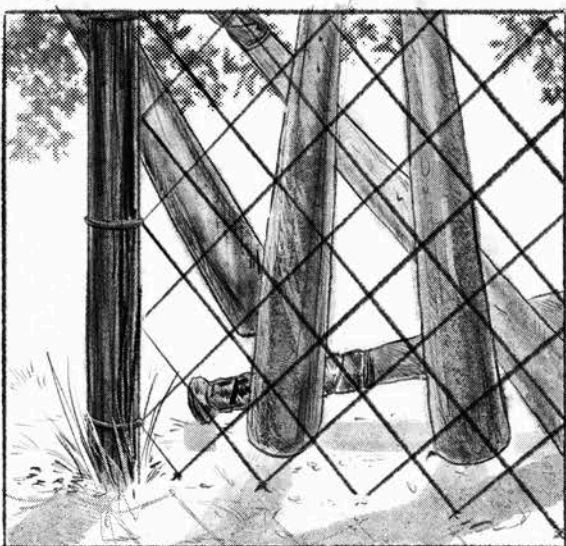
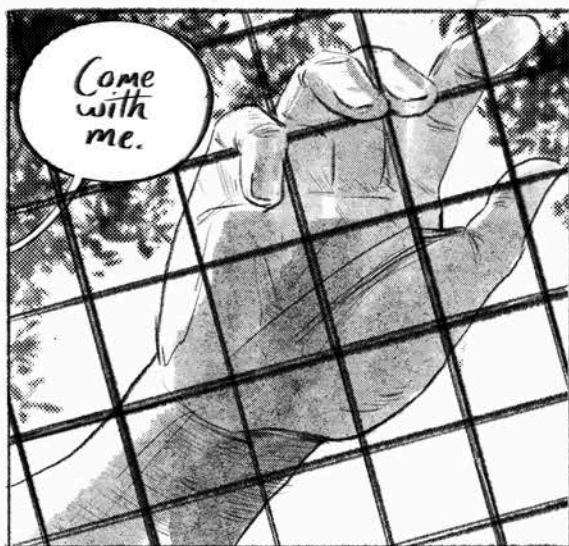
Slugger

Words and pictures by Sven









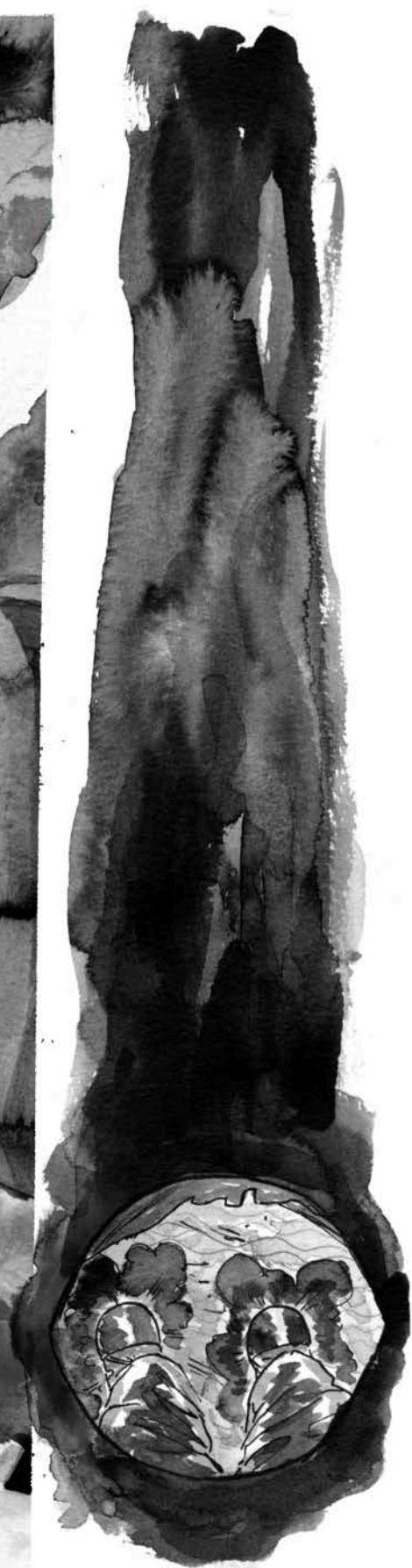


The Custodian

Pictures by Sven










Flying Dogs

Words by Joyce Jodie Kim

Pictures by Sven



This is how
I'll die.

In a recurring dream,
a familiar dream

I'm lost as usual,
but the frostbite is new.

My tear glands are cracked
and dry, and the fire ants in my
thighs are long frozen.

I have no toes left.
I am mouse no more.
I am amphibian.
I am frog.

Is it bad that I want to give up?

I've been trying to find the right door for what feels like five winters, and I have most likely been going around in circles.



If it were up to me, I would have given up a long time ago.

I'm so tired.

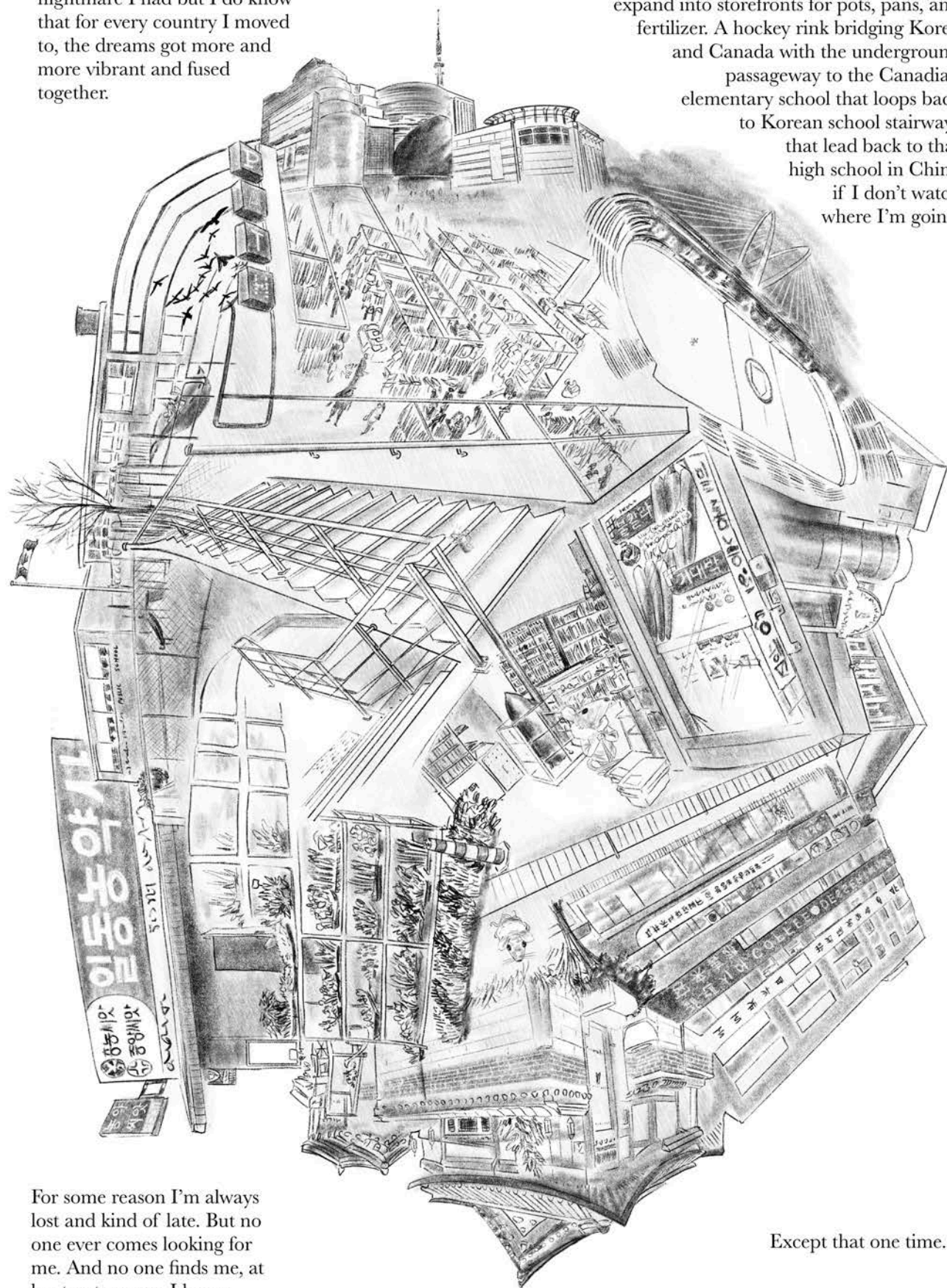


I look at the rows and rows of identical houses on my right and the rows and rows of identical hills on my left. Newly built bungalows and newly constructed mounds of dirt. My fully charged phone is frozen stiff, so I try yelling out my friend's names into the air one by one in the general direction of any houses that look like they could shelter friendly creatures.

How do they not hear me?

I don't remember the first nightmare I had but I do know that for every country I moved to, the dreams got more and more vibrant and fused together.

Shopping malls from China towering above traditional Korean houses that expand into storefronts for pots, pans, and fertilizer. A hockey rink bridging Korea and Canada with the underground passageway to the Canadian elementary school that loops back to Korean school stairways that lead back to that high school in China if I don't watch where I'm going.



For some reason I'm always lost and kind of late. But no one ever comes looking for me. And no one finds me, at least not anyone I know.

Except that one time.

Read the rest in Words Plural #2: Finder's Keepers