

The American Indian narrator of this excerpt transferred from his troubled school on an Indian reservation to attend an all-white high school where the only other Indian is the school mascot. In this excerpt, his new school's basketball team clashes with his old school's team, led by his friend, Rowdy. Read the excerpt and answer the questions that follow.

from **The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian**

by Sherman Alexie

1 I kept glancing over at Wellpinit as they ran their lay-up drills. And I noticed that Rowdy kept glancing over at us.

2 At me.

3 Rowdy and I pretended that we weren't looking at each other. But, man, oh, man, we were sending some serious hate signals across the gym.

4 I mean, you have to love somebody that much to also hate them that much, too.

5 Our captains, Roger and Jeff, ran out to the center circle to have the game talk with the refs.

6 Then our band played the "Star-Spangled Banner."

7 And then our five starters, including me, ran out to the center circle to go to battle against Wellpinit's five.

8 Rowdy smirked at me as I took my position next to him.

9 "Wow," he said. "You guys must be desperate if you're starting."

10 "I'm guarding you," I said.

11 "What?"

12 "I'm guarding you tonight."

13 "You can't stop me. I've been kicking your butt for fourteen years."

14 "Not tonight," I said. "Tonight's my night."

15 Rowdy just laughed.

16 The ref threw up the opening jump ball.

17 Our big guy, Roger, tipped it back toward our point guard, but Rowdy was quicker. He intercepted the pass and raced toward his basket. I ran right behind him. I knew that he wanted to dunk it. I knew that he wanted to send a message to us.

18 I knew he wanted to humiliate us on the opening play.

19 And for a second, I wondered if I should just intentionally foul him and prevent him from dunking. He'd get two free throws but those wouldn't be nearly as exciting as a dunk.

20 But, no, I couldn't do that. I couldn't foul him. That would be like giving up. So I just sped up and got ready to jump with Rowdy.

21 I knew he'd fly into the air about five feet from the hoop. I knew he'd jump about two feet higher than I could. So I needed to jump quicker.

22 And Rowdy rose into the air. And I rose with him.

23 AND THEN I ROSE ABOVE HIM!

24 Yep, if I believed in magic, in ghosts, then I think maybe I was rising on the shoulders of my dead grandmother and Eugene, my dad's best friend. Or maybe I was rising on my mother and father's hopes for me.

25 I don't know what happened.

26 But for once, and for the only time in my life, I jumped higher than Rowdy.
27 I rose above him as he tried to dunk it.
28 I TOOK THE BALL RIGHT OUT OF HIS HANDS!
29 Yep, we were, like, ten feet off the ground, but I was still able to reach out and
steal the ball from Rowdy.
30 Even in midair, I could see the absolute shock on Rowdy's face. He couldn't
believe I was flying with him.
31 He thought he was the only Indian Superman.
32 I came down with the ball, spun, and dribbled back toward our hoop. Rowdy,
screaming with rage, was close behind me.
33 Our crowd was insanely loud.
34 They couldn't believe what I'd just done.
35 I mean, sure, that kind of thing happens in the NBA and in college and in the
big high schools. But nobody jumped like that in a small school basketball gym.
Nobody blocked a shot like that.
36 NOBODY TOOK A BALL OUT OF A GUY'S HANDS AS HE WAS JUST
ABOUT TO DUNK!
37 But I wasn't done. Not by a long shot. I wanted to score. I'd taken the ball from
Rowdy and now I wanted to score in his face. I wanted to absolutely demoralize him.
38 I raced for our hoop.
39 Rowdy was screaming behind me.
40 My teammates told me later that I was grinning like an idiot as I flew down
the court.
41 I didn't know that.
42 I just knew I wanted to hit a jumper in Rowdy's face.
43 Well, I wanted to dunk on him. And I figured, with the crazy adrenaline coursing
through my body, I might be able to jump over the rim again. But I think part of me
knew that I'd never jump like that again. I only had that one epic jump in me.
44 I wasn't a dunker; I was a shooter.
45 So I screeched to a stop at the three-point line and head-faked. And Rowdy
completely fell for it. He jumped high over me, wanting to block my shot, but I
just waited for the sky to clear. As Rowdy hovered above me, as he floated away,
he looked at me. I looked at him.
46 He knew he'd blown it. He knew he'd fallen for a little head-fake. He knew he
could do nothing to stop my jumper.
47 He was sad, man.
48 Way sad.
49 So guess what I did?
50 I stuck my tongue out at him. Like I was Michael Jordan.
51 I mocked him.
52 And then I took my three-pointer and buried it. Just swished that sucker.
53 AND THE GYM EXPLODED!
54 People wept.
55 Really.

56 My dad hugged the white guy next to him. Didn't even know him. But hugged
and kissed him like they were brothers, you know?

57 My mom fainted. Really. She just leaned over a bit, bumped against the white
woman next to her, and was gone.

58 She woke up five seconds later.

59 People were up on their feet. They were high-fiving and hugging and dancing
and singing.

60 The school band played a song. Well, the band members were all confused and
excited, so they played a song, sure, but each member of the band played a different
song.

61 My coach was jumping up and down and spinning in circles.

62 My teammates were screaming my name.

63 Yep, all of that fuss and the score was only 3 to 0.

64 But, trust me, the game was over.

65 It only took, like, ten seconds to happen. But the game was already over. Really.
It can happen that way. One play can determine the course of a game. One play can
change your momentum forever.

66 We beat Wellpinit by forty points.

67 Absolutely destroyed them.

68 That three-pointer was the only shot I took that night. The only shot I made.

69 Yep, I only scored three points, my lowest point total of the season.

70 But Rowdy only scored four points.

71 I stopped him.

72 I held him to four points.

73 Only two baskets.

74 He scored on a layup in the first quarter when I tripped over my teammate's
foot and fell.

75 And he scored in the fourth quarter, with only five seconds left in the game,
when he stole the ball from me and raced down for a layup.

76 But I didn't even chase him down because we were ahead by forty-two points.

77 The buzzer sounded. The game was over. . . . Yep, we had humiliated them.

78 We were dancing around the gym, laughing and screaming and chanting.

79 My teammates mobbed me. They lifted me up on their shoulders and carried
me around the gym.

80 I looked for my mom, but she'd fainted again, so they'd taken her outside to get
some fresh air.

81 I looked for my dad.

82 I thought he'd be cheering. But he wasn't. He wasn't even looking at me. He
was all quiet-faced as he looked at something else.

83 So I looked at what he was looking at.

84 It was the Wellpinit Redskins, lined up at their end of the court, as they watched
us celebrate our victory.

85 I whooped.

86 We had defeated the enemy! We had defeated the champions! We were David
who'd thrown a stone into the brain of Goliath!*

87 And then I realized something.

88 I realized that my team, the Reardan Indians, was Goliath.

89 I mean, jeez, all of the seniors on our team were going to college. All of the
guys on our team had their own cars. All of the guys on our team had iPods and
cell phones and PSPs and three pairs of blue jeans and ten shirts and mothers and
fathers who went to church and had good jobs.

90 Okay, so maybe my white teammates had problems, serious problems, but none
of their problems was life threatening.

91 But I looked over at the Wellpinit Redskins, at Rowdy.

* *David and Goliath* — referring to the biblical story where the weaker man, David, kills the stronger Goliath in battle