

1c1- Arriving in a new school

So, feeling worthless and stupid, I just waited. And pretty soon, a janitor opened the front door and all of the other kids strolled inside. (...)

"Okay," I said to myself. "Here I go."

I walked into the school, made my way to the front office, and told them who I was.

"Oh, you're the one from the reservation," the secretary said.

"Yeah," I said. I couldn't tell if she thought the reservation was a good or bad thin?

"My name is Melinda," she said. "Welcome to Reardan High School. Here's your schedule, a copy of the school constitution and moral code, and a temporary student ID. We've got you assigned to Mr. Grant for homeroom. You better hustle on down there. You're late."

"All, where is that?" I asked.

"We've only got one hallway here," she said and smiled. "It's all the way down on the left."

I shoved the paperwork into my backpack and hustled down to my homeroom. I paused a second at the door and then walked inside.

Everybody, all of the students and the teacher, stopped to stare at me. They stared hard. Like I was bad weather.

"Take your seat," the teacher said.

He was a muscular guy. I walked down the aisle and sat in the back row and tried pore all the stares and whispers, until a blond girl leaned toward me. Penelope!

"What's your name?" Penelope asked.

"Junior," I said.

She laughed and told her girlfriend at the next desk that my name was Junior. They both laughed.

Word spread around the room and pretty soon everybody was laughing. They were laughing at my name. I had no idea that Junior was a weird name. It's a common name on my rez, on any rez.

You walk into any trading post any rez in the United States and shout, "Hey, Junior!" and seventeen guys will turn around. And three women. But there were no other people named Junior in Reardan, so I was being laughed at because I was the only one who had that silly name. And then I felt smaller because the teacher was taking roll and he called out my name name.

"Arnold Spirit," the teacher said.

No, he yelled it. He was so big and muscular that his whisper was probably a scream.

"Here," I said as quietly as possible. My whisper was only a whisper.

"Speak up," the teacher said.

"Here," I said.

"My name is Mr. Grant," he said.

"I'm here, Mr. Grant."

He moved on to other students, but Penelope leaned over toward me again, but she wasn't laughing at all. She was mad now.

"I thought you said your name was Junior," Penelope said.

She accused me of telling her my real name. Well, okay, it wasn't completely my real name. My full name is Arnold Spirit Jr. But nobody calls me that. Everybody calls me Junior. Well, every other Indian calls me Junior.

"My name is Junior," I said. "And my name is Arnold. It's Junior and Arnold. I'm both."

I felt like two different people inside of one body. No, I felt like a magician slicing myself in half, with Junior living on the north side of the Spokane River and Arnold living on the south.