



## ★ **In the Night of Memory**

**Linda LeGarde Grover**

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Linda LeGarde Grover's poignant *In the Night of Memory* explores loss and belonging among an Ojibwe family in northern Minnesota.

It's 1977, and two sisters—three-year-old Azure and four-year-old Rain—are taken from their mother, Loretta, and placed in foster care. Azure narrates most of the novel, revealing the trauma and unhappy truths of their lives as motherless children. Loretta's absence lingers like a ghost in Azure and Rain's consciousness. Eventually, neither remembers Loretta's face or voice. To remain connected, they cling to a hazy memory: the night they watched Loretta perform an Ojibwe dance under the northern lights. Azure concedes, "[It] is this memory that I choose for us to keep whether it was just a dream or really happened."

Rain has a degenerative, developmental disability, and Azure protects and balances her. She describes Rain as her big little sister; she identifies herself as Rain's little big sister. Rain narrates one section, giving an intriguing glimpse into her perspective.

Azure and Rain reunite after three years in different foster homes. Humorous scenes offset the rigors of their experiences even though their smiles lessen and dread quiets them. In their teens, relatives take them in and they rejoice their family. Acknowledged as Loretta's daughters, Azure and Rain occupy their "right and proper place" in the family.

In alternating chapters, multigenerational women characters chronicle the lineage and the backstory of loss—particularly, the disappearance of women and the forced removal of children—that "leads directly to all that is Indian country today."

*In the Night of Memory* is character driven and lyrical. Its vast, distinct chorus of matrilineal American Indian voices ring in melancholic yet dauntless tones, clarifying that community and nurturing can ameliorate absence. Azure and Rain, who are in their thirties when the book concludes, are doing their best with what their history has allotted them.

AMY O'LOUGHLIN (March/April 2019)

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