

## 1c2- Trying to understand the rules

Man, I was freaked. I didn't say another word for six days.(...) Well, let's get something straight. All of those pretty, pretty, pretty, pretty white girls ignored me. But that was okay. Indian girls ignored me, too, so I was used to it. And let's face it, most of the white boys ignored me, too. But there were a few of those Reardan boys, the big jocks, who paid special attention to me. None of those guys punched me or got violent. After all, I was a reservation Indian, and no matter how geeky and weak I appeared to be, I was still a potential killer. So mostly they called me names. Lots of names. And yeah, those were bad enough names. But I could handle them, especially when some huge monster boy was insulting me. But I knew I'd have to put a stop to it eventually or I'd always be known as "Chief" or "Tonto" or "Squaw Boy."

But I was scared. I wasn't scared of fistfighting with those boys. I'd been in plenty of fights. And I wasn't scared of losing fights with them, either. I'd lost most every fight I'd been in. I was afraid those monsters were going to kill me. And I don't mean "kill" as in "metaphor." I mean "kill" as in "beat me to death."

So, weak and poor and scared, I let them call me names while I tried to figure out what to do. And it might have continued that way if Roger the Giant hadn't taken it too far. Roger the Giant and his gang of giants strutted over to me.

"Hey, Chief," Roger said. It seemed like he was seven feet tall and three hundred pounds. He was a farm boy who carried squealing pigs around like they were already thin slices of bacon. I stared at Roger and tried to look tough. I read once that you can scare away a charging bear if you wave your arms and look big. But I figured I'd just look like a terrified idiot having an arm seizure.

"Hey, Chief," Roger said. "You want to hear a joke?"

"Sure," I said

"Did you know that Indians are living proof that niggers fuck buffalo?"

I felt like Roger had kicked me in the face. That was the most racist thing I'd ever heard in my life. Roger and his friends were laughing like crazy. I hated them. And I knew I had to do something big. I couldn't let them get away with that shit. I wasn't just defending myself. I was defending Indians, black people, and buffalo. So I punched Roger in the face. He wasn't laughing when he landed on his ass. And he wasn't laughing when his nose bled like red fireworks. I struck some fake karate pose because I figured Roger's gang was going to attack me for bloodying their leader. But they just stared at me. They were shocked.

"You punched me," Roger said. His voice was thick with blood. "I can't believe you punched me." He sounded insulted. He sounded like his poor little feelings had been hurt. I couldn't believe it. He acted like he was the one who'd been wronged.

"You're an animal," he said.

I felt brave all of a sudden. Yeah, maybe it was just a stupid and immature school yard fight. Or maybe it was the most important moment of my life. Maybe I was telling the world that I was no longer a human target.

"You're crazy," Roger said.

He got to his feet and walked away. His gang stared at me like I was a serial killer, and then they followed their leader. I was absolutely confused. I had followed the rules of fighting. I had behaved exactly the way I was supposed to behave. But these white boys had ignored the rules. In fact, they followed a whole other set of mysterious rules where people apparently DID NOT GET INTO FISTFIGHTS.

"Wait," I called after Roger.

"What do you want?" Roger asked.

"What are the rules?"

"What rules?"

I didn't know what to say, so I just stood there red and mute like a stop sign. Roger and his friends disappeared. I felt like somebody had shoved me into a rocket ship and blasted me to a new planet. I was a freaky alien and there was absolutely no way to get home.