**Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian Chapter Summaries**

**Chapter 1-**Summary: The Black-Eye-of-the Month Club

Arnold Spirit, Jr. (“Junior”) describes how he was born with excess cerebral spinal fluid, or “water,” on his brain. A surgery to remove the fluid during Junior’s infancy is supposed to make him brain dead, but the complications turn out to be relatively minor. As he grows up, he ends up having 42, instead of 32 teeth. When it comes time to have the extras removed, Junior learns Indian Health Services does major dental work only once per year. So Junior has all ten extra teeth pulled during one day. Junior’s white dentist thinks Indians feel only half as much pain as white people, so he gives Junior only half the normal amount of Novocain. In addition to having extra teeth, Junior is nearsighted in one eye and farsighted in the other. Indian Health Services has only one style of thick black eyeglass frames for him to choose. He is very skinny, but has enormous hands and feet. Other kids make fun of him for the size of his head. The most serious complications of Junior’s brain damage, however, are his occasional seizures. Junior’s brain is already bruised, and these seizures keep it from healing. He also has a stutter and lisp. The other kids on the reservation (or the “rez”) call him a retard and beat him up for it. This is why Junior belongs to the “Black-Eye-of-the-Month Club.” Junior’s favorite thing is to draw cartoons of himself, his friends, and his family. He draws because he thinks it might give him a chance to become rich and famous, and he wants to be rich and famous so he can leave the rez one day.

**Chapter 2-**Summary: Why Chicken Means So Much to Me

Junior wishes he could draw food and make it real. His family is poor. No matter how hungry he gets though, he knows eventually his parents will come home with a bucket of Kentucky Fried Chicken. Being hungry makes food taste better, so hunger isn’t the worst thing about being poor. To show the worst thing, Junior tells the story of his “best friend,” his dog Oscar. Oscar is the most dependable thing in Junior’s life, more dependable than any person. But Oscar gets sick. Junior’s mom tells him everything is going to be all right, but Junior knows she is lying. The family doesn’t have enough money to take Oscar to the vet, and Junior realizes he couldn’t get a job to help pay even if he tried. Junior says, with better opportunities, his mom would have been a college professor, and his dad would have been a Jazz musician. After a long talk with Junior’s mom, Junior’s dad gets his rifle and takes Oscar outside. Junior sees that his dad is crying, and he runs away. Junior hears the gun go off behind him. A bullet, Junior concludes, only costs about two cents.

**Chapter 3-**Summary: Revenge Is My Middle Name

Junior want to crawl in a hole and die after Oscar is shot, but his best friend, Rowdy, tells him to get over it because no one would miss him. Rowdy’s father is an alcoholic, and he beats Rowdy regularly. Junior says his parents are drunks too, but they never hit him. Junior doesn’t want to go to the 127th Annual Spokane Reservation powwow because he is afraid he will get beat up, but Rowdy tells Junior he’ll protect him and convinces Junior to go. Rowdy was born the same day as Junior. Junior says he was born broken, and Rowdy was born mad. At the Powwow, Rowdy falls into a minivan, and Junior laughs. Rowdy pushes Junior to the ground for laughing. Then he picks up a shovel that was lying around and attacks the minivan. Junior runs away and into the Andruss triplets’ camp. The three 30-year-olds push the 14-year-old Junior around, call him names like “Hydrohead,” and one knees him in the balls. To get back at the Andruss triplets for hurting Junior, Rowdy hides outside their camp till the three pass out drunk at 3 AM. Then, Rowdy sneaks into their tent, shaves off their eyebrows, and cuts off their long braids. Rowdy starts a rumor that west coast Makah Indians

**Chapter 3 cont.**

did it. “You can’t trust them whale hunters,” Rowdy says, and he never gets caught. Rowdy isn’t just violent though—like Junior, he loves comic books, and he loves Junior’s cartoons. Junior says he thinks Rowdy might be more important to him than his family, and he calculates the time he and Rowdy have spent together: 40,880 hours. Junior tells the reader to trust him—he and Rowdy are inseparable.

**Chapter 4-**Summary: Because Geometry Is Not a Country Somewhere Near France

Junior loves geometry, and he is excited for his first high school geometry class. Junior also likes masturbating, and he spends hours in the family bathroom with porn magazines. Everybody masturbates, Junior says, and everybody likes it. But he likes geometry even more than masturbating and imagining women. When he was young, Junior says, he liked right angles so much he used to sleep in the closet, but he stopped when Mary, his sister, said he was just trying to crawl back into the womb. According to Junior, Mary spends 23 hours a day doing nothing in the family basement, but Junior says he loves and respects Mary in spite of it. Junior is also excited, and nervous, to try out for high school basketball team. On the first day of school, the geometry teacher, Mr. P, a short, white teacher who sometimes forgets to come to school, comes into class with a box of geometry textbooks. Junior speculates that Mr. P is a Sicilian mobster in the Witness Protection Program, but really, Junior says, Mr. P is just a lonely old white man who used to be a lonely young white man. Really lonely white people, Junior says, like to hang around even lonelier Indians. During Junior’s first high school geometry class, Mr. P gives Junior his textbook. Junior sees that his Mom, Agnes Adams, signed the front page of the book more than thirty years earlier when she was a student at the same school. Junior is enraged that he’s being taught with more than 30-year-old course materials, and before he realizes what he’s doing, he throws the book as hard as he can into Mr. P’s face.

**Chapter 5-**Summary: Hope Against Hope

Junior is suspended from school for hitting Mr. P with the book. One day, during Junior’s suspension, Mr. P walks up the Spirit family’s driveway and asks Junior if he can sit with him on the porch. Junior is confused but says yes. After a long silence, Mr. P asks Junior if he knows why he hit him with the book and broke his nose. Junior says he doesn’t know. Then, Mr. P confesses to Junior that, when he was a younger teacher, he beat many Indian school children, and he apologizes to Junior. Mr. P says Junior is the second smartest student he’s ever had, after Junior’s sister, Mary, and Mr. P tells Junior something Junior doesn’t kno Mary wanted to be a romance novelist, but she gave up. Junior is the smartest kid in the school, Mr. P says, and he doesn’t want Junior to give up like Mary. He warns Junior that, even though Rowdy is his best friend, Rowdy has already given up. Junior’s only hope, Mr. P says, is to leave the reservation forever. Then, Mr. P cries. It’s the only time Junior has seen a sober adult cry.

**Chapter 6-**Summary: Go Means Go

Mr. P leaves, and Junior sits on the porch for a long time thinking about his life. Junior’s parents come home, and Junior asks them who has the most hope. Junior’s mom and dad say, “white people,” at the same time, and Junior tells them he wants to transfer schools. They assume Junior means another school on the reservation, but Junior says, no, he wants to go to Reardan—a rich, public school for white farm children 22 miles from the rez. He wants to start at Reardan the next day. Junior says that, even though his parents are drunks, they want a better life for him and Mary. Junior’s dad says it will be hard to get him to school there,

**Chapter 6 cont.**

and Junior’s mom warns that the other kids on the rez will hate Junior for leaving like this, but they support Junior and agree to help him.

**Chapter 7-**Summary: Rowdy Sings the Blues

The day after deciding to transfer to Reardan, Junior finds Rowdy in the Wellpinit tribal school playground and tells him he is transferring to Reardan. Rowdy thinks it’s a bad joke and starts to get mad. Junior tells Rowdy to transfer with him, but Rowdy hates Reardan. Reardan is the only team to have beaten Junior and Rowdy’s 8th grade basketball team, and Reardan throttled Rowdy and Junior’s football and baseball teams too. Junior led Wellpinit against Rearden in the Academic Bowl, and Wellpinit lost 50 to 1. Junior was the only one to know that Charles Dickens wrote A Tale of Two Cities. The Rearden kids, Junior says, “were the best of times.” Rowdy realizes Junior is serious and turns away from Junior. Junior touches Rowdy’s shoulder, and Rowdy turns back and shoves Junior. Rowdy calls Junior a slur and Junior says his heart breaks. Junior tells Rowdy to come with him and touches Rowdy’s shoulder again. Rowdy punches Junior in the face, and, while he’s lying on the ground, Junior realizes Rowdy has become his worst enemy.

**Chapter 8**-Summary: How to Fight Monsters

The day after Junior’s fight with Rowdy, Junior’s dad drives him the 22 miles to Reardan. Junior’s dad tells Junior to remember that the white kids aren’t any better than he is, but Junior says his dad is wrong. Junior’s dad calls Junior a warrior. Junior waits outside the school and as the white students show up, they stare at his black eye and swollen nose. Reardan’s mascot is an Indian. There is a cartoon illustrating the differences between a white and Indian student. The white student has a watch, khakis, and a backpack. The Indian has discount blue jeans, no watch, and a garbage bag for his books. Junior checks in at his office and goes to Mr. Grant’s homeroom where a blond girl named Penelope asks his name. The students laugh at the name “Junior,” but Junior says there are 17 people called Junior on the rez. Then, Mr. Grant takes roll and calls “Arnold Spirit”—Junior’s real name. Penelope is confused. Junior explains his name is both Junior and Arnold. He feels like two people in one body. Junior tells Penelope he’s from the rez.

After his conversation with Penelope, Junior says he didn’t speak for six days, but on the seventh he got into the weirdest fistfight of his life. To explain what makes it weird he lists the 11 unwritten rules for fighting on the rez. If anyone insults you, or you think they might insult you, or they insult some member of your family, you have to fight them or the appropriate member of their family. Basically, on the rez, you are expected to fight. The big white boy jocks call Junior names like “Chief” and “Tonto” and “Squaw Boy.” Then, Roger, the biggest boy of all, says a crude racial slur and Junior punches Roger in the face. Blood gushes from Roger’s nose. He and the other white boys stand around looking shocked. Junior tells Roger to meet him there outside after school, but Roger doesn’t understand. Roger and the others walk away, and Junior asks Roger what the rules are. Roger says, “What rules?”

**Chapter 9-**Summary: Grandmother Gives Me Some Advice

Junior goes home confused. He tells his grandmother what happened, and asks her what it means that Roger walked away. She says it must mean that Roger respects him. The next day, Junior has to walk to school because the car doesn’t have enough gas to get to Reardan. Junior’s dad’s best friend, Eugene, sees Junior walking and offers him a ride on his motorcycle. When they get to Reardan, Eugene, who has “braids down to

**Chapter 9 cont.**

his butt,” is surprised at how many white people there are. Eugene tells Junior it’s cool that he’s going to school there. Eugene says he could never do it, because he’s a wuss. Roger sees Junior pull up with Eugene and says hi to Junior. Roger compliments Eugene’s bike and walks away. Then, Junior says hi to Penelope and she pretends not to know who he is. Junior reminds her his name is Junior or Arnold. Then Penelope remembers. She says he is the boy who can’t figure out his own name. Junior says he may have impressed the king, but not the queen.

**Chapter 10-**Summary: Tears of a Clown

Junior remembers how, at the age of twelve, he fell in love with an Indian girl named Dawn. Dawn is the best traditional powwow dancer on the rez, and she has beautiful braids. One night, when Rowdy is sleeping over Junior’s house, Junior tells Rowdy he’s in love with Dawn. Rowdy tells Junior he’s just being stupid, Dawn doesn’t give a shit about him. Junior cries. Rowdy tells Junior to quit bawling. Junior asks Rowdy not to tell anyone he cried, and Rowdy keeps Junior’s secret.

**Chapter 11-**Summary: Halloween

Junior goes to school dressed as a homeless person for Halloween. Penelope does too. Junior points out that they have the same costume, and Penelope smiles. She tells Junior that she chose her costume in order to raise money for the homeless. Instead of asking for candy, she is going to trick-or-treat for spare change. Junior says he’s wearing his costume to protest the treatment of homeless American Indians, and says he’ll trick or treat for change too. They can raise money together. Junior trick-or-treats for change on the rez, but three guys in masks jump him for his candy and money as he’s walking home. They shove him to the ground and kick him a few times. He feels stupid for not foreseeing the attack. Then he wonders if one of his attackers was Rowdy. The next day, he tells Penelope what happened and shows her the bruises on his ribs and back. Penelope tells Junior she’ll put both their names on her donation. Junior says that it feels good to help people.

**Chapter 12-**Summary: Slouching Toward Thanksgiving

The next few weeks, Junior says, were the loneliest of his life. On the rez, Junior feels he is an Indian, but each day on the way to Reardan, he becomes something less than Indian. At Reardan, he is smarter than almost all the other students. He tells a story how in geology class, he corrects the teacher, Mr. Dodge. Mr. Dodge says petrified wood is wood that turns into rock, but Junior raises his hand to say that the wood is replaced by minerals. Mr. Dodge challenges Junior to explain and the class laughs, until Gordy, the class genius, says that Junior is right. After class Junior thanks Gordy for sticking up for him, but Gordy says he was sticking up for science. Junior rides the bus to the end of the line—the reservation’s border—where Junior’s Dad is supposed to pick him up. His Dad doesn’t come, so Junior walks home. Junior says he sometimes walks the whole twenty-two miles home from Reardan without getting a ride. A white man from the Bureau of Indian Affairs gives Junior a ride home from the bus stop, and when Junior gets inside, his mom is crying. Mary has gotten married and run away to Montana. Junior imagines that Mary felt ashamed for living in the basement for 7 years after he started going to school in Reardan. Junior is impressed by his sister’s courage. Inspired by his sister’s strength, Junior walks up to Gordy the next day and asks him to be his friend. Gordy tells Junior he isn’t a homosexual, and Junior clarifies he just wants to be friends. The two start studying together, and Gordy explains to Junior how books should give him a metaphorical boner. Gordy helps Junior study, encourages him

**Chapter 12 cont.**

to draw cartoons, and to take joy in literature. Junior feels that on the rez, he is a freak for loving books but at Reardan he is a joyous freak.

**Chapter 13-**Summary: My Sister Sends Me an E-mail

Mary’s email is dated November 16th 2006. Mary says she loves Montana and that she recently rode a horse for the first time. She is looking for a job. The Montana rez is weird because some of the towns have more white people in them than Indians, and one white town even tried to secede, or break off from, the rez. She writes about her honeymoon at a hotel on Flathead Lake. The hotel room service menu offered traditional Indian fry bread, and she ordered some. Mary says she loves her husband, her life, Montana, and Junior.

**Chapter 14-**Summary: Thanksgiving

There is no snow on Thanksgiving, and Junior and his parents have a big Thanksgiving meal. Junior says he doesn’t understand why Indians celebrate Thanksgiving like everybody else. What do Indians have to be thankful for? Junior’s dad says Indians should be thankful white people didn’t kill all of them, and Junior and his Dad laugh. After the meal, Junior misses Rowdy. He draws a cartoon of himself and Rowdy as super heroes giving each other a fist bump, and takes it over to Rowdy’s house. Rowdy’s dad says Rowdy isn’t home, but he will give Rowdy the cartoon even though it’s “a little gay.” As Junior walks away, he sees Rowdy holding the cartoon through the upstairs window. Junior waves, and Rowdy gives him the finger, but he doesn’t tear up the cartoon.

**Chapter 15-**Summary: Hunger Pains

Junior leaves Mr. Sheridan’s history class because of a bathroom emergency. While on the toilet, he hears someone violently throwing up in the girl’s bathroom. He finishes his business, and knocks on the girl’s room door. The girl tells Junior to go away, but he leans against the wall and waits for the girl to come out. It’s Penelope. Junior says Penelope is anorexic. She says she is bulimic. She says bulimics are only bulimics when they throw up. Junior is reminded of his father. “Hey Penelope,” Junior says, “Don’t give up.” Penelope cries. Junior and Penelope become a couple, “more like friends with potential.” Weeks later outside school, Penelope’s father, Earl, tells Junior to keep his hand out of his daughter’s pants, says Penelope is only with Junior because she knows it will make him, her father, mad. If Penelope and Junior have mixed raced children, Earl adds, he will disown her. Junior thinks Penelope might just be dating him because he’s new in school and exotic. But, he says, he is kind of using her too. Dating Penelope makes Junior more popular. Junior says there are the shallow reasons like these that he and Penelope are friends, but there are also deep reasons. They have big dreams, and they both want to leave their small homes. Penelope wants to travel the world and to study architecture at Stanford. Junior includes a drawing of Penelope and asks the reader if it was wrong for him to stare at her all day long.

**Chapter 16-**Summary: Rowdy Gives Me Advice About Love

Junior watches Penelope playing volleyball in a white shirt and white shorts, and he can see the outlines of her white bra and white panties. She is milky white, he says. Penelope’s Reardan team is losing to the Davenport Lady Gorillas, and Junior watches Penelope serve. Junior goes home and writes an email to Rowdy saying he’s in love with a white girl. He asks for advice. Rowdy writes back that he’s sick of Indians treating white girls like trophies. He tells Junior to get a life. Then, at school the next day, Junior asks Gordy for advice. Gordy says he

**Chapter 16 cont.**

needs to do some research first. Gordy finds an article about how there was a lot of news coverage about a white girl named Cynthia who disappeared in Mexico and no news coverage of the hundred of disappeared Mexican girls in the same area. He concludes Junior is “just a racist asshole like everybody else.”

**Chapter 17-**Summary: Dance, Dance, Dance

Junior spends half his time in Wellpinit, half in Reardan. He feels half white and half Indian. He says being an Indian is like his job, but only a part-time job that doesn’t pay well. He lies to the Reardan kids and never lets them know he’s poor. Junior asks Penelope to the Winter Formal. She says yes, but Junior is nervous because he has so little money. Junior can’t drive and has no gas money, so he tells Penelope to meet him at the gym. Junior wears his dad’s old suit, and Penelope loves it. She calls it retroactive. Junior and Penelope dance every dance together, and Junior intentionally avoids getting photos, photos he can’t afford. Junior is glad he hasn’t revealed his poverty, but after the dance Roger and his friends invite Junior and Penelope to the all-night diner. Roger offers to drive, and, after talking to Roger, Earl lets Penelope go. Junior has $5. At the diner, Junior orders more food for him and Penelope than he can afford. He goes to the bathroom and throws up. Roger finds Junior in the bathroom and says he supposes Junior is sick with love. Junior says yes, but, also, he forgot his wallet. Roger tell him not to worry and lends him $40 on the spot. In the parking lot afterward, Penelope asks Junior if he is poor. Junior confesses. Penelope says that Roger guessed it and reassures Junior that Roger won’t tell anyone. Then, Penelope asks if Junior’s dad will really come pick him up. Junior says no, and Penelope cries at the thought of Junior walking home 22 miles at 3AM in the cold. Penelope tells Roger that Junior has no ride, and Roger takes Junior home.

**Chapter 18-**Summary: Don’t Trust Your Computer

In the computer lab at school one day, Junior takes a picture of his smiling face and sends it to Rowdy. Rowdy sends back a picture of his bare ass. Gordy sees the picture and asks if it is someone’s “posterior.” Junior says, no, it is a stinky ass. Junior tells Gordy how Rowdy hates him for leaving the rez. He says some Indians think you have to become white to make your life better. If that were true, Gordy says, wouldn’t all white people be successful? He tells Gordy people on the rez call him an apple—red on the outside, white on the inside—and Gordy says that life is a constant struggle between being an individual and being a member of the community. For example, people avoid him and Junior because they’re weird. Junior wants to hug Gordy, but Gordy tells him not to be sentimental. Even the weird boys, Junior concludes, are afraid of their emotions.

**Chapter 19-**Summary: My Sister Sends Me a Letter

Mary writes Junior by hand this time. She complains that restaurants won’t hire her without experience, but that she can’t get experience without being hired. In the meantime, she’s started writing her life story. Mary and her husband have moved into a stainless steel trailer, and Mary calls it the most beautiful place in the world.

**Chapter 20-**Summary: Reindeer Games

Junior’s dad tells Junior how he met Junior’s mom. Junior’s mom is eight years older than Junior’s dad, and, when they were children, she lifted Junior’s dad up to get a drink from a drinking fountain. Junior’s dad tells Junior the story as a way to say he should “dream big to get big.” Junior should try out for the Reardan basketball team. Junior goes to tryouts and Coach says that 16 of the 40 kids there won’t make the team. First,

**Chapter 20 cont.**

all the kids run 100 laps. Four kids give up. Then Coach has the kids play full-court one-on-one. Junior matches up against Roger, who is 6’6” and can dunk. Roger steals the ball from Junior and dunks. Then, when Junior is playing defense, Roger runs him over and dunks again on the other basket. Coach asks Junior if he wants to go again or if he needs a break. Junior wants to give up, but he knows if he does he’ll get cut. He goes again, and, after Roger fouls him, he makes a jump shot. Then, when Roger has the ball, Junior fouls him and keeps him from scoring. Junior makes the varsity team. The next week, Reardan’s basketball team goes to Wellpinit. All the Wellpinit fans are chanting “Ar-nold sucks!” as Junior and his team enter the school. Junior notes that they’re referring to him by his Reardan name, rather than his rez name. Then, once Junior enters the gym, all the fans stand and turn their backs. Junior laughs. Rowdy is the only Indian who doesn’t turn his back on Junior. The game starts and Junior is put in during the first quarter. As he’s running onto the court, a fan hits Junior in the head with a quarter. Junior has to leave the game because he’s bleeding. He goes to the locker room alone, and Eugene, who readers learn has recently become an EMT, comes in to take a look at the cut. Junior asks Eugene to stitch his forehead right there even though it will leave a scar. Then, Junior gets put back in the game early in the second half. He goes up for a layup, and Rowdy elbows him in the head. The blow knocks Junior unconscious. Junior is taken to the hospital with a concussion, and Coach stops in to visit. Junior is not supposed to sleep, so Coach spends the night with Junior telling stories.

**Chapter 21-**Summary: And a Partridge in a Pear Tree

During the Christmas holidays, Junior’s family doesn’t have enough money for presents, and Junior’s dad goes on a bender. He leaves on Christmas Eve and comes back January 2nd with a terrible hangover. Then, back at the house, Junior’s dad apologizes to Junior about Christmas, and Junior says its OK. Junior’s dad tells Junior to reach in his boot, and Junior finds five dollars. Junior thinks how easy it would have been for his dad to spend those five dollars on a last bottle of whiskey. Junior calls it a beautiful, ugly thing.

**Chapter 22-**Summary: Red Versus White

Junior worries the reader might think he only likes white people and doesn’t see anything good in Indians. He says he likes Mary, his parents, and his grandmother. At Reardan he observes both good and bad parents. Bad parents are the ones who ignore their kids. Junior says he has white friends whose fathers he’s never met. Junior says he’s done the thinking and it’s better to live in Reardan than in Wellpinit, but maybe only slightly better. Then Junior talks more about his Grandmother. Junior says her greatest gift is tolerance. Indians used to respect eccentricity more, he says. They saw epileptics as shamans, and gay people were seen as magical. Indians today are intolerant, Junior says. His grandmother still does things the old way. But, Junior continues, his grandmother was just struck and killed by a drunk driver on her way home from a powwow. Her last words were “Forgive him.” Junior concludes that she meant the man who hit her.

**Chapter 23-**Summary: Wake

Three days after Junior’s grandmother’s death, Junior’s family has a wake. 2000 people show up. None of the Indians on the rez hassle Junior that day, and, he says, after his grandmother’s death they quit giving him such a hard time in general. The crowd is so big, Junior’s family moves the coffin onto the fifty-yard line of the Spokane football field. Mary doesn’t come from Montana because she doesn’t have enough money to travel. Ten hours into the wake, a white billionaire named Ted stands up to make a speech. Ted says that ten years previously he bought a beautiful, obviously stolen powwow dance outfit for $1000 off of an Indian stranger

**Chapter 23 cont.**

who came to his cabin—really a mansion, Junior says. Ted says he bough the outfit even though he knew it was stolen.

Ted says he felt guilty about buying the outfit for years, and he hired an anthropologist to track down its rightful owner—Grandmother Spirit. Ted came to return the outfit only to find Grandmother Spirit had died, and he would like to ask forgiveness and give the outfit back to Grandmother Spirit’s family. Junior’s Mom stands up. She tells Ted there’s nothing to forgive. Junior’s Grandmother was never a powwow dancer, never owned a powwow dance outfit, and Ted’s outfit doesn’t look Spokane at all. She says it looks more Sioux or Oglala, but she’s not an expert and neither was Ted’s anthropologist. All the Indians laugh, and Junior says that, when it comes to death, laughter and tears are the same. Ted packs up the outfit and leaves the Spokane reservation.

**Chapter 24-**Summary: Valentine Heart

On Valentine’s Day, Junior gives Penelope a homemade Valentine, and Eugene, Junior’s dad’s best friend, is shot in the face outside a 7-Eleven. Eugene’s friend Bobby shoots him over who will get the last sip of a bottle of wine. A few weeks later, in jail, Bobby hangs himself. Junior copes by drawing lots of cartoons and by reading the ancient Greek playwright, Euripides. Gordy gives him the play Medea. Junior is so depressed he thinks about dropping out of Reardan. After missing school 15 to 20 times for various good reasons, Junior sits down in social studies class. His teacher, Mrs. Jeremy, says it’s nice of him to show up. Gordy and the other students defend Junior by standing up and dropping their textbooks on their desks, then they parade out of the classroom, leaving Junior behind. Junior laughs and tells Mrs. Jeremy she’s an asshole. Then he leaves the class too. He says that, to grieve, he made lists of the good things in his life—lists of friends, music, food, books, and basketball players.

**Chapter 25-**Summary: In Like a Lion

Junior becomes a Freshman starter on Reardan’s varsity basketball team. He’s not big or fast, but he can shoot. Junior throws up before every game, but Coach says it’s okay and that he used to be a “yucker” too. After Reardan’s loss to Wellpinit, Reardan wins twelve games in a row before hosting Wellpinit for a rematch in Reardan. Reardan’s record is 12 and 1, and Wellpinit is undefeated. A local news crew comes out to interview Junior before the game. The reporter asks Junior how it feels to play against his former teammates, and Junior says it’s “weird.” The reporter asks Junior to be more specific, but Junior is suspicious. He doesn’t play along. Finally, after the reporter calls him an asshole, Junior gives a more detailed response. Junior says it’s the most important night of his life, that he has to prove himself to everyone. Two thousand fans come to the Reardan gym. Coach calls Junior Reardan’s secret weapon and assigns him to guard Rowdy.

Reardan wins the tip off, but Rowdy steals the ball from Reardan’s point guard, and, with Junior guarding him, goes up for a dunk. Junior has a burst of adrenaline, jumps higher than he ever has before, and takes the ball from Rowdy above the rim. Junior dribbles down court and pulls up at the three-point line. He fakes, and Rowdy jumps. Then Junior drains a three-pointer. The crowd explodes. Junior’s mom and dad weep with joy. It is the only shot Junior takes all night, but Junior holds Rowdy to just four points, and Reardan wins the game by forty. Junior celebrates at the buzzer, but then he has a realization. Reardan is Goliath to Wellpinit’s David. Reardan has all the advantages and is expected to win. Junior thinks how some of the kids on Wellpinit didn’t have breakfast, how one player’s dad deals drugs, and how Rowdy’s dad will beat him for losing. Junior runs to

**Chapter 25 cont.**

the locker room and cries tears of shame. Wellpinit’s season falls apart after their loss to Reardan. Reardan wins the rest of its regular season games, but is upset by a small town team early in the state playoffs.

**Chapter 26-** Summary: Rowdy and I have Long and Serious Discussion About Basketball

Junior writes Rowdy an e-mail apologizing for beating Wellpinit so bad and ruining their season. Rowdy says they’ll kick Reardan’s ass the next year and Junior will cry like the faggot he is. Junior says he’s the faggot who won, and Rowdy sends back the message “Ha-ha.” Junior says the exchange may just sound like homophobic insults, but he’s happy because it is the first time Rowdy has really talked to him since he left the rez.

**Chapter 27-**Summary: Because Russian Guys Are Not Always Geniuses

Junior says that at the age of fourteen he has already been to forty-two funerals. The white kids he knows can count the funerals they’ve been to on one hand. Junior says that Tolstoy is wrong when he says unhappy families are all unique. All Indian families are unhappy for the same reason, Junior says, because of alcohol. Junior is in chemistry when his guidance counselor, Miss Warren, comes to the door. She asks to see Junior. In the hall, Miss Warren starts crying and hugs Junior tightly. Junior gets an erection. Then Miss Warren tells Junior that Mary has died. Junior asks how, and when Miss Warren won’t say he knows her death was awful. Junior is upset. He runs outside to wait for his father in the snow. As he waits, Junior imagines that his dad has died to on his way to pick him up. Junior’s dad arrives and Junior is so relieved he starts laughing. Junior get in the car, but he can’t stop laughing. Through his laughter, Junior asks how Mary died. Junior’s dad says that she and her husband had a big party. They got really drunk and fell asleep. One of the guests started to cook some soup on a hot plate but forgot about it and the trailer burned down. Junior laughs so hard he throws up a little bit. His vomit tastes like cantaloupe. He hates cantaloupe but Mary loved it. Then, suddenly, Junior falls asleep. He dreams about a how he ate a lot of cantaloupe once as a boy and got stung by a wasp, and he wakes up. At home, Junior’s mom makes him promise he will never drink. During the burial, Junior becomes overwhelmed and runs into the woods. He runs straight into Rowdy, who is watching it in secret. Rowdy is crying. Junior points out Rowdy’s tears, and Rowdy tries to punch him but misses. Rowdy tells Junior he killed Mary, that she left the rez because he did. The day after the burial, Junior goes to school. He doesn’t want to be at a wake where people are getting drunk. All the kids at Reardan show Junior affection. Penelope cries in sympathy.

**Chapter 28-**Summary: My Final Freshman Year Report Card

This section is a cartoon of Junior’s report card. Junior get’s A’s in English, Geometry, P.E. and Computer Programming, an A- in history, a B+ in Geology and a B- in Woodshop.

**Chapter 29-** Summary: Remembering

Junior and Junior’s mom and dad go to the cemetery to clean graves. They clean Grandmother Spirit’s, Eugene’s, and Mary’s graves, and they have a picnic. Junior’s dad brings his saxophone. He tells his family that the world is all about love and death. Junior’s mother tells Junior she is proud of him. Junior cries for Mary, but he realizes he is also crying for his tribe. Junior says that somehow or another Indians have forgotten that reservations were meant to be death camps. Then, Junior lists the other tribes that he feels he is a member of. These other tribes include the tribe of cartoonists, of chronic masturbators, of poor people, and of tortilla chips-and-salsa lovers. Junior says the realization that he is a part of these larger groups is hugely important

**Chapter 29 cont.**

for him. It reminds him that he is okay, but it also reminds him of those who aren’t okay. He thinks of Rowdy and misses him.

**Chapter 30-**Summary: Talking About Turtles

Junior describes the reservation. It’s filled with ponderosa pine trees. Some of the trees are ninety feet tall and 300 years old. One tree past Turtle Lake is the tallest, at least 150 feet tall. He remembers how, when he and Rowdy were ten, they climbed that tree. One hot summer day, Rowdy pressures Junior to go swimming at Turtle Lake. Junior says no one has been able to measure the depth of Turtle Lake, not even scientists with a small submarine. Once, Junior’s Dad told him that, as a kid, he watched a horse, nicknamed Stupid Horse, drown in Turtle Lake. A few weeks later Stupid Horse washed up on the shore of Benjamin Lake, ten miles away. Everyone thought someone moved the carcass as a prank. Some people took the horse to the dump and burned it. Then, a few weeks after they burned the body, Turtle Lake caught on fire. People stayed away from Turtle Lake for a few days, then they found Stupid Horse washed up on shore again. Before long, people forgot and started swimming in Turtle Lake again. On the way to swim in Turtle Lake, Junior points out the big tree. Rowdy says they should climb it. They climb almost to the very top, as far as the branches can support their weight, and they see the whole reservation. Rowdy let out a big fart, and the boys climb back down the tree. They never go swimming. Junior says he can’t believe he survived his first year at Reardan. He misses Penelope. Gordy, he says, is going to stay with him for a week on the rez over the summer. Roger has left for Eastern Washington University on a football scholarship. Then, Junior’s reminiscences are interrupted. Rowdy shows up at Junior’s house. Junior says he thought Rowdy hated him. Rowdy says he does, but he is bored. The two go to play one-on-one. Junior invites Rowdy to come to Reardan the next year. Rowdy says he won’t, but he was reading a book about how Indians used to be nomadic—they used to move from place to place without settling. Rowdy says Junior is the only nomadic Indian left on the rez. Junior cries, and the two play one-on-one for hours. They don’t keep score.