

The Radioactive Kid.

He punched me in the face, and that's when I knew.

Those reservation kids are different.

I was a big Jock. The basketball team was mine. It was my birthright. I was born to play and win the game. Year after year we would crush the reservation kids, Wellpinit. Suckpinit more like it. At least that's what I thought. Until Junior came to our school. I thought that his style was so Indian. He was geeky and definitely got his clothes from Walmart. But we called him Chief. Chief. Chief.

Because those reservation kids are different.

They don't dress like us, they don't play ball like us, they don't joke around like us. That was back then. That was when I thought for sure,

Those reservation kids are different.

I was mean back then. Like I said. I was a star. A leader, and people looked up to me. We had to test him. We had to figure him out. He was not like us. He was an Indian. He was from the reservation and we had to figure him out. But I was mean. I thought I needed to be. I thought I had to make sure he knew his place. I was a senior, he was a freshman, a freshman Indian. I told him a joke. It was a bad joke. A really bad joke. But I said it. I didn't know

just how different those reservation kids were.

And he punched me. He punched me. A freshman. An Indian. He punched me. Star of the basketball team. I thought he was a freak, an animal. He was crazy. But I sure learned.

Those reservation kids are different.

But I respected him, you know? He showed us his stuff and I sure as hell wasn't going to mess with him, especially after he started a thing with Penelope. She's like a sister to me. She has her problems, but she was crazy about Arnold. He was a good guy. He was a good guy for Penelope. It took a lot of guts to come over to Reardan. It took a lot of guts to stand his ground against me.

Those reservation kids were different.

Different enough to be just right for her. That's why I was excited to get to hang out with them at the dance. And to be honest, the dance was when I really learned just how different I was from Arnold. He showed up in his dad's suit. It was old. You could almost smell the age, cheap alcohol and the kind of must clothing collects at the back of a closet stuffed full of twenty-years-worth of junk and forgotten tokens of the past. He looked good though. Penelope had it right, radioactive. A bright glow of decay. Everyone loved it, but I knew he wasn't wearing that suit by choice.

Those reservation kids were different.

They couldn't buy new suits. Those Walmart clothes he showed up in his first day were probably all they could do. I was an idiot. He wasn't dressing like an Indian in some random reservation style. He was dressing like someone who couldn't afford anything else. I guess that's why he missed so much. Radioactive for sure. But, his electricity was mesmerizing.

Those reservation kids were different.

I invited him to pancakes because I wanted him to know that we liked him, that we thought he was worth it. Even though he was poor, he was good for Penultimate and he was good for us at Reardan. So, we had pancakes. I saw him go into the bathroom and that was my entry. He had ordered way too much food and I was sure he couldn't pay for it. Radioactive, and poor. So, I paid for it. I gave him forty bucks and I drove him home. He had been walking all the way home too many nights to count. And he never told anyone.

Those reservation kids were different.

And Arnold was as different as they come. I cannot imagine not being able to buy a new suit, not affording pancakes, or walking home every night. But that was Arnold's life. He left his friends and came to a school where no one was like him. That kid had some balls, and I was

glad to know him. I hope he tries out for the basketball team. We need a radioactive guy like him.

Those reservation kids are different.

But we needed them.