

Discuss the
relationship between
keith



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

'Spies' the riveting novel written by Michael Frayn is narrated by Stephen Wheatley himself as he realises that he must take a trip to the destination: Memory Lane.

He's looking for "the last house before you go round the bend and it turns into Amnesia Avenue," because of something sensual that triggered a remembrance, in this case the "vulgar" smell of privet hedge. The odour takes him back to a terrible summer during World War II when he and his friend Keith were caught up in the adolescent fantasies of wartime. They lived in a nameless suburb of London on a claustrophobic cul-de-sac or "close" of ordinary houses where privet hedges were great hiding places. Stephen Wheatley can be described as a 'dopey, dreamy lad' and he forms an unlikely friendship with Keith Hayward who is the opposite to him. Keith is a polite, fiercely disciplined, quite sinister boy with a vicious and sinister father and a nice charming mother.

Stephen and his best friend, Keith Hayward, contribute to the war effort by proposing terrible goings-on in their neighbourhood that need investigating: murderers, smugglers, and secret societies. One day, Keith announces that his mother is a German spy, and a new game begins. In the first chapter Stephen refers to himself as 'the awkward boy who lives in that unkempt house between the Hardiments and the Pinchers' he is ashamed of his dilapidated home with the neglected lawn that his father never tended and of the boy he once was and used to look like. He was known as 'the one with the stick-out ears' and wore clothes that were too short or too long, this reflected his humble background. Everything about him was grey, not just his mood but what he wore such as the 'stripes on the belt,' he was entirely

monochrome and that's how the old Stephen could recognise himself from the old 'black-and-white snaps.

'It sounds like he felt that he didn't exist or that he was always in the background, a shadow. He led quite a dull life with little excitement, quite the opposite to how he is now, in fact his grandchildren laugh in 'disbelief.' He must have completely transformed himself as he even says 'I share their incredulity. I shouldn't have the slightest idea what Stephen Wheatley looks like' which exaggerates how he has changed physically that you wouldn't even be able to recognise him. Looking back, he believes that his plain name 'Stephen Wheatley' or just 'Stephen' didn't suit the boy he used to be, it was too normal as him and his family was apparently not quite right. His elder brother was 'insufferable' and it made him so frustrated that he would 'shout some inadequate insult' which shows how insignificant he felt and how he just wanted to lead a normal life like his friend Keith.

We immediately notice the comparisons between the two boys' families and how they live such as Stephens' parents not being interested in the appearance of the house and lawn whereas Keith's father used to keep his house flawless and Stephen always saw Mr Hayward painting the 'garage doors.' We also see that Stephen's parents did not teach him manners and did not discipline him especially around the dinner table as he was 'cramming food into his mouth from tea,' but Keith's mother preferred to dine with her family. When Stephen was sometimes invited to join them, they were allowed to sit on their own, with napkins and a jug of lemon barley, he still can taste the 'chocolate spread on the thick plank of bread,' which he would never have had with his family. There were also silver candlesticks,

awards and a frame, which again reflected their social status and wealth. He used to look forward to going to the Haywards as they seemed 'normal' and their house was well preserved and neat compared to his.

He was aware of his disgraceful appearance even then and tried to look respectable by pulling up his socks, which were sagging and tying his untied tennis shoes. He felt isolated, like an outsider and 'non-existent' as he felt that he 'didn't fit with the pigtailed Geest girls and the oil-stained Avery boys, and never will.' He used to believe that all girls were 'sly and treacherous' and yet he has children and probably had a wife, even though she is not mentioned in the first chapter. He used to 'daydream' which kind of emphasises to the reader how he was desperate to tear away from reality into a more exciting fictional world. The old Stephen couldn't believe how 'unsatisfactory' he was, he just wanted to 'take him by the shoulders and shake him' which shows how angry and almost regretful he is when looking back. Keith, his friend made a big impact in his life, with him he was no longer 'monochrome' as he was a lot brighter and cheerful.

He felt lucky to be Keith's friend even now with an adult's hindsight. In their friendship Keith was the most dominant character and he would be the 'officer corps' in their two-man army whilst Stephen would just be the 'other ranks,' but he was very grateful. They had many enterprises and projects but in all of them Keith was the leader and Stephen was the 'led,' but this did not upset Stephen as he admired him so much and knew that his intellect and imagination was far more superior. The quote "he was the only first in a whole series of dominant figures in my life whose disciple I became," shows

that he admired his friend more than his parents who are meant to be role models.

They never played at Stephens' house as Keith had far more toys and space, it wasn't as interesting as Keith's who's family seemed a lot wealthier and seemed to have a perfect life, a life which Stephen wishes he probably had. Keith discovered 'Trenwick' and the 'rail embankment' and this shows that he used to go on adventures and missions by himself without the help of Stephen. He also used to plan what they did for the rest of the day and Stephen relied on him, unless he had a chore from his father opposed on him in which case Stephen would help especially with 'maintaining his bicycle.' He believed that their family were 'impeccable' and could not understand how they tolerated him. Stephen never really saw his father like Keith, he was 'out of an office somewhere all day and often all evening, doing a job' and when he was he 'said very little' this also contributed to Stephens dull and lonely life.

This also maybe the reason why he is there for his children and grandchildren, because he knows how it feels to be alone and unloved. He felt guilty for not loving his family and not wanting to always be with them, as instead he loved being invited to tea at Keith's house and used to dislike going home afterwards. He remembers his farewell speech 'thank you for having me' and is still sincerely grateful to Keith and his mother for having him. Keith's father has also been portrayed quite abusive and malicious as he used to threaten Keith who he addressed as an 'old bean' with a cane, even if Stephen was involved as well. He used to frighten Stephen and therefore he never spoke to him or directly looked at him.

His father did still inspire respect as he did 'win a medal in the Great War' for killing five Germans, and Keith was very proud to recite the exciting story of what he had achieved. Sometimes Stephen would see Keith's father's disapproving looks in Keith when he went to Auntie-Dees untidy house, but Stephen always believed that their family was perfect and put them on a 'pedestal' so he told himself that 'a properly brought-up was supposed to have in an aunt's house,' this again shows their unshakeable correctness. He appreciated Keith's family's qualities as he had disadvantages in life due to the difference between Keith's status in the world and his own, he described it as 'enthraling' as he felt privileged to even be associated to their family. He admired Keith's 'good fortune in being encumbered with a brother' as Stephen's brother Geoff was very difficult and his mother deteriorated because of his impertinent behaviour, she spent 'most of the day in a faded apron, sighing and anxious, apparently unable to think about anything except Geoff's swearing and Stephen's whereabouts' this shows that Stephen actually gave Keith's mother more respect and didn't think highly of her.

Stephen imitated his father's language like 'Shnick-shnack' when Keith said something unbelievable but Keith gave one of his looks to show that he was not impressed and he had said the wrong thing once again. Stephen feels that he is inferior, loses his confidence and follows perfect Keith. Stephen disliked having to be interrogated by his father when he got home. He asked questions about school, friends, and favourite subjects, and name-calling but Stephen's responses were vague and brief, as his mind was drifting off and he was desperate to go to Keith's house and get away from his 'unsatisfactory family' even at bedtime. When Keith revealed to Stephen that

his mother was a 'German spy' he didn't know how to react and had mixed emotions. He was 'surprised' by Keith's announcement and 'immediately excited' as he could see all possibilities opening up such as investigating, hiding and dressing up in disguise kits but also felt admiring jealousy as it was another demonstration of Keith's 'unending good fortune.

'He was again impressed with Keith's parents, as his father was in the 'Secret Service' and his mother was a 'German spy,' incomparable to his unexciting parents. He then feels 'slightly regretful' as he accepted all the lemon barley and chocolate spread from her, this is typical of a child to have such an immature approach and worry about all the insignificant things. He also feels regretful for all the 'tolerance, all the intimations of grace and composure' he would rather it have been someone that they could investigate, he feels awkward. He eventually gets used to the idea and it begins to make sense with the help of Keith. He is glad though that it is not Keith's father that is the 'spy', as he'd find keeping an eye on him 'too frightening to contemplate' Stephen was also ashamed to ask Keith questions as he felt that they were not intelligent enough and were too obvious so he couldn't ask for proof that she was a genuine spy.

Keith liked to feel in power and to be in charge, he knew that he was better off and wanted to impress Stephen by giving him a taste of his life as he is of a higher social class. Looking back at the young Stephen he realised that Keith made stories up and that he was very gullible quoted 'Keith's words came out of nowhere, that they were spontaneously created in the moment they were uttered' Stephen makes out that Keith just imagined things 'a blind leap of pure fantasy. Or of pure intuition,' and he did it more than once.

He visits Keith all the time because of all of the investigation and his mother gets suspicious but doesn't have any control over him ' where are you off to?.

.'Not to Keith's house?' he is quite nasty about his mother when he says ' there's something so hopelessly ordinary about her that it's difficult to take account of her existence' he shows no interest or time for her. They are quite devious about the investigation and Keith is always the leader and is the expert, as he knows what to do, Stephen just observes and follows. This is shown in quotes such as ' very softly Keith takes down the looking glass from its hook, and picks up the torch from the hall table.

' Stephen tried to imitate Keith in the operation ' I bend over and imitate his methodical slowness' this is because he is so fond of him and thinks that everything he does is correct. Keith was very precise and did everything properly especially when he records various letters and digits in the logbook, which he claims, are ' codes'. He was very organised and examined every little clue, which contributed to the investigation. Keith feels extremely superior and deliberately tries to scare Stephen to make out that he is more courageous and mature. Stephen has felt humiliated by him in the past as he says ' things start as a game, and then they turn into a test, which I fail,' this shows how spiteful Keith can be.

Stephen often mentions every so often how honoured he is to be associated with Keith, when he says ' his family have taken on the heroic proportions of characters in a legend' and admires his parents as he describes them as ' noble father' and ' traitorous mother'. He also feels that Keith is charged by

fate and he feels lucky to be 'granted a modest foothold' in the story as he is the 'loyal squire' and a 'sword-bearer,' to Keith who is the hero. Stephen believed that he was more than a 'protagonist in the events we're living through' and he believes that he is in some mysterious way their 'creator' he made out as if he was supernatural and had powers when he says 'he uttered the words, and the words became so. He told the story, and the story came to life.' Stephen was completely dominated by Keith and he would even wait for him to announce how they're going to conduct the adventure that he has planned.

Keith was determined, mysterious and didn't seem to think of the consequences of their actions whereas Stephen was wiser and always suggested to Keith to tell people as he was afraid of danger, but Keith didn't respond or he looked at him as if he didn't know what he was talking about. Stephen was very scared to query things as he refuses to take Keith's confidence away and he was in charge of both of them for example when Keith wrote 'Privet' on the tile and Stephen didn't want to question it as it was written so neatly and authoritatively. Keith didn't treat Stephen very kindly and sometimes got very aggressive particularly if he made mistakes for instance when Stephen picked up the binoculars the wrong way and Keith snatched them whispering 'You'll get them out of focus..

. Go home if you're bored, old bean' which is what Keith's pugnacious father calls him. Stephen was very hurt, as he seems very sensitive and decided to fight back and not play his game anymore. He realised how badly Keith treated him and was tired from all the lies that Keith made up and was sick of being bossed around all the time. When Stephen tried to tell Keith that his

father was a German Spy he ignored him as he was only concerned about his mother and wanted all of the attention. He wanted to go home but Keith tempted him to stay by spotting his mother.

Stephen liked to be involved and even wrote down '1217', which Keith directed him to, but their boredom did vanish as well as their 'mutual peevishness' and his 'unbelief,' this shows the reader that they did get bored and that being in Keith's company wasn't brilliant, even though Stephen made him out to be. Keith ordered Stephen to look for his mother and when they discussed that she was going to one of her rendezvous and them not knowing where Stephen suggested that 'it must be one of these houses in the Avenue' but Keith doesn't comment and just murmurs something. Stephen tried so hard to please him and come up with brilliant ideas or plans or suggestions but Keith either contradicted him or ignored him. When Stephen was on his own he was so determined to solve the mystery himself and achieve something so that Keith could be proud of him. He also came up with lots of theories, which he explained to Keith several times, but Keith said nothing as he was already didn't like the fact that Stephen had the 'latest mysterious experience' when he wasn't there.

Keith almost sounds rather jealous himself and tries to make Stephen feel unimportant, but Stephen was aware of this but still continued being his best friend. If intellectual theories involved 'secret passages rockets, time travel etc they had to be 'uttered' in Keith's voice not Stephens. Stephen sees Keith's fathers expressions on his face particularly the look of distaste when Barbara Berrill was there trying to find out what they were doing. We discover that Keith is not a very friendly or social person, he only speaks to

Stephen in the close and never to girls, this is maybe because his confidence has been taken away by the way his father treats him. Keith acted strong and brave around Stephen but deep down he was frightened and insecure. Stephens doesn't get punished that severely as his parents are not strict in comparison to Keith's who would cane him for being late.

Keith and Stephen were very intimate and spent every day together. It was an unbalanced friendship as one was more dominant than the other and this is shown even by they walk in single file one behind the other and of course Keith lead. Stephen for once was very content when they had incorporated his idea of following Keith's mother through the tunnel but when he suggested ideas again about his mother having a transmitter hidden somewhere or there being a secret research laboratory that she is spying on, Keith said nothing. Stephen defended him again by saying that this was because he was 'maintaining an attitude of caution' to his proposals to remind him that he was the leader of this expedition. Remembering what he said, Stephen tried to reason slowly so that Keith could overtake him and resume full control of the operation and get the credit.

Stephen was quite a scared, weak character and Keith took advantage of this by deliberately carrying on up to the parapet when Stephen asked to go back. Keith was also just as frightened and Stephen noticed as he says 'we lie like terrified worshippers prostrate before a visiting god. When Keith discovered the box, Stephen warned him not to open it, but he insisted on anyway, even though it was empty but it could have been dangerous. Keith was very stubborn and quite a torment. Stephen has nightmares about the X's and Keith's mother and feels sorry for Keith as he kissed goodnight by

her. Although it seemed that Stephen is completely reliant on Keith, when Keith doesn't turn up he still continues to go through the tunnel by himself.

He pushed himself to overcome his fear and to show courage that he doesn't really possess. He feels better when Keith's with him though and has a sense of relief when he thinks it is him who is crawling in, but it was in fact Barbara Berrill. When she was there he kept his eyes fixed on Keith's house, hoping that he would come. Afterwards he felt 'disorientated' and couldn't even move as he felt 'disabled by gathering shame.' He felt that he had betrayed Keith and had let interfering Barbara Berrill into their secret place.

He felt that he had failed in his 'surveillance duties' and has allowed himself to listen to 'unworthy insinuations' that his mothers getting bacon and butter on the black market. He has allowed himself to entertain a momentary suspicion that Keith's mother is not a German spy and that Keith has made it all up. He still carried on filling in the logbook where Keith's mother was going and even had the courage to follow her but gets caught. Stephens mother accused him of annoying and pestering Keith continuously and when Stephen came back from the tunnel soaking wet she asked 'you're sure you didn't get Keith into this kind of state as well?' Keith's mother also insinuated that Stephen is a bad influence when she said '..

Keith's easily led, as I'm sure you realise..'which astonished Stephen as Keith was the instigator and commander of every enterprise they undertook. Yet again Stephen complimented him for concealing his true nature and managing too fool both their mothers. He still couldn't believe that he let strangers in their private place. In chapter six Stephen felt upset, guilty and

trapped as 'there were a lot of things piling up' that he couldn't tell Keith about such as Barbara Berrills visit and her 'stupid stories about Keith's mother and his aunt.

He had been burdened with another secret that he had to keep from him but was afraid that their friendship could end if he kept it from him. He wanted to do a single heroic deed to prove that Keith was right all along that his mother was a German Spy by going through the tunnel. Stephen felt disappointed with himself when he only managed to get a sock and thinks 'if it had been Keith who had done the deed it would be. It would be a map or a plan of something perhaps.' And Keith was not at all impressed. Stephen spoke harshly about himself 'My great exploit hasn't pleased or impressed him.

...He's the one who's the hero of our projects, not me' he was filled with self-pity. Keith had his father's tone and his phrases, at the 'accusing absence in the undergrowth' at his own hopelessness.

He felt ashamed and humble. Stephen thought it was unfair how Keith kept humiliating him because he didn't hide his body just his face 'like a little baby.' He was accusing him and Stephen was distraught and thought that he had lost interest in him. When they followed her Stephen didn't want to go and Keith teased him about being frightened of dogs, but Stephen realised that Keith was just as frightened as him. He realised that Keith needed his company as without him there is game or there is no one to be braver than him, even after these revelations he still joins him. They both thought alike

and were both reluctant as they both weren't brave enough to go to the cottages.

When they got there Stephen stopped being a cowardice and thought it was funny terrifying the tramp with a metal bar and wood. They were laughing and panting until the same sensation afflicted both of them that they had killed him. They both ran neither of them leading for once as they were both in the same situation and both frightened. Overall we learn that at the beginning Stephen is slovenly, a poor student and pathetically insecure and Keith is neat, excels at school and confidently plans their games of childish adventure, two very opposites.

We learn that in the end they are both very similar and are in the same situation as a result of a very dangerous game and both have to face the consequences.