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**The Dutch Indian**  
**or**  
**How to Bring Sherman Alexie's Style to The Netherlands**

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## Introduction

'That all these bad things can happen to one person,' was one of the thoughts going through my mind after I had finished reading *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (henceforth *ATD*). Before I started reading, I did not know who Sherman Alexie was and it wasn't until I finished the book that I found out it was semi-autobiographical; written by an Indian who grew up on an Indian Reservation in America and about an Indian who grew up on an Indian Reservation in America. The history of Native Americans is part of history teaching in American high schools since it is part of American history but this is different in The Netherlands. American pupils will discuss Native American culture during history or literature lessons in high school, but as a Dutch student my knowledge did not reach far beyond motion pictures like *Dances With Wolves*, which is not a realistic portrayal of Indian life. Alexie writes about Indian life as it is now, with all its joys and hardships. The novel is used around the world in English lessons or history lessons. Many lesson plans can be found on the internet (Andree, Noone). Besides being entertaining and an easy read, the novel depicts contemporary Indian life in America.

*ATD* is written in the first person, like many other novels aimed at young adults. The first-person point of view is considered to be the "preferred technique" for young adult literature (Cadden 148). *ATD*'s narrator is Junior, a fourteen year old Indian who lives on the Spokane Indian Reservation. The story is written as a diary; Junior writes down the thoughts and troubles of his life. However, this diary is

somewhat unusual since Junior does not keep his thoughts for himself but shares them with the readers. This is a conscious sharing, as Junior sometimes directs his writing at the reader directly and it is easy for the reader to relate to the protagonist. Books like this are a wonderful chance for young people to encounter other cultures and to find a connection with people from other cultures and translations of these works might result in mutual respect. Young Adult Literature has become an important category in the Dutch book world. With the publishing company Lemniscaat as front runner in this process, many book shops and libraries now have their own young adult section (Postema 48). The term 'young adult' is now a well-known term in the Netherlands, borrowed from the hype in America.

Sherman Alexie is a writer with a typical style. His characters are straight from the shoulder with a certain amount of sarcasm and humour. "Alexie's inventive style conveys to readers his characters' suffering and anguish but also the enduring power of humor and imagination" (Berglund xvii). As mentioned before, his stories portray the joys and hardships of reservation life which are interwoven with humour and imagination. Alexie is also known for his multigenre interest. He has written poetry, songs, screenplays, thrillers and in most of his work these interests can be found.

The fact that *ATD* is about Native Americans and how they live these days makes it interesting for a translator. Although, with Alexie's work it's not just the cultural specific elements that challenge the translator, other translation problems are caused by the colloquial style of the narrator and the many dialogues, witty puns,

inventive names and sports terminology. Therefore, the research question for this thesis is:

What translation problems does the translator face when translating Sherman Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, what are the available translation strategies and options and which strategies and options are most desirable taking into account the chosen translation purpose?

Before discussing the translation problems and possible solutions, I will start with a biography of the author and an extensive analysis of *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. Since the story is semi-autobiographical, it will be interesting to compare Alexie's own life story with the one of the protagonist in *ATD*. The first chapter will discuss Alexie's life and work. The second chapter contains an extensive analysis of the book, including a summary of the story, discussion of the narrative style, themes and characteristics and will conclude with the delimitation of young adult literature by contrasting it with children's literature and adult literature.

Chapter three will deal with the translation problems that occur in *ATD*, which are cultural elements, dialogue and colloquial style, names and puns. The next chapter will contain my own translation of the first three chapters of *ATD* provided with explanatory footnotes in which I will explain my translation choices using the theory and information of the previous chapters. In the final chapter I will compare my translation with the published one by Aleid van Eekelen-Benders.

# 1. Sherman Alexie

As a famous Native American author, Sherman Alexie travels around the country to talk about his life and work and receives invites to join discussions about a diversity of topics. This hasn't always been the case...

## 1.1 Sherman Alexie Growing Up

Sherman Alexie was born on October 7, 1966 in the town of Wellpinit, a small town of approximately one thousand people (Grassian 1), on the Spokane Indian Reservation, the son of Sherman Joseph Alexie who was of Coeur d'Alene descent and Lillian Agnes Cox of Spokane descent (Berglund xi). Alexie was born with "a skull that expanded on an hourly basis" as he described it himself (Blewster 76).

Being born with hydrocephalus meant that he had to undergo heavy brain surgery when he was only six months old. The doctors expected him to die during surgery or suffer serious brain damage. Against all odds, Alexie survived the surgery. He did suffer some brain damage which resulted in wetting the bed till the age of twelve and having seizures until he was seven.

Alexie loved reading as a child and had read the whole reservation library by the age of ten (Bellante 12). After the surgery, the doctors were still afraid that Alexie would end up being severely mentally disabled. Therefore, they kept testing him, made him go into therapy and literally put books in front of him (Allam 162).

Reading became his world, since he could not take part in "the wild athleticism of a

young male Indian's rites of passage" (Marx 17) because of the shortcomings he faced as a result of being born a hydrocephalus. His large head, glasses, lisp and competitiveness made him laughing-stock at the reservation.

Alexie went to primary school on the reservation. In seventh grade he got a textbook with his mother's maiden name written in it (Allam 162). Since his mother had graduated from school a long time ago, that book must have been at least thirty years old. It was then Alexie realised he had to leave the reservation to survive. A year later he left to go to a high school in Reardan, a town outside the reservation. It was an all-white high school in a German immigrant community (Highway 23). Besides the mascot<sup>1</sup> (Allam 162), Alexie was the only Indian in the entire school. Hence, he was the outsider. He did, however, get accepted by his peers. To assimilate into his new high school he had to tone down some of his characteristics, among which his reservation accent and some of his long hair (Himmelsbach 34). He became the perfect Reardan student: "an honor student and class president and the only ponytail on the crew-cut Reardan [...] basketball team" (Marx 18). To Alexie's surprise the qualities that made him unpopular on the reservation, like competitiveness and perseverance, made him popular at Reardan (Marx 18).

After high school Alexie went back to the reservation to study at Gonzaga University. "He had the vague intentions of becoming a doctor or a lawyer" (Marx 18). This is where he started drinking, like everyone else on the reservation. His

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<sup>1</sup> Mascots were usually Indians on horses.

parents were alcoholics, as were many Indians on the reservation. His mother stopped drinking when Alexie was seven and became a drug and alcohol abuse counsellor (Blewster 77). His father never drank at home, but sometimes left for a couple of days without any notice. Alexie was one of six siblings and lost his older sister when he was a teenager. She and her husband died when their mobile-home caught fire (Blewster 76). They were too drunk to notice it. Alcoholism is almost “epidemic” among Indians (Milk River Film). The year that Alexie decided to go to Reardan, he lost seven family members, who either drank themselves to death or were involved in an accident caused by alcoholics. While he was at Gonzaga University Alexie was “on the verge of becoming one of those young Indians that drink themselves to death” (Marx 18). The drinking made him drop out of school and he moved to Seattle to work as a busboy (Grassian 3). One night he was robbed at knifepoint and decided to change paths. He applied for Washington State University and got accepted. Alexie had enrolled in a human anatomy lab (Nygren 143) but had a tendency to faint whenever blood occurred and switched courses. The only class that fit with his busy schedule was a creative writing course taught by Alex Kuo. It was during that course that Alexie was first brought into contact with Indian poetry. Kuo gave him an anthology called *Songs From This Earth on Turtle's Back* which consisted of poems written by Native Americans like Linda Hogan, Simon Ortiz, Joy Harjo, James Welch and Adrian Louis. Reading these poems, Alexie felt like he could have written them himself. It was new to him to read something that concerned his life, something that talked about what he was dealing with every

day. One line in particular stood out: 'Oh Uncle Adrian, I'm in the reservation of my mind', for Alexie it captured the way he saw himself (Nygren 143). Inspired by his fellow Native American poets, Alexie was assured that he could do that too and began to write poetry.

Even though Alexie had started studying again, he was still a binge drinker. The turning point for him came when one day the police came at his door, reporting his car missing. Apparently Alexie had left his car running in some street and had walked all the way home. That's when he decided he had to stop drinking to survive. This realisation coincided with the publishing of his first collection of poems. It was a poetry manuscript that he had written in his first semester at WSU. As part of the assignments the students had to submit their work to literary magazines. (Highway 26) Alexie sent his to *Hanging Loose* and the magazine was interested in publishing it. "The letter accepting the manuscript for publication arrived the day Alexie decided to quit drinking" (Marx 19) and he took that as a sign that it was the right decision. Alexie has been writing ever since and published several poetry and short story collections, novels and film scripts.

Today Alexie is a so-called 'urban Indian', which is also reflected in his work. Urban Indians are Native Americans who live in urban areas as opposed to Indian reservations. Alexie lives in Seattle with his wife Diane and their two sons Joseph and David.



## 1.2 Sherman Alexie's Work

Alexie has often been described as a prolific author (Teters 53). His extensive bibliography (Appendix 1) shows why this description is more than correct. Alexie started as a poet and always refers to himself as first and foremost a poet. Yet, it is no longer just poetry that Alexie writes. His oeuvre contains short stories, novels, screenplays, songs and comedy (Nygren 141). Besides writing, Alexie travels around the world to address different audiences and talk about his life and work or take part in discussions about various subjects.

Alexie frequently refers to one of his qualities as “insane ambition” (Himmelsbach 34). As a consequence of this ambition he became an outcast in the Indian world where important values are family and equality. It is, however, also this same ambition that made him a success in the white world, where individuality is put on a pedestal. That Alexie doesn't make a secret of his ambition becomes clear in comments like: “I'm not truly going to be happy until every single human being on the planet reads something I've written” (Cole 108).

Alexie's work has been characterized as realistic, straight from the shoulder, filled with self-deprecating humour, a wonderful mix between pain and comedy (Bellante 3). “Far from romanticized, his writings are brooding and ironic, with a sharp edge” (Teters 53). He is known for his realistic depictions of present day Indian reservation life and urban life (Peterson *xiv*). Alexie has been praised and denounced

for his work. He has received many awards and honours but his work has also been banned from schools for being too graphic and blatant.

### 1.2.1 Themes and Topics

Alexie writes about what he knows. Many of the events in his novels come directly from Alexie's life. According to him, Indians are no fiction writers (Purdy 49). In his introduction to *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* Alexie writes "I was the first Alexie to ever become middle-class and all because I wrote stories and poems about being a poor Indian growing up in an alcoholic family on an alcoholic reservation" (The Lone Ranger xviii). Alcoholism, violence and fires are present in most of his stories, things he has found to his cost. That the stories are close to home becomes clear when Alexie discusses the characters in his books. There are three recurring main character in his stories: Thomas Builds-the-Fire, a misfit storyteller of the Spokane tribe, Victor Joseph, an angry alcoholic Indian guy and Junior Polotkin, the happy-go-lucky failure. Alexie calls them "the unholy trinity of me" (Highway 28). He describes Thomas as the person he would have become if he had stayed on the reservation (Blewster 80). Victor is Alexie when he was drinking. Alexie describes Junior as the character that is most like himself.

Identity is one of the main themes in Alexie's work. Many characters struggle to find their identity, often feeling stuck between the Indian world and the white world. Alexie thinks "it's endemic to everybody's experience [...], we're all

struggling with our identity. Literature is all about the search for identity, regardless of the ethnicity, everyone's trying to find a sense of belonging" (Chapel 99). His later work is characterized by a so-called 'multi-tribal-identity'. A person does not belong to one tribe only, but to many tribes: culturally, ethnically and racially. This multitribalism is also present in *ATD* (Appendix 4). Junior finds his identity in a combination of tribes. He is not only part of the Spokane Indian tribe, but also belongs to the tribe of American immigrants, the tribe of basketball players, the tribe of bookworms etc.

Other recurring themes are death, friendship and alcoholism. The heavy subjects are approached with humour. This mix of seriousness and humour makes it easier for the reader to tackle the difficult topics and is also the reason many scholars praise Alexie's work.

An interesting observation is the shift of topics in Alexie's work. As Alexie described it himself: "my work is starting to reflect the way in which I live my life" (Weinmann). His first novels can be tagged as angry. One of his characters stated that "survival = anger x imagination" (Bellante 10). The situations described in the stories offer no hope. Alexie's attitude towards life has since changed. His later work shows hope for the protagonists (Nygren 155). The multi-tribal identity helps the main characters to find their place and to overcome the identity crisis.

### 1.2.2 Audience

According to Alexie, his audience consists mainly of “middle class, college-educated white women” (Nygren 151). He does not write for this group specifically, but it is the largest group in his audience at book readings. Generally speaking his books are aimed at an Indian audience. His work is “about Indian people’s inner lives, their relationships with each other, their relationships to their history and their children, and all those things. It’s not written for a non-Indian audience predominantly” (Allam 158). Even though his books seem directed at Indians, they are read all over the world, mainly by white people. His ideal reader would be one who has the conviction that reading is essential to survival and understanding and that books and literature are not mere entertainment (Nygren 152). Alexie has a desire to reach young people of all backgrounds and to spread encouragement and hope (Nygren 152). *ATD* is his first book specifically written for young adults. This book is different from his other novels, which contain a higher level of violence and are therefore less suitable as reading material for young people. *ATD* has been used in classrooms and many lessons can be found online. There are many teachers who recommend it for history or literature lessons (Noone 3), in English-speaking countries as well as in The Netherlands (PHL). There is even a method for Dutch that contains a chapter about *ATD* (Mulder). This educational aspect results in a larger audience. The book is read by adults who will recommend it to young people or make it part of their school curriculum.

## ***2. The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian***

*ATD* is the first novel of Alexie that is marketed as a Young Adult novel. It is semi-autobiographical, as many of the events and struggles that Junior faces come directly from Alexie's own life. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Alexie writes about what he knows. According to him, Indians are unable (or less able) to write fiction (Purdy 49). *ATD* is based on Alexie's own life story

### **2.1 Storyline and Autobiographical Elements**

This book tells the story of Junior (or, officially, Arnold Spirit Jr.), a fourteen-year-old Indian that lives on the Spokane Indian Reservation. As an Indian, Junior grew up in a poor environment where death and alcoholism were everyday reality. He was born with "too much cerebral spinal fluid inside his skull" (*ATD* 1) and had to undergo brain surgery when he was six months old. His surgeons didn't expect him to survive, but he did. He ended up having forty-two teeth though, and had recurring seizures until he was seven. All these ailments resulted in him being teased. He became kind of a loner, except for his best friend Rowdy. Junior is an ambitious kid and that doesn't make him popular on the reservation either. He wants to become an artist. "So I draw because I want to talk to the world. And I want the world to pay attention to me. I feel important with a pen in my hand. I feel like I might grow up to be somebody important. An artist. Maybe a famous artist. Maybe a rich artist" (*ATD* 6). Oscar, his dog, falls ill and because they can't afford a vet, his dad kills him to

release him from suffering. This is when Junior realizes how hopeless life on the reservation is. He starts high school on the reservation and one day he opens his geometry book to find his mother's maiden name written in the cover. Mad about again another hopeless situation, he throws the book at his teacher and ends up being suspended from school. To his surprise, his teacher is not mad and even encourages him to leave the reservation: "The only thing you kids are being taught is how to give up" (ATD 42). With this extra stimulation, Junior decides to change schools and goes to a white school in the off-reservation town Reardan. His friend Rowdy does not agree with his decision, thinks Junior is a traitor for going to a white school, and for the first time Junior is punched by his best friend.

The first weeks at Reardan are terrifying. As an only Indian at a white school you have to learn the new rules. For example that fighting is not the way to solve differences of opinion. Junior discovers that the qualities that made him an outcast on the reservation, actually give him advantages at Reardan. Being ambitious is admired at his new high school. He even ends up in the basketball team because of his perseverance. Even though Junior finds friends and somehow manages to get accepted at his new high school, he keeps feeling like a "stranger in a strange land" (ATD 66). And when his basketball team has to play the Indian team, he feels like a traitor: "Jeez, I felt like one of those Indian scouts who led the U.S. Cavalry against other Indians" (ATD 200). This is one of the main themes in the novel; the search for identity, of where to belong. Junior feels stuck between two worlds. He does no longer feel like an Indian, nor is he white. That is why it is the diary of a *part-time*

Indian. At his new school Junior makes new friends, overcomes problems and falls in love. During the course of the year Junior's grandmother dies, his father's best friend Eugene dies and his older sister dies, all because of alcohol. He has to deal with a lot of grief and does this by drawing and making lists of the good things in life. Junior approaches all the bad situations with a sense of self-deprecating humour and hope, and that might be the reason why in the end things seem to turn round.

Obviously, the story of Junior shows many similarities with Alexie's own life story. It is set on the Spokane Indian Reservation where Alexie himself grew up and Junior was also born with hydrocephalus. Alexie did find his mother's maiden name written in one of his school books. His older sister died in a fire because she and her husband were too drunk to notice it, which also happened to Junior. Alexie also lost his grandmother because a drunk driver killed her. Hence, many of the events in the book are autobiographical. Not only events though, also thoughts and comments come from Alexie's life. At a certain point in the story Penelope, a girl from his new school he has a crush on, says the thing Alexie's mum used to say about him (Fraser 85): "I think I was born with a suitcase" (*ATD* 111).

The book shares the inside knowledge of someone who grew up at a reservation, 'on the rez'. And that seems one of Alexie's writing goals; to provide, or maybe rather confront, readers with life on the 'rez' as it is. He reveals the harsh realities with a somewhat sarcastic sense of humour. When the topics and situations get too serious, a humorous remark frequently relieves the tension for the readers (Odle).

## 2.2 Diary -Format and Narrative Style

*ATD* is written in a diary-format. This is a popular style among young adult novels as can be seen in the success of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole* and *Angus, Thongs, and Full-Frontal Snogging*. The advantage of this genre is that it is easy for the reader to connect with the main character. As reader, you are basically in the head of the character and you know what he or she thinks and feels. It will be a story written in the style and tone of the main character, often a teenager. "The liveliness of the voice is easy for the YA reader to relate to" (Loertscher). Hence, this is a wonderful way to enable young people to connect with contemporaries from other countries and cultures. Of course other formats will offer this same possibility, but the personal style of the diary makes it easier for the reader to connect with the protagonist from another culture. By reading the Dutch translation of *ATD* Dutch young readers will have an insight into the world of an Indian living on an Indian reservation in America. Writing in a diary-format is also a good way to address difficult or heavy topics. The protagonist will share his or her thoughts and feelings on the topics and how he or she deals with it. The diary-format can be compared to the epistolary form in this respect, although the epistolary form deals with two main characters where the diary-form has one, both are tools that allow "readers to enter the minds of [...] young adults for an intimate view of their struggles for identity and self in a confusing and often frightening world" (Wasserman). The epistolary form does have, at least, two protagonist who can discuss topic with one another and



complement each other's thoughts and opinions. A diary has one author, one point of view, although this person will be influenced by the people who surround him or her, everything that is written down comes from one character. Alexie's stories tend to be pervaded with humour, and this is also true for *ATD*. The humorous tone makes it easier to discuss serious matters and creates a story that is more accessible to young adults.

Since it is a diary, the story is written in first person. The narrator is Junior himself, there is no omniscient narrator. Junior is clearly aware of his audience 'out there', which becomes clear in several questions, comments and rhetorical questions he puts in his writing that are directed at 'you' as the reader:

"Do you know what happens to retards on the rez?" (*ATD* 4)

"Do you know the worst thing about being poor?" (*ATD* 8)

"I'm not even writing down this story the way I actually talk, because I'd have to fill it with stutters and lisps, and then you'd be wondering why you're reading a story written by *such a retard*." (*ATD* 4)

"Okay, so now you know that I'm a cartoonist." (*ATD* 7)

"What a bastard, huh?" (*ATD* 3)

He also puts words in the reader's mouth: "And now I'm sure you're asking: 'Okay, okay, Mr. Hunger Artist, Mr. Mouth-Full-of-Words, Mr. Woe-Is-Me, Mr. Secret Recipe, what is the worst thing about being poor?' So, okay, I'll tell you the worst

thing" (ATD 9). The use of this type of language strengthens the connection between narrator and readers by increasing the reader involvement in a direct way.

Besides writing for an audience, Junior also seems to be writing the first draft of the text. This is not surprising, since it is a diary and usually there is only one draft of a diary. Several passages show how Junior writes something and then takes it back or changes it:

"I walked like a zombie through the next few weeks in Reardan.

Well, no, that's not exactly the right description.

I mean, if I'd been walking around like a zombie, I might have been scary. So, no, I wasn't a zombie, not at all. Because you can't ignore a zombie.

So that made me, well, it made me *nothing*.

Zero.

Zilch.

Nada" (ATD 82).

This quote also shows that Junior uses a lot of short sentences, sometimes consisting of only one word. The book does not only contain short sentences, the chapters and paragraphs in general are short. This creates an easy readable book and also shows a protagonist who writes down his thoughts, often jumping from one idea to the next.

All these aspects together and especially Junior's way of talking, create a teenage narrator who is convincing and real.

## 2.3 Themes

The most important themes of the novel are identity and death. The PhD and Masters students of Stanford, Harvard and Berkely made a list of themes that are present in *ATD* (Shmoop Editorial Team): home, race, poverty, literature and writing, mortality, friendship, hopes, dreams and plans, education, tradition and custom. Junior discusses these themes with friends and family members and also deals with them in his drawings. The theme of identity has already been discussed in the previous chapter. The characterizing theme of *ATD* is also 'hope'. Where other novels written by Alexie are somewhat depressive, this novel depicts a boy who defies his destiny and against all odds gains success.

The tradition and custom of Native Americans comes up throughout the story in conversations with his parents and grandmother, the powwow celebration and stories the Indians tell each other at the funerals that take place.

Another main theme is Junior's friendship with Rowdy. At the end of the third chapter Junior says: "Rowdy and I are inseparable" (*ATD* 24). However, a couple of chapters later Rowdy has become his worst enemy (*ATD* 53). After Junior has decided to leave the reservation to go to a white school, their friendship seems beyond repair. Yet, even in this hopeless situation Junior sees hope for their friendship which becomes clear in comments like: "But Rowdy still respected my cartoons. And so maybe he still respected me a little bit" (103).

Mortality is clearly present in the story, since Junior has to go to three funerals. Junior deals with all these deaths through drawing, making lists of the good things in life and talking about it with his parents and friends.

## 2.4 Humour

The sense of humour in this story is mainly sarcastic. Junior uses a certain amount of self-mockery, which starts with the description of himself. The way in which he describes the dreadful things that happened to him, make them sound “weirdo and funny” (*ATD* 2). Peterson describes it as a “masterful balance between great pain and humour” (xvii).

Many words in *ATD* are italicized for emphasis. These italicized words frequently have a humorous effect: “Yep, whenever I had a seizure, I was *damaging my damage*” (*ATD* 3). Of course most topics Junior discusses are far from funny, but the typical way in which he expresses himself is very entertaining. Sarcastic remarks as “Epic” (*ATD* 3) enhance the sarcastic tone of the text. Nearly all of the illustrations add to the humorous effect of the book. Junior calls himself a cartoonist and most of his drawings are cartoons. Cartoons are drawings with a mock-effect and that is what most of Junior’s drawings definitely have.

## 2.5 Illustrations

Ellen Forney provided the book with illustrations. These illustrations are the cartoons and drawings made by Junior himself. He is an aspiring artist, and his cartoons add to the story he tells. The cartoons either show what has been said in the text, explain something that has been said in the text or tell something new. Sometimes illustrations are shaped like a comic and contain dialogue that is not part of the text but is part of the story and thus the illustration functions as text.

Many drawings are about people Junior knows or meets and how he sees them. Some of these are caricatures, especially the ones about his teachers and coaches. There are also several drawings where people are surrounded by captions and notes that explain the drawing or add extra information, like brand names of clothes and accessories. These drawings show Junior's slight fascination with money.

An interesting drawing is the one of the 'Eimouttaheer Virus' in appendix 3. This is a word play on an imaginary virus that some of the boys get when trying out for the basketball team. One of them quits during running laps and three more follow his example. 'Eimouttaheer' is formed according to the pronunciation of 'I'm outta here'.

## 2.6 Title

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

The last part of this title is explained by Junior in the book: "Traveling between

Reardan and Wellpinit, between the little white town and the reservation, I always felt like a stranger. I was half Indian in one place and half white in the other. It was like being Indian was my job, but it was only a part-time job. And it didn't pay well at all" (*ATD* 118). Junior compares his Indian identity with a part-time job. Because he is travelling back and forth between the white border school and the Indian reservation, Junior seems to be stuck in between identities and this is one of the themes that is discussed throughout the book.

The use of adverbs like 'absolutely' that give the other words extra emphasis is common usage among children and young people. They use these adverbs and adjectives to enforce their claims or arguments. The word 'absolutely' in the title enforces readers to believe that it is true what Junior has written down. It can also be seen as a reference to the autobiographical aspects of the story. Parts of it are true, since Alexie himself has experienced the events he described.

## **2.7 Adult Literature vs. Young Adult Literature**

Alexie writes for adults and teenagers. *ATD* is the first novel that is marketed as a young adult novel. Alexie wrote it for young people and there are clear differences between this novel and his other work. *Flight* is a book that was published in the same year as *ATD* and also has a teenager as protagonist. However, the story of *Flight* is more graphic and bloody than *ATD*. There is "some quiet serious stuff going on there" (Milk River Film) and it has a level of violence that makes it unsuitable for

a whole class full of young people. Some teenagers might be able to understand and appreciate it, but it wouldn't be teachable. The story is indeed about a teenager, but about a teenager that ends up in a grown-up's body, and therefore has to deal with adult problems and sensibilities. *ATD* deals with teenage problems. Even though *ATD* is the first novel aimed at young adults, Alexie always had a wish to reach out to young people and inspire aspiring writers: "There's a kid out there, some boy or girl who will be that great writer, and hopefully they'll see what I do and get inspired by that" (Fraser 88).

To connect with his audience, Alexie also incorporated popular culture into the story. He uses famous artists, basketball players, songs, books etc. as a lingua franca (West 69) to enable readers to relate to the story, even though they did not grow up on a reservation. "It's a way for me, as the writer, to speak to the audience through my characters in a way that will give them something to hold onto as they're hearing and seeing something brand new" (West 69). This does cause problems for the translator though, since many of these popular culture aspects are culture specific. Besides being culture specific popular culture is also subject to time. Therefore, a book written for young adults with a lot of references to popular culture will probably be outdated, or nostalgic, a couple of years later. "The burden of adolescent literature has always been to achieve synchronicity with the concerns of an audience that is defined by its state of flux and impermanence" (Coats 325). Adolescents are in a fragile phase in their lives, they are searching for identity and young adult literature can be a source of comfort if they can relate to the problems

discussed in the stories (Coats 327). It can be a constructive tool to help young readers read about, think about and discuss experiences that are familiar to them (Wasserman). Young adult literature “can be a helpful coping mechanism for adolescents who experience traumatic difficulties or for ones who are dealing with the normal, but painful, everyday experiences associated with a changing mind and body” (Wasserman). Young adult novels discuss problems and experiences in which young people can recognize themselves (Wasserman). Therefore, even though Alexie’s story is about an Indian boy who grew up on a reservation, many of the problems and struggles he faces are universal and will be easy to relate to by young readers of all backgrounds.

“In English Education, young adult literature is often viewed as a gateway drug used to entice readers to try the harder stuff” (Coats 316). Young adult literature has not been taken seriously as a subject for academic study but rather as an in-between step towards reading serious, adult, literature (Coats 318). Coats argues that young adult literature should be viewed both as a step up to more sophisticated literature and as an area of academic study, since children’s literature has obtained that status as well (317).



### 3 Translation Problems

To be able to make the right translation choices and use the best translation strategies, a translator should have a clear translation goal. The model contract for literary translations states that the translator should provide a translation in impeccable Dutch that is faithful to the original in style and content (LUG and VvL). To comply with this regulation, translators should find a balance between staying close to the source text and creating a credible text in the target language. Hence, the purpose of my translation is offering Dutch young adults a novel that will entertain them the same way the English original would have if they could read it, with self-deprecating humour and a perfect balance between humour and seriousness. Furthermore, the translation should offer readers a similar realistic view of life on an Indian Reservation in America as the source text does. Yet, besides these source text aspects, it is also important that the translation will depict a convincing 14-year-old in Dutch, therefore, tone and colloquial aspects of the target language should sound natural in Dutch.

This chapter will discuss translation strategies and possible solutions to translation problems and decide what the desirable choices would be considering the purpose of the translation.

### 3.1 Translating Young Adult Literature

To further specify the translation purpose, a translator should take the audience into consideration. As has been seen in the previous chapter, young adult literature has specific characteristics that the translator has to be aware of. According to Oittinen “translators of fiction [...] should be able to recreate the idea of the book (as interpreted by the translator) in the target language” (35). To be able to recreate the idea of the book one should analyse the story and stylistic elements of the text, as has been done in the previous chapter. Besides analysing the source text, it is also important to estimate the readers of the target text. The age of the target group lies roughly between 15 and 25 years old (Storm). Dutch young adults will have knowledge of English, since it is taught at school. Moreover, The Netherlands has a close connection to American culture through the media. Students will have an image of American teenage life through the many American television shows that are broadcasted in The Netherlands. Pupils might have discussed some American history in class, but it is less common to discuss the history of Native Americans in The Netherlands than it is in America. Fortunately, Alexie seems to have taken the work of translators in consideration since almost all Indian terminology is explained in the context. This is a didactic quality that can be found in many books written for young people. The first occurrence of the term ‘powwow’ is followed by an explanation that shows that it is a festive gathering of Indians:

“The Spokane Tribe holds their annual powwow celebration over the Labor Day weekend. This was the 127<sup>th</sup> annual one, and there would be singing, war dancing, gambling, storytelling, laughter, fry bread, hamburgers, hot dogs, arts and crafts, and plenty of alcoholic brawling” (*ATD* 17).

Even though this explanation adds new cultural elements to the story, like fry bread, the description is clear enough to help readers understand what a ‘powwow’ is.

Therefore, this term can be preserved without having to add new information to the text. This didactic quality is especially present in children’s literature. Young adults will need less explanation, and might even appreciate foreign terms (Coillie v).

Alexie only explained some Indian terms, most American terms have no explanations in the text.

Oittinen distinguishes two main translation strategies: domestication and foreignization (42). The first one brings the text to the reader, the latter brings the reader to the text. The translator can either choose to naturalize foreign elements or to preserve them. Whereas ‘naturalisation’ used to be the most employed strategy for translating children’s literature (Lathey 7), young adult literature does not need this. Reasons for naturalisation can be principles, Lathey gives the example of Mary Wollstonecraft who made radical changes in the children’s book she was translating to create a moral message, which was not present in the source text (7). Other reasons for using naturalisation as a strategy can be to improve the accessibility of the story or to make the translation commercially viable. However, *ATD* can also be accessible

with foreign elements and books that are marketed as young adult novels will not gain extra commercial success by naturalising foreign elements, therefore, these reasons do not really apply to this situation.

Oittinen cites several scholars who are against domestication since it would be a “method [of] denaturalizing and pedagogizing” literature (43). According to them young people should have the opportunity to discover the foreign in a translation and learn to be able to notice and appreciate the differences (43). Preserving foreign elements will give readers the opportunity to become familiar with another culture. Oittinen discusses domestication and foreignization in relation to children’s literature. Nevertheless, these strategies can also be applied to young adult literature since these books also contain foreign elements. Young adults will probably have more knowledge of English than children. Therefore, translators might choose foreignization more easily. Also, as Cascallana indicates, “the ongoing process of internationalization [...] is bound to affect the strategies used by translators” who translate from English (108). Foreignization will probably become the preferable translation strategy “given the dominance of English as a world language and the hegemony of Anglo-Saxon culture generally” (108). Items that are specific to the English speaking world will require “less and less manipulation to become acceptable in the receiving cultures” (108).

Many scholars discuss the translation of literature for young people as a combination of factors. The translator should not just have the young reader in mind but also the parents, who might buy the book for their children, and the teachers or

librarians, who might teach or recommend it, and the publisher (Pascua-Febles 111).

As mentioned before, *ATD* is frequently used in history, literature and English lessons and teachers will thus be an interesting audience as well. In other words, translating for young people is not just about creating texts which their young readers will like, it is “the result of a combination of different systems within a culture: social, educational and literary” (Pascua-Febles 111).

Typical of the translated young adult literature in The Netherlands are the many English terms and phrases that are present in the Dutch texts. “It may be true that for very young readers things need to sound familiar. But for [...] adolescents, that isn’t necessary. It’s a positive thing, in fact, for them to immerse themselves in an unknown world” (Coillie 135). The publishing company Lemniscaat has been the driving force behind the popularity of young adult literature in The Netherlands (Postuma 48). The name of the category alone shows that it is English minded. The term Young Adult comes directly from America (Postema 48). It is hard to find a library or large book shop that does not have a young adult section these days, although the amount of these sections are decreasing again.

Taking all these issues into consideration, foreignization is the advisable strategy for translating *ATD*. Since the readers of the translation should be able to form an image of Indian life in America according to Sherman Alexie, domestication will lead to a less colourful text. Moreover, young adults will have knowledge of English as a language and the American culture and it will not be difficult for them to understand a book that contains some foreign elements. Therefore, the main

translation strategy for Alexie's work should be foreignization, so that young readers will have the opportunity to become familiar with another culture. "It is common practice today to describe the role of the translator as a mediator, as one who facilitates the negotiating 'dialogue' between source text and target audience. Nowhere else is the mediating role of the translator so strongly felt as in the translation of children's literature. [...] For children who do not master foreign languages, translations are the sole means of entering into genuine contact with foreign literatures and cultures" (Coillie v- Preface). Even though Coillie is probably referring to younger children and not young adults, this mediating role is also applicable to the translator of young adult literature. The translator decides to what extent readers are exposed to the new culture. For *ATD* the foreignization strategy results in preserving terms like 'powwow' and geographical names like 'New York' and 'Iowa'. The currency (dollar) stays the same as well, since the occurrences do not expect readers to know exact amounts, but miles can be changed into kilometres to help readers estimate the distance. By making choices like these, "the translator mediates, but to an important extent he or she also shapes the image that young readers or listeners will have of the translated work" (Coillie v).

### **3.2 Culture Specific Elements**

Taking foreignization as a translation strategy, might have the biggest consequences for the translation of culturally embedded elements. *ATD* contains both terms from

Indian as from American culture. As mentioned before, Alexie uses American pop culture as a cultural lingua franca. "Throughout his books the reader encounters a complex sensibility simultaneously embracing the Indian way of life but which nevertheless has been profoundly influenced by white American culture, books and movies in particular" (Bellante 3). Grit lists seven strategies to tackle translation problems concerning 'realia', which are defined as culture specific terms and expressions: preservation, loan translation, estimation, explanation or definition in the target language, core translation, adaptation and omission (Grit 189). Aixelá creates a broader category named Culture Specific Elements (CSE). He defines CSE as elements that bring about translation problems because of their function or connotations in the source text (Aixelá 198). When the target language does not offer an equivalent term that bears the same function and connotations, this element becomes a CSE. A translator can deal with these elements by preserving them or replacing them. Preservation is a logical solution for terms that don't have a Dutch equivalent but are known in The Netherlands with their English name: "It would have been like King Kong battling Godzilla" (67). King Kong and Godzilla are both well-known in The Netherlands through comic books and films. Brand names that do have Dutch synonyms could be replaced, but this might lead to different connotations. "Indian families stick together like Gorilla Glue, the strongest adhesive in the world" (89). However, changing Gorilla Glue into 'Pritt' or 'tien-seconden-lijm' will not have the connotation that it is the strongest glue. Since the name 'Gorilla Glue' already indicates something 'strong' and the tagline confirms this thought, this

brand name can be maintained as well. Another solution would be partial translation, the 'glue' part can be replaced by the Dutch equivalent 'lijm': Gorillalijm.

An example of a cultural element that cannot be preserved is the chapter title: "And a Partridge in a Pear Tree" (150). This is a line from the Christmas song 'Twelve Days of Christmas'. The literal translation would be 'en een patrijs in een perenboom' but this wouldn't make any sense to Dutch readers. Even though they might know the English song, the Dutch translation is not a known song. The chapter that follows the title deals with Christmas, therefore a line from a Dutch Christmas song would be a satisfying choice, for example: "Kling klokje klingelingeling" or "In de mensen een welbehagen". The first song is a Christmas song that children learn at the nursery or primary school. The same goes for 'Twelve Days of Christmas'. Hence, this would be a good option. The other possibility, that Aleid van Eekelen-Benders has chosen for her translation, is a phrase from the Christmas song 'Ere zij God' that is sung in churches around Christmas time. Although this phrase will indeed indicate that the chapter is about Christmas it will also add extra, religious, connotations that the original does not have.

At a certain point in the story the kids are going to a diner to have some pancakes: "Denny's" (125). Diners are very common in America but not in the Netherlands. Aixelá lists five solutions for preservation: repetition, change the spelling, linguistic translation, extra textual explanation or intra textual explanation. Adding extra textual explanations, footnotes and glossaries, in novels will often distract the reader and work as a disruption instead of help. In this case, a short intra



textual explanation, for example 'restaurant Denny's' will explain the term. This solution might however result in a different image. A diner is usually a simple restaurant that serves cheap meals. The term 'restaurant' can mean everything from a simple to a very fancy restaurant. Another possibility would be the term 'wegrestaurant' which comes closer to diner, since these restaurants often serve cheap and fast meals as well. However, this word indicates that the restaurant is next to a road, which the word 'diner' does not imply. To convey the simple image of a diner, the translator could add an adjective to make this clear: goedkoop restaurant Denny's. The effect of this translation is that it may lay it on too thick that Denny's is a cheap restaurant, this is not the aim of the source text, since Junior cannot afford the pancakes. 'Eettent' might be a better solution, although this word could indicate that it is not an actual restaurant.

### 3.3 Style

In the previous chapter, the style of *ATD* has been described in relation to the diary-format, the first person point of view and the quick topic shifts in the story. These style characteristics do not lead to translation problems. The translator is confronted with difficulties concerning the protagonist's way of talking. The book contains a lot of profanity and colloquial speech. To make the main character sound as believable in Dutch as he does in the English version, the translator should find a way to make him speak as a Dutch teenager. Odle indicates the importance of a character's 'talk':

“Talk is a mark of character. If you clean up the way a character actually talks [...] then you aren’t telling the truth of the story. You’re insulting your characters, because you are speaking for them, instead of letting them speak for themselves. And you’re insulting your readers, because you’re giving them something that isn’t real. Verisimilitude, that sense of reality which all writers seek, is like a house of cards: hard to build, easy to knock down. Everything you leave in a story should add to the sense of verisimilitude; everything that takes away from it should be removed” (Odle).

The translator should find a way to let the characters speak the way they would if they were Dutch. The way Junior talks with his friends is very typical. Their language contains a lot of insults and swear words. This type of language tends to be very impermanent and language specific.

“ ‘I thought you were on suspension, dickwad,’ he said, which was Rowdy’s way of saying, ‘I’m happy you’re here.’

‘Kiss my ass,’ I said.” (47)

The story contains many words like ‘dickwad’, which usually mean something like ‘idiot’ but differ in severity. An English-Dutch dictionary often translates these words with the more standard ‘eikel’ or ‘klootzak’. It is up to the translator to come up with more creative solutions and maintain a variety of these expletives. There is

even a website ([www.taalkabaal.nl](http://www.taalkabaal.nl)) with an insult dictionary that the translator could use.

A good example of colloquial speech is the following excerpt that is written as if Junior was talking to the reader in real-life and telling his story: “So, okay, I’m going number two, and I’m sitting on the toilet, and I’m concentrating. I’m in my Zen mode, trying to make this whole thing a spiritual experience. I read once that Gandhi was way into his own number two” (*ATD* 105). The difficult part of translating this section are the present participles that keep the text flowing. English and Dutch both have a present participle, however, it is more frequently used in English. The quote above contains several present participles in one sentence. This would not be allowed in Dutch and would in this case lead to very strange Dutch: ‘Ik moest een grote boodschap, zittend op het toilet, concentrerend in mijn Zen modus, proberend om er een spirituele ervaring van te maken.’ The present participle works in English for spoken language but not in Dutch. The Dutch language would use active verbs instead of passive ones. Since the example above clearly is spoken language the target text should have a similar effect, as if the text was spoken out loud. For example: ‘Dus ik moet een grote boodschap, zit op de wc en concentreer me. Ik ben in mijn Zen-modus en probeer er een spirituele ervaring van te maken.’ “The challenge of a Dutch translation of the present participle construction lies in balancing faithfulness to the text world by preserving the same degree with natural idiom” (Spies 17). Hence, it depends on the use of the present participles what strategy should be used. A single occurrence might be translated as a single present

participle in Dutch, but more of these in a row do need different grammatical constructions in Dutch. “A way-old dude” (172) is another example of colloquial speech, which is typical ‘young people talk’. In Dutch a teenager would probably say something like ‘vet ouwe vent’.

Another style feature can be found in the creative descriptions of for instance the weather: “It was July. Crazy hot and dry. It hadn’t rained in, like, sixty days. Drought hot. Scorpion hot. Vultures flying circles in the sky hot” (220). This is where Alexie’s poetry background comes forward, in creative use of language working towards a climax. The word ‘like’ is again a feature of colloquial speech, which is used all the time by young people, whether relevant or not. In this case it could be translated with ‘zeker’: Het had zeker twee maanden niet geregend. Although this might have a stronger effect than the original. Other possibilities are ‘zo’n’, ‘minstens’, ‘al’. A similar example can be found elsewhere in the book: “Yep, we were, like, ten feet off the ground, but I was still able to reach out and steal the ball from Rowdy” (ATD 192). It depends on the interpretation of the word ‘like’ which translation the translator finds suitable. In these examples, like could either mean ‘about’ or ‘at least’, the first option being a hesitant one where the second option seems to be the ‘exaggerating’ opposite of the first.

### 3.4 Dialogue

*ATD* contains large amounts of dialogue. Many of the stories Junior tells recount the literal conversations as they have taken place. “The translation of literary texts that contain a great deal of dialogue and distinct grades of formality reflecting the different characters can be compared to the translation of audiovisual texts (dubbing). Nevertheless, one difference remains in that literary texts are written to be read *as if* they were spoken. But both have the same aim: that the reader or spectator does not perceive the discourse to be ‘prefabricated’ but rather realistic, believable and natural” (Pascua-Febles 114-15). Thus, the main goal is to create a dialogue that does not read as a translation but as a conversation that could have taken place in the target language. According to Loertscher young adult novels tend to have “a self-absorbed teenage narrator writing in a conversational, rather than a literary, style.” This can also be said of *ATD*’s protagonist Junior. Most of what he writes down sounds like it came directly out of a conversation. Some dialogues consist of longer sentences, but there are plenty of examples where the sentences are short, sometimes not even more than a couple of words:

“‘What kind of books did she want to write?’ I asked.

‘You’re going to laugh.’

‘No, I’m not.’

‘Yes, you are.’

'No, I'm not.'

'Yes, you are.'

Jeez, we had booth turned into seven-year-olds.

'Just tell me,' I said.

It was weird that a teacher was telling me things I didn't know about my sister. It made me wonder what else I didn't know about her.

'She wanted to write romance novels.'

Of course, I giggled at that idea.

'Hey,' Mr P said. 'You weren't supposed to laugh.'

'I didn't laugh.'

'Yes, you laughed.'

'No, I didn't.'

'Yes, you did.'

'Maybe I laughed a little.'

'A little laugh is still a laugh.'

And then I laughed for real. A big laugh."

(Alexie 37)

Dutch seven-year-olds would probably say 'welles, nietes' but this might be too informal for this conversation between a teacher and student. Still, the conversation should be short, so rather 'Nee hoor' and 'Jawel' than 'Nee, dat doe ik niet' and 'Ja, dat ga je wel'. Since the source text contains many witty, quick-reply dialogues, the

target text should also contain witty, quick-reply Dutch dialogues.

In the previous section, the example of dialogue contained a certain amount of profanities. There are many more examples where Junior and his friends are making fun of each other or insulting one another:

“If I had a dog with a face like yours, I’d shave its ass and teach it to walk backwards.’

‘ I once had a zit that looked like you. Then I popped it. And then it looked even more like you.’

‘This one time, I ate, like, three hot dogs and a bowl of clam chowder, and then I got diarrhea all over the floor, and it looked like you.’

‘And then you ate it,’ Rowdy said” (*ATD* 221).

Typical for these dialogues is the quick pace of the phrases back and forth. The dialogues act like real conversations between teenagers, and the translator should create real conversations in Dutch. This can be achieved through using active verbs and short sentences. Translating the first sentence in the example above with: “Als ik een hond had met een gezicht als dat van jouw, dan zou ik zijn achterwerk scheren en hem achteruit leren lopen” is a correct translation, but it would sound more like a teenager to have him say: “Als ik een hond had met jouw gezicht, dan zou ik z’n kont kaal scheren en hem achteruit leren lopen.” Even though these changes might only be minimal, it does change the tone of the text.

### 3.5 Wordplay, Idioms and Expressions

“From a translator’s point of view, wordplay represents one of the most difficult aspects of cultural intertextuality” (Cascallana 104). Cascallana states that the translatability of puns depends on the extent to which they are embedded in the source culture (104). Some puns are universal and will not result in translation problems. Yet, most puns are specific for a language or will contain humour that is specific for a culture. Neagu distinguishes three categories of puns: paradigmatic, transpositional and syntagmatic puns (84). The first category involves phonetic-lexical ambiguity, which can be achieved through homonymy, words that have the same spelling and sound but a different meaning or origin, or polysemy, words that have more than one meaning. “Transpositional puns involve swapping words or parts of words” (84). The last category, syntagmatic puns, are texts that contain one or more similar parts, for example: “It is better to be looked over than to be overlooked” (84). Delabastita provides a list of translation strategies that can be used when dealing with puns (134). A pun in the source text can be replaced by a similar pun in the target text, a non-pun, a related rhetorical device or it can be omitted. The translator can also choose to preserve the source text pun or to render it literally. Other options are creating puns where there are no puns in the source text, this strategy can be used as a way of compensation to make up for the puns that were lost



somewhere else in the text. The last strategy of Delabastita's list are editorial techniques, which entail adding explanatory footnotes or comments.

*ATD* contains several puns that are a challenge for the translator. Aleid van Eekelen-Benders came up with an interesting solution for the seemingly untranslatable: "Dad got stopped three times for DWI: Driving While Indian." (*ATD* 46) Her solution was replacing the pun with a pun in the target text: "is mijn vader drie keer aangehouden voor door rood rijden – dat wil zeggen, de auto werd door een roodhuid gereden" (*DHI* 50). Obviously, a literal translation would not make sense in this case, since DWI does not have a meaning in Dutch. The Dutch equivalent *Rijden Onder Invloed* is not known as ROI but even if it was: "Rijden Onder Indiaan" does not have the same pun as Driving While Indian.

Another pun is created through the lexical ambiguity of the word 'pick' as in 'to pick on someone' and 'to pick ones nose'. (*ATD* 18) This is a paradigmatic pun which cannot be translated literally to Dutch. Van Eekelen-Benders used two different expressions: 'jennen' and 'iemand op de kop zitten'. This latter one does create the opportunity of a pun: "Dan kom ik erbij zitten" (*DHI* 23). I used the same expression for both sentences, 'iemand te grazen nemen' and created the pun with the word 'grazen' which also means 'graze' (see page 62). Naturally, the preferable translation strategy is replacing a pun with a pun.

A final example of a pun is the wordplay on 'hydro' when three brothers are making fun of Junior's brain disorder. (*ATD* 20,21) Hydro means 'relating to water or using water'. Since the term hydro does not have many words in Dutch, preserving

this term was not an option. Van Eekelen-Benders used ‘water’ instead of hydro. She did not add puns, even though the source text ends with two: “Hydro-and-Low” and “Hydro-and-Seek” (*ATD* 21). I decided to use ‘aqua’, since that is another term for water and the Dutch language has several words with aqua. I ended with the puns “aquaadaardig” and “aquacadabra”.

Besides puns, *ATD* contains many English idioms and expressions, for instance the phrase “tough love” (*ATD* 15). This English expression is another way of saying ‘being cruel to be kind’: to tell someone the truth, even though the truth is hard to hear, so that it might help them the future. There is no Dutch equivalent, although something like ‘de waarheid is hard, maar ik heb het beste met je voor’ comes close. Preservation is not an option, since most Dutch readers won’t be familiar with the English expression. A possible solution would be to change the sentence structure. It is important that the idea of the phrase is preserved and this won’t be the case with keeping the original or using a literal translation like ‘stoere liefde’.

### **3.6 Other Problems**

Besides these problems, there are several translation problems that only have a few occurrences, but create difficulties for the translator.

### 3.6.1 Names

Names in books can serve particular functions. The main function is of course to identify characters (Coillie 123), either to refer to people or animals or imaginary creatures. Besides this function, names can have several concomitant functions such as: amusing the reader, providing knowledge or evoking emotions (Coillie 123). Most names in *ATD* are only there to identify characters but there are some examples that have concomitant functions. For instance the name of Junior's friend Rowdy, which is an adjective used to describe someone who is behaving in a noisy and rough way. And that is exactly what Rowdy is: he is angry and aggressive and quick to take offence. Preserving the English name in the Dutch translation takes away this extra connotation since many Dutch readers will not know the meaning of the word 'rowdy'. Rowdy is 'rouwdouw(er)' or 'lawaaischopper' in Dutch, so a Dutch equivalent of the name could be something like Rouwdouw. However, when deciding on this translation, a translator should take the other names in the translation into account as well. This name might sound too Dutch in comparison to the rest of the names. Nevertheless, there will be Dutch readers who will not be familiar with the term 'rouwdouw' and who might see it as a foreign name after all. Another possible translation could be 'Douwe', although this might be too Frisian for an Indian name.

Roger, one of the basketball players at Reardan, calls Penelope, the girl Junior fancies, Penultimate. Junior describes this nickname as the most intricate word Roger

knows (*ATD* 124). Obviously, Penultimate is a wordplay on the name Penelope. It does not have a particular meaning that refers to Penelope's character, so a Dutch translation should be a difficult word that looks or sounds like Penelope as well. 'Penaliteit' could be an option. However, 'penaliteit' has negative connotations where 'penultimate' is a positive, or neutral, word. Van Eekelen-Benders has chosen 'penalty' as nickname for Penelope in her translation. This word would be a good nickname for someone called Penelope since it is an easy and well-known word, it does however, make the statement that Junior makes about it being the most difficult word Roger knows much stronger, since penalty is a word that all boys will know.

### **3.6.2 Illustrations**

*ATD* contains a lot of illustrations. Junior, the main character, is a cartoonist and his cartoons can be found throughout the book. Most of these cartoons contain written text, thus have to be translated as well. Many of these cartoons contain culture specific elements, for example the drawing of the millionaire who loves Indians and collects Indian items. (appendix 5) The captions add information about the clothes and accessories the man wears, which can be translated according to Aixelá's translation strategies. Since many of these terms will not have a Dutch equivalent, it might be best to preserve the terms. This way readers who are interested have the opportunity to look them up. For example the brand name 'Pendleton' which is a company that started out in the early twentieth century making blankets and clothes

'the Indian way'. The drawing is clearly made to mock the person on it. Junior does not take this rich man and his love for Indians serious. Aixelá has several strategies for replacing CSE: synonymy, restricted universalisation, absolute universalisation, naturalizing and omission. Restricted universalisation is replacing the the name 'Pendleton' with another, similar but more familiar brand name. 'Native Threads' could be an option, but this brand will probably be just as unknown in The Netherlands as Pendleton. Absolute universalisation would result in choosing a neutral element (Aixelá 202), for example 'Indian clothing shop'. This solution would add extra words to the illustration and there might not be enough space. The same goes for the preserving strategy of adding intra textual information. Extra textual explanations like footnotes or a glossary would be an option, however, these are often seen as distracting in novels.

This limited amount of space certainly leads to problems in translating some of the texts in the drawings and puts extra constraints on the work of the translator. For instance the drawing of Junior on page six (appendix 6). This cartoon contains a little book titled 'Poems about Pine Trees'. A literal translation of this title would be 'Gedichten over Dennenbomen'. This title contains two long words that would not fit on the cover of the book in the cartoon. Van Eekelen-Benders came up with a clever solution: 'Dichten over Dennen'. This title sounds poetic because of the alliteration and does not contain words of more than two syllables.

## 4 Annotated Translation

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the goal of my translation is creating a target text that is true to the source text in tone and content. The reader of the target text should have the same image of Indian life on a reservation as a reader of the source text. I hope to achieve this by using foreignization as a main translation strategy. This means I will try and preserve most foreign elements to enable readers to get to know another culture.

### Het werkelijk ware dagboek van parttime Indiaan.

#### *De 'Blauwe-oog-van-de-maand' club*

\*

Ik werd geboren met water in m'n<sup>2</sup> hersenen.

Nou ja, dat is niet helemaal waar. Eigenlijk werd ik geboren met te veel cerebrospinale vloeistof in mijn hoofd. Maar cerebrospinale vloeistof is gewoon de doktersterm voor hersensmeer. En hersensmeer werkt in de kwabben zoals smeerolie in een motor. Het zorgt ervoor dat alles soepel en snel blijft lopen. Maar gek als ik ben<sup>3</sup>, werd ik natuurlijk<sup>4</sup> geboren met teveel smeer in m'n hoofd waardoor het allemaal dik en wazig en smerig werd en het mechanisme daarboven alleen maar verstopte. Mijn denk-, adem- en leefmotor ging hoe langer hoe langzamer lopen en verzoop<sup>5</sup> bijna.

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<sup>2</sup> To create the same colloquial tone as the source text, some words have been contracted.

<sup>3</sup> 'Weirdo' is a typical term for a strange person in English youth language.

<sup>4</sup> 'Natuurlijk' has been added to enhance the slightly sarcastic tone of the text.

<sup>5</sup> The verb 'verzuipen' is used to indicate flooding of a carburettor. Since Junior used a car metaphor, this verb seemed appropriate.

Mijn hersenen stonden op het punt te verdrinken in smeer.

Maar zo klinkt het allemaal heel gek en grappig, alsof mijn brein één grote patat met<sup>6</sup> was, dus leek het me serieuzer, poëtischer en gepaster om te zeggen: “Ik werd geboren met water in m’n hersenen.”

Oké, dat klinkt nou ook weer niet echt serieus... misschien *is*<sup>7</sup> het hele gedoe gewoon gek en grappig.

Maar jemig, dachten mijn vader en moeder en grote zus en oma en neven en nichten en tantes en ooms dat het grappig was, toen de dokters mijn kleine schedeltje open sneden en al dat extra water eruit zogen met de een of andere ministofzuiger?

Ik was pas zes maanden oud en ik zou het loodje leggen tijdens de operatie. En zelfs als ik op de een of andere manier het ministofzuigertje overleefde, zou ik er ernstig hersenletsel aan overhouden en de rest van mijn leven als plant doorbrengen.

Nou, die operatie heb ik dus overleefd. Ik zou dit niet schrijven als ik er niet meer was, maar ik heb allerlei lichamelijke problemen die het directe resultaat van de hersenbeschadiging zijn.

Ten eerste kreeg ik tweeënveertig tanden. De gemiddelde mens heeft er tweeëndertig. Maar ik had er tweeënveertig.

Tien meer dan gebruikelijk.

Tien meer dan normaal.

Tien tanden meer dan menselijk.

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<sup>6</sup> ‘French fry’ has been domesticated to ‘patat met’. It is more natural to say ‘patatje’ than ‘frans frietje’. The description Junior gives of the situation of his brains sounds like a ‘patatje met’.

<sup>7</sup> In the source text, certain words and phrases have been italicised to emphasize them. In Dutch texts, italicised words are often foreign elements, emphasis is created by accents, hence the *is* here.

Het werd zo'n volle bedoening dat ik nog nauwelijks mijn mond dicht kon krijgen. Ik ging naar de Indiaanse Gezondheidsdienst<sup>8</sup> om wat tanden te laten trekken zodat ik normaal kon eten, in plaats van als een slobberende aasgier. Maar de Indiaanse Gezondheidsdienst vergoedde ingrijpend gebitswerk maar één keer per jaar, dus moesten alle tien extra tanden in één dag getrokken worden!<sup>9</sup>

En dat was niet eens het ergste, onze blanke tandarts geloofde dat Indianen maar half zoveel pijn voelen als blanke mensen, dus gaf hij ook maar de helft van de verdoving<sup>10</sup>.

Wat een eikel, hè?

De Indiaanse Gezondheidsdienst vergoedde brillenaankoop ook maar één keer per jaar en had maar één model: van die lelijke, dikke, zwarte platieken.

Mijn hersenschade had ervoor gezorgd dat ik bijziend in het ene oog was en verziend in het andere, dus mijn lelijke bril stond schots en scheef, omdat m'n ogen zo schots en scheef waren.

Ik krijg hoofdpijn omdat mijn ogen een soort van vijanden zijn, alsof ze eerst getrouwd zijn geweest, maar elkaar nu niet meer kunnen uitstaan.

En ik kreeg een bril toen ik drie was, dus liep ik over het reservaat<sup>11</sup> als een driejarige, Indiaanse opa.

Oh, en ik was zó mager. Als ik zijwaarts keerde, verdween ik gewoon.

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<sup>8</sup> In The Netherlands you would go to the 'huisartsenpost' or the doctor. Yet, the Indian Health Service is an actual service that should not be naturalised to The Netherlands.

<sup>9</sup> Emphasis through exclamation mark instead of italicizing.

<sup>10</sup> Dutch readers will probably not be familiar with the term Novocain, hence the hyperonym 'verdoving'.

<sup>11</sup> The first 'rez' is written in full, to help the readers understand that Junior is talking about the reservation. The other 'rez' occurrences have been preserved, since this is the typical way Junior talks about his home.



Maar m'n handen en voeten waren enorm. Mijn voeten hadden al maat 44 in groep vijf<sup>12</sup>! Met mijn grote voeten en potloodlichaam leek ik wel een wandelende hoofdletter L.

En m'n hoofd was enorm.

Kolossaal.

Mijn hoofd was zo groot dat er kleine Indiaanse hoofdjes in een baan omheen cirkelden. Sommige kinderen noemden me Planeet<sup>13</sup>. Andere kinderen noemden me gewoon Globe. De pestkoppen pakten me beet, draaiden me rond en rond, legden hun vinger op mijn hoofd en zeiden, "Daar wil ik naartoe."

Het is dus wel duidelijk dat ik er nogal sullig uitzag aan de buitenkant, maar het was de zoi aan de binnenkant die het ergst was.

Ten eerste had ik aanvallen. Minstens twee per week. Dus ik beschadigde mijn hersens met regelmaat. Maar het zat zo, ik kreeg die aanvallen omdat ik al hersenletsel had opgelopen, dus met elke aanval werden die wonden weer geopend.

Ja, elke keer als ik een aanval had, beschadigde ik mijn schade.

Ik heb al zeven jaar geen aanval meer gehad, maar de dokters zeggen dat ik "ontvankelijk voor epileptische activiteit" ben.

Ontvankelijk voor epileptische activiteit.

Klinkt dat niet lekker poëtisch?<sup>14</sup>

Ook stotterde en sliste ik. Of misschien moet ik zeggen, ook st-t-t-t-st-t-totterde en shhlishhhte ik.

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<sup>12</sup> Grade 3 = groep vijf

<sup>13</sup> Orbit has no Dutch equivalent, therefore I chose 'Planeet', since planets orbit around the sun.

<sup>14</sup> 'Rollen over de tong' is not common Dutch, therefore I changed the sentence into a colloquial sounding sentence with a similar effect.

Je zou niet denken dat spraakgebrek levensbedreigend is, maar serieus, er bestaat geen groter gevaar dan een stotterend en slissend kind zijn.

Een vijfjarige is schattig als hij slist en stottert. Sterker nog, de meeste kindacteurs zijn door hun geslis en gestotter beroemd geworden.

En zelfs als je een stotterende en slissende zes-, zeven- of achtjarige bent, is het nog schattig, maar dat is allemaal voorbij zodra je negen of tien wordt.

Dan zorgen je gestotter en geslis ervoor dat je een mongool wordt.

En als je veertien bent, zoals ik, en je nog steeds stottert en slist, dan wordt je de grootste mongool ter wereld.

Iedereen op het rez noemt me zo'n twee keer per dag een mongool. Ze noemen me een mongool als ze voor de lol m'n broek naar beneden trekken, wanneer ze mijn hoofd in de toiletpot steken of wanneer ze me gewoon op m'n hoofd slaan.

Ik schrijf dit verhaal niet eens op zoals ik praat, want dan zou ik het moeten vullen met gestotter en geslis en dan zou je je afvragen waarom je überhaupt<sup>15</sup> een verhaal leest dat door zo'n ongelooflijke<sup>16</sup> mongool is geschreven.

Weet je wat er gebeurt met mongolen op 't rez?

We worden in elkaar geslagen.

Minstens één keer per maand.

Jep, ik hoor bij de Blauwe-Oog-van-de-Maand Club.

Natuurlijk wil ik wel naar buiten. Elk kind wil naar buiten. Maar het is veiliger om thuis te blijven. Dus zit ik meestal in m'n eentje op m'n kamer en lees boeken en teken cartoons<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Added for to preserve the tone of the text.

<sup>16</sup> Added for emphasis. The original text is italicized.

Hier is er een van mijzelf:

[Ik in volle glorie]

[De k-k-kat k-k-krabt...]

Ik teken altijd.

Ik maak cartoons over mijn moeder en vader, mijn zus en oma, mijn beste vriend, Rowdy<sup>18</sup>, en alle anderen op 't rez.

Ik teken omdat woorden te onvoorspelbaar zijn.

Ik teken omdat woorden te beperkt zijn.

Als je praat en schrijft in het Engels, of het Spaans, Chinees, of in welke taal dan ook, dan is er maar een bepaald<sup>19</sup> percentage mensen dat jouw betekenis zal begrijpen.

Maar als je een plaatje tekent, kan iedereen het begrijpen.

Als ik een bloemetje teken, dan kan elke man, vrouw en elk kind ter wereld die het ziet, zeggen: "Dat is een bloem."

[[ ... Hou van me!

... 'Naaldboomgedichten'<sup>20</sup>]]

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<sup>17</sup> 'Cartoon' has more meanings in English than in Dutch, but almost all of Junior's drawings are cartoons (spotprenten), it is the right term in Dutch as well.

<sup>18</sup> Rowdy = lawaaischopper/rouwdouw(er), ruw/wild/ordeloos  
This name describes his personality, or character trait.  
Rouwdouw = ruw persoon

<sup>19</sup> Added for clearer meaning.

Dus ik teken omdat ik de wereld wat te zeggen heb<sup>21</sup>. En ik wil dat de wereld naar me luistert.<sup>22</sup>

Met een pen in mijn hand voel ik me belangrijk.<sup>23</sup> Dan heb ik het gevoel dat ik misschien wel een belangrijk iemand zal worden. Een kunstenaar. Misschien een beroemde kunstenaar. Misschien wel een rijke kunstenaar.

Het is de enige manier waarop ik rijk en beroemd kan worden.

Kijk maar om je heen. Bijna alle getinte rijke en beroemde mensen zijn artiesten. Het zijn zangers en acteurs en schrijvers en dansers en regisseurs en dichters.

Dus ik teken omdat ik het idee heb dat het mijn enige kans zou kunnen zijn om uit het reservaat te ontsnappen.

Ik zie de wereld als een reeks gebroken dammen en overstromingen, en mijn tekeningetjes zijn kleine reddingsbootjes.<sup>24</sup>

### *Waarom kip zoveel voor me betekent*

\*

Oké, dus nu weet je dat ik een cartoonist ben. En ik vind dat ik er best goed in ben. Maar hoe goed ik ook ben, mijn cartoons zullen nooit de plek van eten of geld innemen. Ik zou willen

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<sup>20</sup> 'Dennenboom' has a strong connotation of Christmas, 'naaldboom' is a more general term.

<sup>21</sup> Sentence structure slightly changed to enhance tone.

<sup>22</sup> 'pay attention to me' has been changed into 'listen to me', since 'aandacht hebben voor' would create a weird sentence in Dutch.

<sup>23</sup> Sentence structure change to make meaning clearer.

<sup>24</sup> Tiny little = double, kleine bootjes = double as well

dat ik een boterham met pindakaas en jam<sup>25</sup> of een handjevol twintigdollar<sup>26</sup> briefjes zou kunnen tekenen en dat ik dan de een of andere magische truc kon doen waardoor het echt zou worden. Maar dat kan ik niet. Niemand kan dat, zelfs de hongerigste tovenaars ter wereld niet.

Ik zou willen dat ik magisch krachten had, maar ik ben maar gewoon een rete-arm<sup>27</sup> reservaatkind dat met zijn rete-arme familie op het rete-arme Spokane Indianenreservaat woont.

Weet je wat het ergste is aan arm zijn? Ach, misschien heb je het rekensommetje al wel bedacht:

*Armoede = lege koelkast + lege maag*

En ja, soms mist mijn familie wel eens een maaltijd en is slaap het enige wat we als avondeten krijgen, maar ik weet dat er een moment komt waarop mijn ouders de deur binnen komen vallen met een emmer Kentucky Fried Chicken.

Volgens origineel recept.

En het gekke is dat honger ervoor zorgt dat eten beter smaakt. Er bestaat niets beters dan een kippenpoot als je al zo'n<sup>28</sup> achttien-en-een-half uur niets meer gegeten hebt. En geloof me, een goed stuk kip kan iedereen doen geloven in het bestaan van God.

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<sup>25</sup> Since a peanut butter and jelly sandwich is a typical American snack, this is preserved to maintain the American setting. A Dutch equivalent could be peanut butter and chocolate sprinkles sandwich but this snack wouldn't fit in the American setting.

<sup>26</sup> 'Dollar' has been preserved, since the story is set in America and in this case it does not really matter whether the reader knows exactly how much money Junior is referring to, the context makes clear that he would like a handful of money.

<sup>27</sup> Poor-ass means not having money to get a car or petrol or even a bus ticket. It's slang and since there is no Dutch equivalent I came up with the somewhat literal translation 'rete-arm'.

[De lijkwade van Kentucky Fried]

Dus honger is niet het ergste aan arm zijn.

En nu vraag je zeker, “Oké, oké, meneer Hongerige Kunstenaar, meneer de Praatjesmaker<sup>29</sup>, meneer Ach-en-Wee, meneer Geheim Recept, wat is het ergste aan arm zijn?

Oké, ik zal je het ergste vertellen.

Vorige week werd mijn beste vriend Oscar heel erg ziek.

Eerst dacht ik dat hij gewoon uitgeput was van de hitte. Het was namelijk<sup>30</sup> een ontzettend hete dag in juli (meer dan 35 graden en een luchtvochtigheid van 90 procent) en heel wat mensen vielen om van de hitte, dus waarom niet een klein hondje met een bontjas aan?

Ik probeerde hem wat water te geven, maar hij wilde niks.

Hij lag op z'n bedje met rode, waterige, snotterige oogjes. Hij jammerde van de pijn.

Toen ik hem aanraakte, jankte hij als een gek.

Het leek wel of zijn zenuwen tien centimeter<sup>31</sup> uit z'n huid staken.

Ik dacht dat het na wat rust wel beter zou gaan, maar toen begon hij over te geven en de<sup>32</sup> diaree spoot er aan de andere kant uit en hij had aanvallen waarbij zijn kleine pootjes alleen maar schopten en schopten en schopten.

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<sup>29</sup> 'Mouth-full-of-words' is similar to 'praatjesmaker'

<sup>30</sup> 'namelijk' has taken the place of 'I mean' since the latter is a typical English construction.

<sup>31</sup> Dutch teenager hard to iets voorstellen bij 3 inch... Three inches = 7,6 cm, rounded up to a whole number this is 8 or 10.

<sup>32</sup> Added

En ja, Oscar was dan maar een geadopteerd straathondje, maar hij was het enige levende wezen dat ik kon vertrouwen. Hij was betrouwbaarder dan mijn ouders, oma, tantes, ooms, neefjes en nichtjes en grote zus. Hij heeft me meer geleerd dan welke leraar dan ook.

Serius, Oscar was een beter persoon dan welk mens dat ik ooit gekend had.

“Mam,” zei ik. “Oscar moet naar de dierenarts<sup>33</sup>.”

“Hij wordt wel weer beter,” antwoordde ze.

Maar ze loog. Haar ogen worden in het midden altijd donkerder als ze liegt. Ze was een Spokane Indiaan en slecht in liegen, wat niet logisch was. Wij Indianen zouden echt betere leugenaars moeten zijn als je kijkt naar hoe vaak er tegen ons gelogen is.

“Hij is heel erg ziek, mam,” zei ik. “Hij gaat dood als we hem niet naar de dokter brengen.”

Ze keek me aandachtig aan. Haar<sup>34</sup> ogen waren niet langer donker, dus ik wist dat ze me de waarheid zou vertellen. En geloof me, er zijn momenten waarop de waarheid het laatste is dat je wilt horen.

“Junior, lieverd,” zei moeder. “Het spijt me, maar we hebben geen geld voor Oscar.”

“Ik betaal je terug,” antwoordde ik. “Dat beloof ik.”

“Schat, het gaat honderden dollars kosten, misschien zelfs duizend.”

“Ik zal de dokter terug betalen. Ik zal een baantje zoeken.”

Moeder glimlachte verdrietig en gaf me een stevige knuffel.

Tjemig, hoe stom kon ik zijn? Wat voor baantje kan een Indiaans reservatenkind krijgen? Ik was te jong om blackjack te dealen in het casino, er waren maar zo’n vijftien

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<sup>33</sup> Just like in the source text, first ‘dierenarts’ (vet), later ‘dokter’ (doctor).

<sup>34</sup> ‘And’ omitted/deleted, since it is not usual to start Dutch sentences with ‘en’.

groene gazons op het reservaat (en geen van de eigenaren besteedde het maaien daarvan uit) en de enige krantenroute stond op naam van een stamoudste genaamd Wally. En hij moest maar vijftig kranten rondbrengen, dus die baan was meer een hobby.

Er was niets dat ik kon doen om Oscar te redden.

Niets.

Niets.

Niets.

Dus lag ik uren naast hem op de vloer en aaide over zijn kopje en fluisterde zijn naam.

Toen kwam vader thuis van weet ik veel waar vandaan en had één van die lange gesprekken met moeder, en toen besloten ze iets zonder mij.

Vader haalde zijn geweer en kogels uit de kast tevoorschijn.

“Junior,” zei hij. “Draag Oscar naar buiten.”

“Nee!” schreeuwde ik.

“Hij lijdt,” zei vader. “We moeten hem helpen.”

“Nee, dat kun je niet doen!” riep ik.

Ik wilde mijn vader in zijn gezicht slaan. Ik wilde hem een flinke knal op zijn neus geven en ervoor zorgen dat hij zou bloeden. Ik wilde hem in zijn ogen slaan en hem blind maken. Ik wilde hem in zijn ballen trappen zodat hij buiten westen zou raken.

Ik was ontzettend kwaad. Vulkaankwaad. Tsunamikwaad.

Mijn vader keek me aan met de droevigste blik in zijn ogen/ontzettend droevig aan. Hij huilde. Hij leek zwak.

Ik wilde hem haten voor zijn zwakheid.

Ik wilde mijn ouders haten voor onze armoede.



Ik wilde hen de schuld geven voor mijn zieke hond en voor alle andere ziektes op aarde.

Maar ik kan mijn ouders niet de schuld geven voor onze armoede, omdat mijn moeder en vader de twee zonnen zijn waar ik omheen draai en mijn wereld zou exploderen zonder hen.

En mijn ouders werden echt niet rijk geboren. Het is niet zo dat ze hun familierijkdommen hebben vergokt. Mijn ouders stammen af van arme mensen, die afstammen van arme mensen, die afstammen van arme mensen, helemaal terug tot de eerste arme mensen.

Adam en Eva bedekten hun edele delen met vijgenbladeren; de eerste Indianen bedekten hun edele delen met hun kleine handen.

Ik weet heus wel dat mijn moeder en vader hun dromen hadden toen ze kinderen waren. Ze droomden ervan om iets anders dan arm te zijn, maar ze kregen nooit de kans om iets te worden, omdat niemand aandacht aan hun dromen schonk.

Mocht ze de kans gehad hebben, dan zou mijn moeder zijn gaan studeren. Ze verslindt nog steeds boeken. Ze koopt ze bij het depot. En ze onthoudt alles wat ze leest.

[Wie mijn ouders zouden zijn als iemand aandacht aan hun dromen had geschonken:

modieuze bob (\$50 bij Vidal Sassoon!)

intellectuele bril (verhoog uw IQ met 20 punten!)

zakelijk mantelpakje

sociologie, psychologie, redenaarskunst

schoenen passen perfect!

Spokane Falls Community College Docent van het jaar 1992-98

gave hoed

zonnebril

wit overhemd (van de K-mart, want hij houdt niet van uitsloven)

pied-de-poule broek (echte vintage, op eBay gekocht)

glimmende zwarte laarzen (maatje te klein, maar gedragen door Miles Davis!)

De op vier na beste Jazz Saxofoonspeler ten westen van de Mississippi]

Ze kan hele pagina's uit haar hoofd opzeggen. Ze is een wandelende taperecorder. Echt waar, mijn moeder kan in vijftien minuten de krant lezen en me vertellen wat de baseball scores zijn, de locaties van de verschillende oorlogen, de laatste persoon die de loterij heeft gewonnen en de hoge temperaturen in Des Moines in Iowa.

Had hij de kans gehad, dan zou mijn vader muzikant zijn geworden. Als hij dronken is, zingt hij oude countryliedjes. En ook blues. En hij klinkt goed. Als een prof. Alsof hij op de radio thuishoort. Hij speelt gitaar en een klein beetje piano. En hij heeft een oude saxofoon uit de tijd dat hij op de middelbare school zat, die hij altijd mooi schoon en glanzend houdt, alsof hij elk moment bij een band kan gaan.

Maar wij, reservaatindianen, kunnen onze dromen niet realiseren. Zulke kansen krijgen we niet. Of keuzes. We zijn alleen arm. En daar is alles mee gezegd<sup>35</sup>.

Het is vreselijk<sup>36</sup> om arm te zijn, en het is vreselijk om het gevoel te hebben dat je het op de een of andere manier verdient om arm te zijn. Je begint te geloven dat je arm bent,

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<sup>35</sup> Changed sentence, similar effect.

omdat je stom en lelijk bent. En dan begin je te geloven dat je stom en lelijk bent, omdat je een Indiaan bent. En omdat je een Indiaan bent, begin je te geloven dat het voorbestemd is om arm te zijn. Het is een nare negatieve spiraal en er is niets wat je ertegen kunt doen.

Armoede geeft je geen kracht en leert je geen lessen over doorzettingsvermogen. Nee, armoede leert je alleen hoe je arm moet zijn.

Dus, arm en<sup>37</sup> klein en zwak, pakte ik Oscar op. Hij likte mijn gezicht omdat hij van me hield en me vertrouwde. Ik droeg hem naar het gazon en legde hem onder onze groene appelboom.

“Ik hou van je, Oscar,” zei ik.

Hij keek naar me en ik zweer je dat hij begreep wat er zou gaan gebeuren. Hij wist wat m'n vader zou doen. Maar Oscar was niet bang. Hij was opgelucht.

Maar ik niet.

Ik rende zo snel en hard mogelijk weg.

Ik wilde harder rennen dan het geluid, maar niemand, in hoeveel pijn ze ook verkeren, kan zo hard rennen. Dus ik hoorde de knal van mijn vaders geweer toen hij mijn beste vriend neerschoot.

Een kogel kost maar een paar cent, en iedereen kan dat betalen.

### *Wraak is zoet*<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Toned down.

<sup>37</sup> Alexie uses many 'ands' when he enumerates, instead of comma's. Even though it is unusual to use several 'en's' in a row in Dutch, it seems to be part of Alexie's style. Hence, the use of 'en', instead of comma's. It ... emphasis.

\*

Na Oscars dood werd ik zo depressief dat ik eraan dacht onder de grond te kruipen en voor altijd te verdwijnen.

Maar Rowdy weerhield me daarvan.

“Alsof iemand het merkt als je verdwijnt,” zei hij, “Je kunt maar beter even volhouden.”

Ja, liefde is hard, maar hij heeft het beste met me voor.<sup>39</sup>

Rowdy is het stoerste kind van het reservaat. Hij is lang en slank<sup>40</sup> en sterk als een slang.

Zijn hart is ook sterk en gemeen als een slang.

Maar hij is mijn beste mensenvriend en hij geeft om me, dus hij zal me altijd de waarheid vertellen.

En hij heeft gelijk. Niemand zou me missen als ik weg was.

Nou ja, Rowdy zou me missen, maar hij zou nooit toegeven dat hij me miste. Hij is veel te stoer voor dat soort emotie.

Maar naast Rowdy en mijn ouders en zus en oma, zou niemand me missen.

Ik ben een nul op het rez. En als je nul min nul doet, dan heb je nog steeds nul. Dus wat is het nut van aftrekken als er telkens hetzelfde antwoord uitkomt?

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<sup>38</sup> Since we don't have middle names in The Netherlands, the title 'Revenge is my middle name' doesn't really make sense. This chapter is about revenge and the expression 'Wraak is zoet' suits the chapter perfectly.

<sup>39</sup> Cruel to be kind; streng maar rechtvaardig, de harde waarheid, liefde is hard, om je eigen bestwil... Many possibilities but not the right one.

<sup>40</sup> Dictionary says 'mager' for 'lean', this is not the right translation though, since 'mager' tends to be a negative term and lean is a positive one. 'long and lean and strong'; has alliteration and rhyme, 'lang en slank en sterk' has alliteration and rhyme as well, though in another order. It is unclear if Alexie did this on purpose, but since he is first and foremost a poet, one can never be too careful.

Dus blijf ik volhouden.

Ik moet wel, denk ik, vooral omdat Rowdy een van de ergste zomers van zijn leven heeft.

Zijn vader drinkt veel en deelt veel klappen uit, dus lopen Rowdy en zijn moeder altijd met gekneusde en bebloede gezichten rond.

“Het is oorlogsverf,” zegt Rowdy altijd. “Het zorgt er alleen maar voor dat ik er nog stoerder uitzie.”

En ik denk dat het hem inderdaad stoerder maakt, omdat Rowdy nooit probeert zijn wonden te verbergen. Hij loopt over het reservaat met een blauw oog en een gespleten lip.

Vanmorgen kwam hij ons huis binnengehinkt, zakte neer in een stoel, gooide zijn verstuipte knie op de tafel en grijnsde.

Hij had een verband om zijn linker oor.

“Wat is er met je hoofd gebeurd?” vroeg ik.

“Vader zei dat ik niet luisterde,” antwoordde Rowdy. “Dus toen hij weer teveel had gedronken<sup>41</sup>, probeerde hij mijn oor een beetje groter te maken.”

Mijn vader en moeder drinken ook veel, maar ze worden er niet gemeen van. Helemaal niet. Soms negeren ze me. Soms schreeuwen ze tegen me. Maar ze hebben me nog nooit, echt nog nooit, geslagen. Ik heb nog niet eens een tik gekregen. Echt. Ik denk dat mijn moeder soms wel eens zin heeft om uit te halen en me een mep te verkopen, maar mijn vader staat dat niet toe.

Hij gelooft niet in fysieke straffen, hij gelooft in ijskoud staren net zolang tot ik van buiten en binnen een ijsklontje ben geworden.

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<sup>41</sup> Changed sentence structure.

Mijn huis is een veilige plaats, dus brengt Rowdy zijn meeste tijd bij<sup>42</sup> ons door. Hij is net familie, een extra broer en zoon.

“Wil je naar de powwow?” vroeg Rowdy.

“Neuh,” antwoordde ik.

De Spokane stam houdt hun jaarlijkse powwowviering tijdens het Labor Day weekend. Dit was de 127<sup>e</sup> jaarlijkse viering en er zou gezang zijn, en krijgsdansen, gokken, verhalen vertellen, gelach, *fry bread*<sup>43</sup>, hamburgers, hot dogs, kunst<sup>44</sup>, en veel geknok door de alcohol.

Ik had daar geen zin in.

Oh, het dansen en zingen is leuk. Supermooi<sup>45</sup> eigenlijk, maar ik ben bang voor al de Indianen die geen dansers of zangers zijn. Die ritmeloze, talentloze, toonloze Indianen lopen de meeste kans om dronken te worden en de beschikbare losers<sup>46</sup> eens flink te grazen te nemen.

En ik ben altijd de meest beschikbare loser.

“Kom op,” zei Rowdy, “ik zal je wel beschermen.”

Hij wist dat ik bang was dat ik in elkaar geslagen zou worden. En hij wist ook dat hij waarschijnlijk voor me zou moeten vechten.

Rowdy heeft me beschermd sinds we geboren zijn.

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<sup>42</sup> Added.

<sup>43</sup> Indian snack.

<sup>44</sup> Kunst en ambacht/kunstnijverheid/ambachtskunst; those are not really words a teenager would use.

<sup>45</sup> ‘mooi’ is weaker than the original, hence the addition ‘super-’.

<sup>46</sup> Preserved; loser seems to be a more popular term than the Dutch equivalent ‘sukkel’.

We werden beiden deze wereld in geperst op 5 november 1992, in het Sacred Heart Ziekenhuis in Spokane. Ik ben twee uur ouder dan Rowdy. Ik kwam helemaal gebroken en gedraaid ter wereld, hij kwam kwaad ter wereld.

Hij was altijd aan het huilen en schreeuwen en schoppen en slaan.

Hij beet in de borst van zijn moeder toen ze hem probeerde te voeden. Hij bleef maar bijten, dus gaf ze het op en gaf hem flesvoeding.

Hij is sinds die tijd niet veel veranderd.

Nou ja, hij rent met veertien jaar niet meer als borstenbijter rond, maar hij slaat en schopt en spuugt nog steeds.

Zijn eerste gevecht had hij in de kleuterschool. Hij nam het op tegen drie kinderen uit groep drie tijdens een sneeuwballengevecht, omdat een van hen een ijsbal had gegooid.

Rowdy had ze vrij snel buiten westen geslagen.

En toen sloeg hij de leerkracht die het gevecht kwam stoppen.

Hij had de leerkracht geen pijn gedaan, helemaal niet, maar man, wat was die vent boos!

“Wat heb jij?” riep hij.

“Alles!” schreeuwde Rowdy terug.

Rowdy vocht met iedereen.

Hij vocht met jongens en meisjes.

Mannen en vrouwen.

Hij vocht met zwerfhonden.

Hij vocht zelfs<sup>47</sup> met het weer.

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<sup>47</sup> ‘Hell’ is a word that is not used the same way in Dutch. Adding ‘zelfs’ to the sentence creates a phrase with the same tenor.

Dan deelde hij rake klappen uit aan de regen.

Echt waar.

“Kom op, watje,” zei Rowdy. “Laten we naar de powwow gaan. Je kunt je niet voor altijd in je huis blijven verstoppen. Straks verander je nog in de een of andere trol of zo.”

“Maar wat als iemand me te grazen neemt?” vroeg ik.

“Dan neem ik hen te grazen.”

“Wat als iemand het gras onder m’n voeten te grazen neemt?” vroeg ik.

“Dan graas ik lekker mee,” antwoordde Rowdy.<sup>48</sup>

“Je bent mijn held,” zei ik.

“Kom naar de powwow,” zei Rowdy. “Alsjeblieft.”

Het wil heel wat zeggen als Rowdy beleefd is.

“Oké, oké,” antwoordde ik.

Dus liepen Rowdy en ik de vijf kilometer<sup>49</sup> naar de powwowplek. Het was donker, misschien een uur of acht en de drummers en zangers klonken luid en schitterend.

Ik kreeg er zin in. Maar ik raakte ook onderkoeld.

De Spokane powwow is overdag snikheet en ‘s nachts ijskoud.

“Ik had mijn jas mee moeten nemen,” verzuchtte ik.

“Stel je niet aan,” antwoordde Rowdy.

“Laten we naar de kippendansers gaan,” zei ik.

Ik vind de kippendansers cool want, nou ja, ze dansen als kippen. En je weet ondertussen al wel hoeveel ik van kip houd.

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<sup>48</sup> Similar pun.

<sup>49</sup> ‘miles’ have been replaced by kilometres to prevent misunderstandings.



[Kraaloojjes

Halskwab

Onbruikbare vleugels

Dikke buik

Dunne beentjes]

“Wat een saaie bende,” zei Rowdy.

“We blijven gewoon eventjes kijken,” zei ik. “En dan gaan we wel gokken of zo.”

“Oké,” antwoordde Rowdy. Hij is de enige persoon die naar me luistert.

We zigzagden tussen de geparkeerde auto’s, busjes, SUV’s, campers, plastic tenten en tipi’s van hertenvel.

“Hey, zullen we wat illegale whisky gaan halen,” zei Rowdy, “ ik heb vijf dollar.”

“Niet dronken worden,” zei ik. “Daar word je alleen maar lelijk van.”

“Ik ben al lelijk,” antwoordde Rowdy.

Hij lachte, struikelde over een tentstok en knalde tegen een busje op. Hij stootte zijn hoofd tegen een raam en botste met zijn schouder tegen de zijspiegel<sup>50</sup>.

Het was nogal grappig, dus ik lachte.

Dat had ik beter niet kunnen doen.

Rowdy werd boos.

Hij duwde me naar de grond en gaf me bijna een trap. Hij zwaaide z’n been mijn kant uit, maar trok hem op het laatste moment terug. Ik kon zien dat hij me pijn wilde doen,

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<sup>50</sup> Rearview mirror can be a ‘achteruitkijkspiegel’ (inside the car) or a ‘zijspiegel’ or ‘buitenspiegel’. Since it would be hard to walk into a ‘achteruitkijkspiegel’ zij- or buitenspiegel is the more appropriate term here.

omdat ik had gelachen. Maar ik ben zijn vriend, z'n enige vriend. Hij kon me geen pijn doen. Dus greep hij een vuilniszak met lege bierflesjes beet en smeed die richting het busje.

Glas vloog alle kanten uit.

Toen pakte Rowdy een schep die iemand had gebruikt om gaten voor de barbecues te graven en nam het busje te grazen. Sloeg het volledig aan stukken.

Klets! Boem! Bam!<sup>51</sup>

Hij maakte deuken in de deuren, sloeg de ramen kapot en ramde de spiegels eraf.

Ik werd bang van Rowdy en was bang om in de gevangenis te belanden voor vandalisme, dus ik rende er vandoor.

Dat had ik beter niet kunnen doen.

Ik rende regelrecht het kamp van de Andruss broers binnen. De Andruss<sup>52</sup> broers – John, Jim and Joe – zijn de wreedste drieling die er in de geschiedenis van de wereld heeft bestaan.

“Hé, kijk,” zei een van hen. “Als dat Aqua Hoofd niet is.”

Ja, die eikels maakten grappen over mijn hersenaandoening. Aardig, hè?

“Neuh, hij's geen Aqua<sup>53</sup>,” zei een van de andere broers, “Hij is Aquanormaal.”

Wie dat zei weet ik niet. Ik kon ze niet uit elkaar houden. Ik besloot weer weg te rennen, maar een van hem greep me beet en duwde me naar een andere broer toe. Alledrie duwden ze me toen over en weer. Ze speelden vangbal met me.

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<sup>51</sup> Onomatopoeias differ per language. Preserving English examples as ‘Smash’ and ‘Boom’ will distract readers. “When considering how to address the examples of onomatopoeia in the text it is arguably not appropriate to retain foreign expressions. For these markers translators are more likely to follow the textual conventions and linguistic norms of the target culture” (Pascua-Febles 117). ‘Boom’ is usually maintained, though with a change of spelling (Boem). ‘Smash’ however, has many possible translations: Klets, Bats, Klatsj, etc.

<sup>52</sup> Typical American language use, preserved.

<sup>53</sup> Because puns like ‘hydro-and-low’ and ‘hydro-and-see’ are untranslatable, a similar joke is created with ‘aqua’.

“Aquametrie”

“Aquaduct.”

“Aquamarijn”

“Aquarel.”

“Aquadriljoen”

“Aquaadaardig.”

“Aquacadabra”<sup>54</sup>

Ik viel op de grond. Een van de broers sjarde me overeind, klopte me af en gaf me een knietje.

Ik viel weer op de grond, hield mijn gevoelige kruis vast, en probeerde niet te schreeuwen.

De Andruss broers lachten en liepen weg.

Oh, had ik trouwens al verteld dat de gebroeders Andruss dertig jaar zijn?

Wat voor mannen slaan een veertienjarige jongen in elkaar?

Gigantische klootzakken.

Ik lag nog steeds op de grond, terwijl ik mijn noten zo voorzichtig vasthield als een eekhoorn zijn nootjes, toen Rowdy aan kwam lopen.

“Wie heeft dit gedaan?” vroeg hij.

“De Andruss broers.” antwoordde ik.

“Hebben ze je hoofd aangeraakt?” vroeg Rowdy. Hij weet dat mijn hersenen gevoelig zijn. Als die Andruss broers een gat in het aquarium in mijn hoofd hadden geslagen, had ik misschien de hele powwow onder water gezet.

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<sup>54</sup> Hydro refers to water, aqua is a different word for water. Since Dutch does not offer puns like ‘hydro-and-low’ with the word ‘hydro’, I chose ‘aqua’ to create a similar idea.

“Mijn hersenen zijn oké,” zei ik. “Maar mijn ballen gaan dood.”

“Ik ga die klootzakken vermoorden,” zei Rowdy.

Natuurlijk deed Rowdy dat niet, maar we verstopten ons in de buurt van het kamp van de Andruss broers tot drie uur 's nachts. Toen waggelden ze terug naar hun tent en vielen als blokken in slaap. Rowdy sloop naar binnen, scheerde hun wenkbrauwen af en knipte hun vlechten af.

Dat is zo'n beetje het ergste wat je een Indiaan kan aandoen. Het heeft hen jaren gekost om hun haar te laten groeien. En Rowdy knipte dat er in vijf seconden af.

Ik vond dat geniaal van Rowdy. Ik voelde me schuldig dat ik dat geniaal vond. Maar wraak voelt toch ook wel goed.

De Andruss broers zijn er nooit achtergekomen wie hun wenkbrauwen en haar heeft geknipt. Rowdy verspreidde het gerucht dat het een stel Makah Indianen uit het kustgebied waren geweest.

“Die walvissenjagers zijn niet te vertrouwen,” zei Rowdy. “Ze zijn tot alles in staat.”

Maar voordat je denkt dat Rowdy alleen maar goed is voor wraak, en het afrossen van busjes, regen en mensen, laat me iets leuks over hem vertellen: hij is dol op stripboeken.

Maar niet die over stoere superhelden als *Daredevil* of *X-Men*. Nee, hij leest van die kansloze oude als *Richie Rich* en *Archie* en *Casper het Vriendelijke Spookje*. Kinderspul. Hij houdt ze verborgen in een gat in de wand van de kast in zijn slaapkamer. Bijna elke dag ga ik naar zijn huis en lezen we samen die stripboeken.

Rowdy is geen snelle lezer, maar wel een volhouder. En hij blijft lachen en lachen om de domme grapjes, het maakt niet uit hoe vaak hij de strip al gelezen heeft.

Ik houd van het geluid van Rowdy's gelach. Ik hoor het niet vaak, maar het is altijd een soort lawine van ha-ha en ho-ho en hi-hi.

Ik vind het leuk om hem aan het lachen te maken. Hij houdt van mijn cartoons.

Hij is ook een grote, sullige dromer, net als ik. Hij houdt ervan om te doen alsof hij in de stripboeken leeft. Een nepleven in een strip is waarschijnlijk heel wat beter dan zijn echte leven.

Dus teken ik cartoons om hem blij te maken, om hem andere werelden te geven waarin hij kan leven.

Ik teken zijn dromen.

En hij praat alleen met mij over zijn dromen. En ik praat alleen met hem over mijn dromen.

Ik vertel hem mijn angsten.

Ik denk dat Rowdy de belangrijkste persoon in mijn leven is. Misschien zelfs nog belangrijker dan mijn familie. Kan je beste vriend belangrijker zijn dan je familie?

Ik denk van wel.

Ik bedoel, ik breng meer tijd met Rowdy door dan met wie dan ook.

Even rekenen.

Ik denk dat Rowdy en ik gemiddeld acht uur per dag samen hebben doorgebracht in de laatste veertien jaar.

Dat is acht uur keer 365 dagen keer veertien jaar.

Dat houdt in dat Rowdy en ik 40,880 uur in elkaars gezelschap hebben doorgebracht.

Niemand komt daar zelfs maar in de buurt.

Geloof me.

Rowdy en ik zijn onafscheidelijk.

## 5 Comparing Translations

In this chapter I will compare my translation with the existing translation by Aleid van Eekelen-Benders: *Dagboek van een halve indiaan* which has been published by Lemniscaat in 2008. I will do this according to the translation problems discussed in chapter three.

### 5.1 Cultural Specific Elements

Both translations have preserved the cultural specific elements where possible.

Differences can be found in the term 'fry bread'. I decided to preserve the English term, because it is a typical Native American snack and the literal translation 'gebakken brood' seemed to normal, since all bread is baked. Van Eekelen-Benders did translate this cultural dish with 'gebakken brood'. Even though the English term might work as a distraction, readers could look the term up on the internet and they will immediately find Indian recipes and stories about the bread, while the Dutch equivalent results in all sorts of baked bread and many recipes that have nothing to do with the Indian fry bread.

Besides many differences, the translations also show some interesting similarities.

For example, the choice to preserve the currency (dollar) but to naturalize the longitudinal measurements. In both translations three inches becomes 'tien centimeter' and three miles becomes '5 kilometer'.

## 5.2 Style

Van Eekelen-Benders has created natural Dutch. By adding words like 'dure' to 'doktersterm' (*DHI 7*), using words like 'hersenpan' (*DHI 7*) instead of 'schedel', 'openzaagden' (*DHI 7*) instead of 'opensneden', 'kil' (*DHI 17*) instead of 'koud', 'rechtstreeks gevolg' (*DHI 8*) and 'piepklein' (*DHI 7, 12*) she creates Dutch that sounds natural and to the point.

The text contains a lot of words like 'jeez', 'heck', 'hell' that enhance the tone of what is being said, but do not have clear Dutch equivalents. Both translations have deleted some of these words, for example 'jeez' (*DHI 7*), or came up with a word that would create a similar effect, 'jemig' or 'verdomd'. Sometimes rephrasing was the solution, with the addition of adverbs like 'zelfs' to create the same effect as the source text.

"It sucks to be poor" is how Junior describes his situation at a certain point in the book. Young people frequently use the slang term 'suck' to describe things or situations that are not good. A literal translation would be 'het zuigt', but this is only used in Dutch street language and not universal. 'Zwaar kloten' is the translation according to the dictionary, but this seems too rude for a young adult novel. I decided to translate this phrase as 'Het is vreselijk om arm te zijn', Van Eekelen-Benders chose 'beroerd'. Both translations are not slang, but have the same meaning as the original. For the slang term 'poor-ass' that junior uses to describe himself and his family, I came up with the Dutch slang term 'rete-arm'. This is not a frequently

used term, but the prefix 'rete-' is frequently used by young people in The Netherlands and 'rete-arm' is almost a literal translation of 'poor-ass' and the meaning is clear. Van Eekelen-Benders chose 'straatarm', which is the general term to describe very poor people.

I decided to preserve the term 'loser', since it is frequently used by Dutch teenagers and the Dutch equivalent 'sukkel' seems less popular nowadays. A retard is an offensive word for a stupid person. In my opinion young people in The Netherlands would use the word 'mongool'. 'Randdebiel' might be less offensive since it does not insult a mongol or Mongol, but it is not frequently used.

### 5.3 Dialogue

Both translations contain spoken language, witty remarks and quick replies. The use of Dutch in the dialogues is natural and credible. However, if there has to be a difference, the translation of Van Eekelen-Benders seems a bit more dated. As mentioned in the theory, youth language is characterized by its impermanent nature. My translation seems a bit closer to youth language today and sometimes sentences run smoother:

“‘Come on, you wuss,’ Rowdy said. ‘Let’s go to powwow. You can’t hide in your house forever. You’ll turn into some kind of troll or something.’” (ATD 18)



“‘Kom op, sukkel,’ zei hij nu. ‘Ga mee naar de powwow. Je kunt je niet eeuwig in huis blijven verstoppen. Dan verander je in een trol of zoiets.’” (*DHI 23*)

“ ‘Kom op, watje,’ zei Rowdy. ‘Laten we naar de powwow gaan. Je kunt je niet voor altijd in je huis blijven verstoppen. Straks verander je nog in de een of andere trol of zo.’”

A wuss is a person that is weak or lacks courage, ‘watje’ would be the Dutch equivalent. ‘Sukkel’ is used to describe an idiot. The quotes above show that I used more words to create a dialogue that is more natural. Van Eekelen-Benders’s translation is from 2008, which might also be the reason for some of the dated phrases. Another example of ‘smooth’ language can be found in the phrase: “I think the chicken dancers are cool because, well, they dance like chickens” (*ATD 19*). Van Eekelen-Benders translated this as follows: “Ik vind de kippendanser cool omdat ze, nou, als kippen dansen” (*DHI 23*). In my opinion, the following translation is more fluent and colloquial: “Ik vind de kippendansers cool want, nou ja, ze dansen als kippen.”

## 5.4 Wordplay, Idioms and Expressions

Several instances of wordplay have been discussed in chapter three. It became clear that Van Eekelen-Benders seems to have deviated more from the source text, where I stayed closer to the structures of the wordplay in the source text.

Expressions and idioms are almost never translated the same way and have sometimes even been interpreted differently. I interpreted the expression “She buys them by the pound” (*ATD* 11), about Junior’s mother who reads like crazy, literally and translated it with “Ze koopt ze bij het depot”. I chose this translation because Junior keeps describing his family as very poor, which means they won’t have a lot of money to spent on books. However, since his mother is a ‘crazy’ reader, Van Eekelen-Benders’ translation “Ze koopt ze met kilo’s tegelijk” would make more sense because it is a natural expression.

Another difficult expression to render into Dutch is ‘tough love’ which means ‘being cruel to be kind’. Van Eekelen-Benders translated this as “Is dat geen liefde in een stoer jasje?” (*DHI* 20) which does not convey the same meaning. My translation: “Ja, liefde is hard, maar hij heeft het beste met me voor” is more extensive, but has the same meaning as the original.

Alexie uses many different expressions for beating someone or something up: to get beat up, punch someone in the face, give a slap, beat the shit out of someone, pick on someone, beat the crap out of something. Some expressions are stronger than others. Van Eekelen-Benders seems to have come up with even more expressions in

Dutch: in elkaar geslagen worden, in zijn gezicht stompen, pak voor mijn broek krijgen, een tik geven, iemand lens slaan, een pak slag krijgen, iemand jennen, iemand op zijn kop zitten, een ongenadig pak slaag geven. Expressions as ‘iemand lens slaan’ might not be used frequently in Dutch, but the meaning is clear. Alexie used many expressions with beat, besides ‘in elkaar geslagen worden’, ‘iemand buiten westen slaan’ and ‘iets aan stukken slaan’ I used many phrases with ‘te grazen nemen’.

## 5.5 Striking differences

The first striking difference between the translations is the title. Where Van Eekelen-Benders chose a shorter version of the original title, I decided to maintain the original length. Van Eekelen-Benders replaced part-time by ‘half’. I preserved the term, since Junior explains this last half of the title when he compares his identity as an Indian to a part-time job. Although ‘absolutely true’ might sound more natural in English than ‘werkelijk waar’ does in Dutch, both titles are long and somewhat exaggerated, to try and draw readers to the book. This phrase might also indicate the semi-autobiographic features of the book.

The first page contains the phrase: “Okay, so that’s not exactly true” (*ATD* 1). Van Eekelen-Benders translated this with the natural sounding: ‘Nou ja, dat klopt niet helemaal’ (*DHI* 7). My translation reads: ‘Nou ja, dat is niet helemaal waar.’ I decided to translate this sentence literally to enable the link between this phrase and the title.

Another striking difference is the style of enumerations. I chose to preserve Alexie's style, who uses the conjunction 'and' over and over again: "But jeez, did my mother and father and big sister and grandma and cousins and aunts and uncles think it was funny when the doctors cut open my little skull and sucked out all that extra water with some tiny vacuum?" (*ATD* 2) Since this frequently occurs and seems to be part of Junior's language, I used 'en' in my translation instead of comma's: "Maar jemig, dachten mijn vader en moeder en grote zus en oma en neven en nichten en tantes en ooms dat het grappig was..." Van Eekelen-Benders applied the Dutch spelling rules and used comma's instead: "Maar vonden mijn vader en moeder, grote zus, oma, neven, nichten, ooms en tantes het soms grappig..." (*DHI* 7).

Page nine contains an interesting example of Junior's language. This is one of the many occurrences where he talks directly to his audience: the reader. "And now I'm sure you're asking, 'Okay, okay, Mr. Hunger Artist, Mr. Mouth-Full-of-Words, Mr. Woe-Is-Me, Mr. Secret Recipe, what is the worst thing about being poor?'" (*ATD* 9) In this sentence, Junior gives himself four names. Van Eekelen-Benders' translation reads: "En nu vraag je vast en zeker: 'Oké, oké, meneer de Hongerkunstenaar, meneer Mondvolwoorden, meneer Owatbenikzielig, wat is dan het ergste van arm zijn?'" (*DHI* 14) and I translated the sentence as: "En nu vraag je zeker, 'Oké, oké, meneer Hongerige Kunstenaar, meneer de Praatjesmaker<sup>55</sup>, meneer Ach-en-Wee, meneer Geheim Recept, wat is het ergste aan arm zijn?'" The phrase 'mouth full of words' reminded me of a Dutch expression: 'mond vol tanden'. This expression has a

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<sup>55</sup> 'Mouth-full-of-words' is similar to 'praatjesmaker'

completely opposite meaning, though, so would not be usable. I interpreted the phrase as describing a person who has airs, a person who has a lot to talk about. Such a person would be a 'praatjesmaker' in Dutch, hence my translation. Van Eekelen-Benders translated this phrase literally. The last name, Mr. Secret Recipe, has been left out in the translation of Van Eekelen-Benders, whether she was aware of this or not, I do not know.

## 5.6 Interesting similarities

The sentence structure of "I feel important with a pen in my hand" (*ATD* 6) has been changed in both translations by changing the word order: "Met een pen in mijn hand voel ik me belangrijk."

Another interesting example of similarity is the sentence "She still reads books like crazy" (*ATD* 11). Both translations read: "Ze verslindt nog steeds boeken." Since this is an expression used to describe people who read a lot of books, this is a good translation for reading books like crazy.

## 5.7 Concluding Remarks

Translating a novel for young adults sounds easier than it is. Even though young adult literature has not been taken seriously as an academic subject, these works contain translation problems that do not offer clear-cut solutions. To translate Alexie Sherman for young people from The Netherlands, the translator should have

foreignization as a translation strategy to preserve the cultural elements and to be able to create a story by Sherman Alexie.

Aleid van Eekelen-Benders has created a Dutch text that sounds natural and to the point where my translation could sometimes use a better choice of words. However, my translation contains expressions and puns that are closer to the effect of the source text than Van Eekelen-Benders' solutions.

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- PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction for *War Dances*, 2010
- Native Writers' Circle of the Americas Lifetime Achievement Award, 2010
- Puterbaugh Award", the first American Puterbaugh fellow
- California Young Reader Medal for *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*



## Appendix 3 – Eimouttaheer

I didn't understand. Why would you try out for a basketball team if you didn't want to run?

I didn't mind. After all, that meant only twelve more guys had to be cut. I only had to be better than twelve other guys.

Well, we were good and tired after that run.

And then Coach immediately had us playing full-court ones-and-ones.

That's right.

FULL-COURT ONE-ON-ONE.

That was torture.

Coach didn't break it down by position. So quiet guards had to guard power forwards, and vice versa. Seniors had to guard freshmen, and vice versa. All-stars had to guard losers like me, and vice versa.

Coach threw me the ball and said, "Go."

So I turned and dribbled straight down the court.

A mistake.

Roger easily poked the ball away and raced down toward his basket.

Ashamed, I was frozen.

"What are you waiting for?" Coach asked me. "Play some D."

Awake, I ran after Roger, but he dived it before I was even close.

"Go again," Coach said.

This time, Roger tried to dribble down the court. And I played defense. I crouched down low, spread my arms, and legs high and wide, and gritted my teeth.

And then Roger ran me over, just sent me sprawling.

He raised down and dunked it again while I lay still on the floor.

Coach walked over and locked down at me.

"There are forty of you. But we only have room for twelve on the varsity and twelve on the junior varsity."

I knew I wouldn't make those teams. I was C-squad material, for sure.

"In other years, we've also had a twelve-man C-squad," Coach said. "But we don't have the budget for it this year. That means I'm going to have to cut sixteen players today."

Twenty boys pulled up their chests. They knew they were good enough to make either the varsity or the junior varsity.

The other twenty shook their heads. We knew we were untable.

"I really hate to do this," Coach said. "If it were up to me, I'd keep everybody. But it's not up to me. So we're just going to have to do our best here, okay? You play with dignity and respect, and I'll treat you with dignity and respect, no matter what happens, okay?"

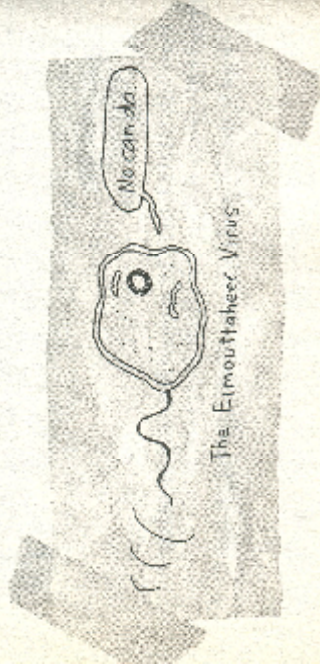
We all agreed to that.

"Okay, let's get started," Coach said.

The first drill was a marathon. Well, not exactly a marathon. We had to run one hundred laps around the gym. So forty of us ran.

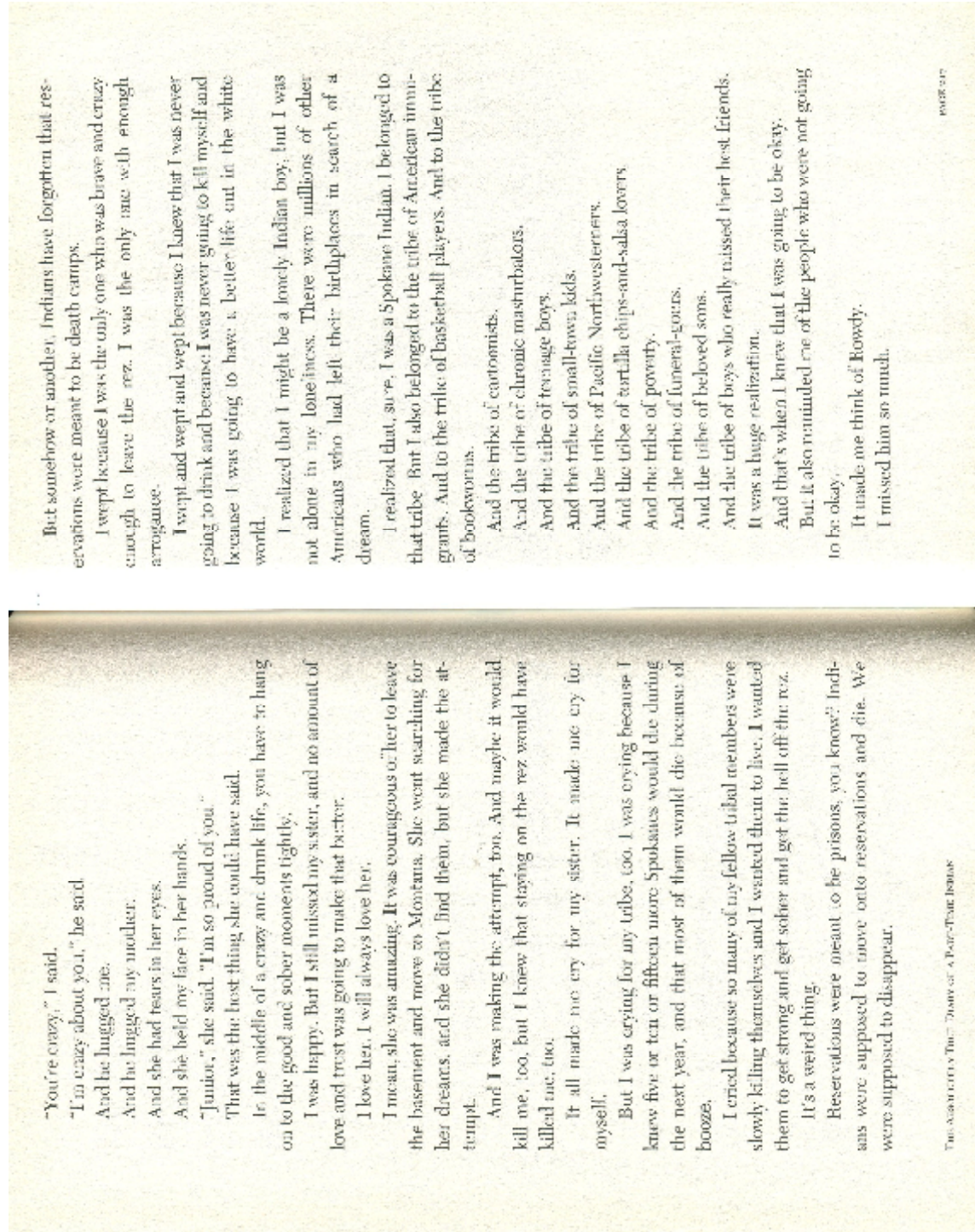
And thirty-six of us finished.

After fifty laps, one guy quit, and since quitting is contagious, three other boys caught the disease and walked off the court, too.

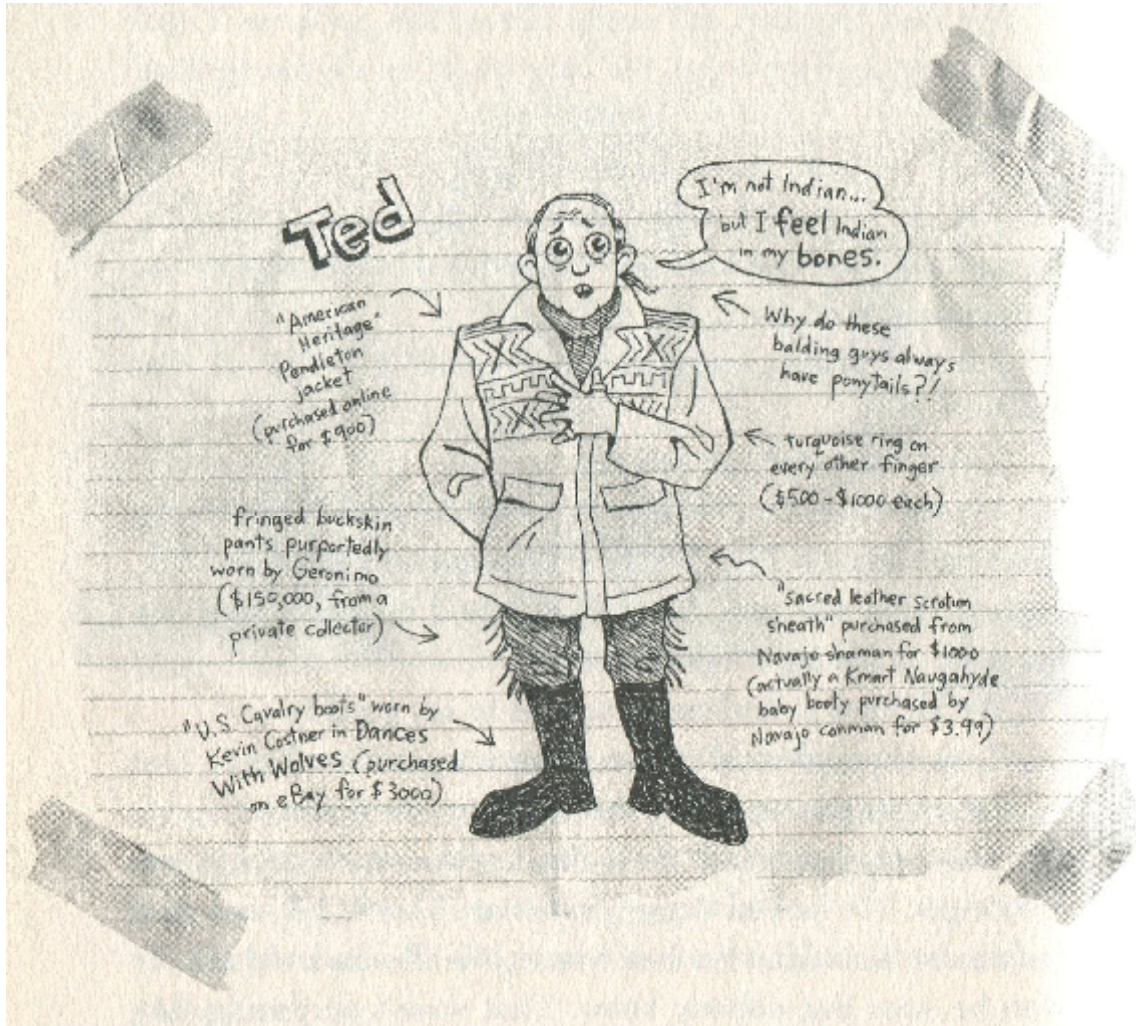




## Appendix 4 – MultiTribalism



## Appendix 5 – CSE in Cartoons





The  
Absolutely  
**T**ruE  
Diary  
of a  
**P**art-  
time  
**I**ndian

There is  
another world,  
but it is in this one.  
W.B. Yeats



# The Black- Eye-of- the-Month Club ✱

I was born with water on the brain.

Okay, so that's not exactly true. I was actually born with too much cerebral spinal fluid inside my skull. But cerebral spinal fluid is just the doctors' fancy way of saying brain grease. And brain grease works inside the lobes like car grease works inside an engine. It keeps things running smooth and fast. But weirdo me, I was born with too much grease inside my skull, and it got all thick and muddy and disgusting, and it only mucked up the works. My thinking and breathing and living engine slowed down and flooded.



My brain was drowning in grease.

But that makes the whole thing sound weirdo and funny, like my brain was a giant French fry, so it seems more serious and poetic and accurate to say, "I was born with water on the brain."

Okay, so maybe that's not a very serious way to say it, either. Maybe the whole thing *is* weird and funny.

But jeez, did my mother and father and big sister and grandma and cousins and aunts and uncles think it was funny when the doctors cut open my little skull and sucked out all that extra water with some tiny vacuum?

I was only six months old and I was supposed to croak during the surgery. And even if I somehow survived the mini-Hoover, I was supposed to suffer serious brain damage during the procedure and live the rest of my life as a vegetable.

Well, I obviously survived the surgery. I wouldn't be writing this if I didn't, but I have all sorts of physical problems that are directly the result of my brain damage.

First of all, I ended up having forty-two teeth. The typical human has thirty-two, right? But I had forty-two.

Ten more than usual.

Ten more than normal.

Ten teeth past human.

My teeth got so crowded that I could barely close my mouth. I went to Indian Health Service to get some teeth pulled so I could eat normally, not like some slobbering vulture. But the Indian Health Service funded major dental work only once a year, so I had to have all ten extra teeth pulled in *one day*.

And what's more, our white dentist believed that Indians only felt half as much pain as white people did, so he only gave us half the Novocain.

What a bastard, huh?

Indian Health Service also funded eyeglass purchases only once a year and offered one style: those ugly, thick, black plastic ones.

My brain damage left me nearsighted in one eye and farsighted in the other, so my ugly glasses were all lopsided because my eyes were so lopsided.

I get headaches because my eyes are, like, enemies, you know, like they used to be married to each other but now hate each other's guts.

And I started wearing glasses when I was three, so I ran around the rez looking like a three-year-old Indian *grandpa*.

And, oh, I was skinny. I'd turn sideways and *disappear*.

But my hands and feet were huge. My feet were a size eleven in third grade! With my big feet and pencil body, I looked like a capital *L* walking down the road.

And my skull was enormous.

Epic.

My head was so big that little Indian skulls orbited around it. Some of the kids called me Orbit. And other kids just called me Globe. The bullies would pick me up, spin me in circles, put their finger down on my skull, and say, "I want to go there."

So obviously, I looked goofy on the outside, but it was the *inside* stuff that was the worst.

First of all, I had seizures. At least two a week. So I was damaging my brain on a regular basis. But the thing is, I was having those seizures because I *already* had brain damage, so I was reopening wounds each time I seized.

Yep, whenever I had a seizure, I was *damaging my damage*.

I haven't had a seizure in seven years, but the doctors tell me that I am "susceptible to seizure activity."



*Susceptible to seizure activity.*

Doesn't that just roll off the tongue like poetry? I also had a stutter and a lisp. Or maybe I should say I had a st-st-st-stutter and a lissssssstthththp.

You wouldn't think there is anything life threatening about speech impediments, but let me tell you, there is nothing more dangerous than being a kid with a stutter and a lisp.

A five-year-old is cute when he lisps and stutters. Heck, most of the big-time kid actors stuttered and lisped their way to stardom.

And jeez, you're still fairly cute when you're a stuttering and lisping six-, seven-, and eight-year-old, but it's all over when you turn nine and ten.

After that, your stutter and lisp turn you into a retard.

And if you're fourteen years old, like me, and you're still stuttering and lisping, then you become the biggest retard in the world.

Everybody on the rez calls me a retard about twice a day. They call me retard when they are pantsing me or stuffing my head in the toilet or just smacking me upside the head.

I'm not even writing down this story the way I actually talk, because I'd have to fill it with stutters and lisps, and then you'd be wondering why you're reading a story written by *such a retard*.

Do you know what happens to retards on the rez?

We get beat up.

At least once a month.

Yep, I belong to the Black-Eye-of-the-Month Club.

Sure I want to go outside. Every kid wants to go outside. But it's safer to stay at home. So I mostly hang out alone in my bedroom and read books and draw cartoons.

Here's one of me:



I draw all the time.

I draw cartoons of my mother and father; my sister and grandmother; my best friend, Rowdy; and everybody else on the rez.

I draw because words are too unpredictable.

I draw because words are too limited.

If you speak and write in English, or Spanish, or Chinese, or any other language, then only a certain percentage of human beings will get your meaning.

But when you draw a picture, everybody can understand it.

If I draw a cartoon of a flower, then every man, woman, and child in the world can look at it and say, "That's a flower."





So I draw because I want to talk to the world. And I want the world to pay attention to me.

I feel important with a pen in my hand. I feel like I might grow up to be somebody important. An artist. Maybe a famous artist. Maybe a rich artist.

That's the only way I can become rich and famous.

Just take a look at the world. Almost all of the rich and famous brown people are artists. They're singers and actors and writers and dancers and directors and poets.

So I draw because I feel like it might be my only real chance to escape the reservation.

I think the world is a series of broken dams and floods, and my cartoons are tiny little lifeboats.

## Why Chicken Means So Much to Me \*

Okay, so now you know that I'm a cartoonist. And I think I'm pretty good at it, too. But no matter how good I am, my cartoons will never take the place of food or money. I wish I could draw a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, or a fist full of twenty dollar bills, and perform some magic trick and make it real. But I can't do that. Nobody can do that, not even the hungriest magician in the world.

I wish I were magical, but I am really just a poor-ass reservation kid living with his poor-ass family on the poor-ass Spokane Indian Reservation.



Do you know the worst thing about being poor? Oh, maybe you've done the math in your head and you figure:

*Poverty = empty refrigerator + empty stomach*

And sure, sometimes, my family misses a meal, and sleep is the only thing we have for dinner, but I know that, sooner or later, my parents will come bursting through the door with a bucket of Kentucky Fried Chicken.

Original Recipe.

And hey, in a weird way, being hungry makes food taste better. There is nothing better than a chicken leg when you haven't eaten for (approximately) eighteen-and-a-half hours. And believe me, a good piece of chicken can make anybody believe in the existence of God.



So hunger is not the worst thing about being poor.

And now I'm sure you're asking, "Okay, okay, Mr. Hunger Artist, Mr. Mouth-Full-of-Words, Mr. Woe-Is-Me, Mr. Secret Recipe, what is the worst thing about being poor?"

So, okay, I'll tell you the worst thing.

Last week, my best friend Oscar got really sick.

At first, I thought he just had heat exhaustion or something. I mean, it was a crazy-hot July day (102 degrees with 90 percent humidity), and plenty of people were falling over from heat exhaustion, so why not a little dog wearing a fur coat?

I tried to give him some water, but he didn't want any of that.

He was lying on his bed with red, watery, snotty eyes. He whimpered in pain. When I touched him, he yelped like crazy.

It was like his nerves were poking out three inches from his skin.

I figured he'd be okay with some rest, but then he started vomiting, and diarrhea blasted out of him, and he had these seizures where his little legs just kicked and kicked and kicked.

And sure, Oscar was only an adopted stray mutt, but he was the only living thing that I could depend on. He was more dependable than my parents, grandmother, aunts, uncles, cousins, and big sister. He taught me more than any teachers ever did.

Honestly, Oscar was a better person than any human I had ever known.

"Mom," I said. "We have to take Oscar to the vet."

"He'll be all right," she said.

But she was *lying*. Her eyes always got darker in the middle when she lied. She was a Spokane Indian and a bad liar,



which didn't make any sense. We Indians really should be better liars, considering how often we've been lied to.

"He's really sick, Mom," I said. "He's going to die if we don't take him to the doctor."

She looked hard at me. And her eyes weren't dark anymore, so I knew that she was going to tell me the truth. And trust me, there are times when the *last thing* you want to hear is the truth.

"Junior, sweetheart," Mom said. "I'm sorry, but we don't have any money for Oscar."

"I'll pay you back," I said. "I promise."

"Honey, it'll cost hundreds of dollars, maybe a thousand."

"I'll pay back the doctor. I'll get a job."

Mom smiled all sad and hugged me hard.

Jeez, how stupid was I? What kind of job can a reservation Indian boy get? I was too young to deal blackjack at the casino, there were only about fifteen green grass lawns on the reservation (and none of their owners outsourced the mowing jobs), and the only paper route was owned by a tribal elder named Wally. And he had to deliver only fifty papers, so his job was more like a hobby.

There was nothing I could do to save Oscar.

Nothing.

Nothing.

Nothing.

So I lay down on the floor beside him and patted his head and whispered his name *for hours*.

Then Dad came home from *wherever* and had one of those long talks with Mom, and they decided something *without me*.

And then Dad pulled down his rifle and bullets from the closet.

"Junior," he said. "Carry Oscar outside."

"No!" I screamed.

"He's suffering," Dad said. "We have to help him."

"You can't do it!" I shouted.

I wanted to punch my dad in the face. I wanted to punch him in the nose and make him bleed. I wanted to punch him in the eye and make him blind. I wanted to kick him in the balls and make him pass out.

I was hot mad. Volcano mad. Tsunami mad.

Dad just looked down at me with the saddest look in his eyes. He was crying. He looked *weak*.

I wanted to hate him for his weakness.

I wanted to hate Dad and Mom for our poverty.

I wanted to blame them for my sick dog and for all the other sickness in the world.

But I can't blame my parents for our poverty because my mother and father are the twin suns around which I orbit and my world would **EXPLODE** without them.

And it's not like my mother and father were born into wealth. It's not like they gambled away their family fortunes. My parents came from poor people who came from poor people who came from poor people, all the way back to the very first poor people.

Adam and Eve covered their privates with fig leaves; the first Indians covered their privates *with their tiny hands*.

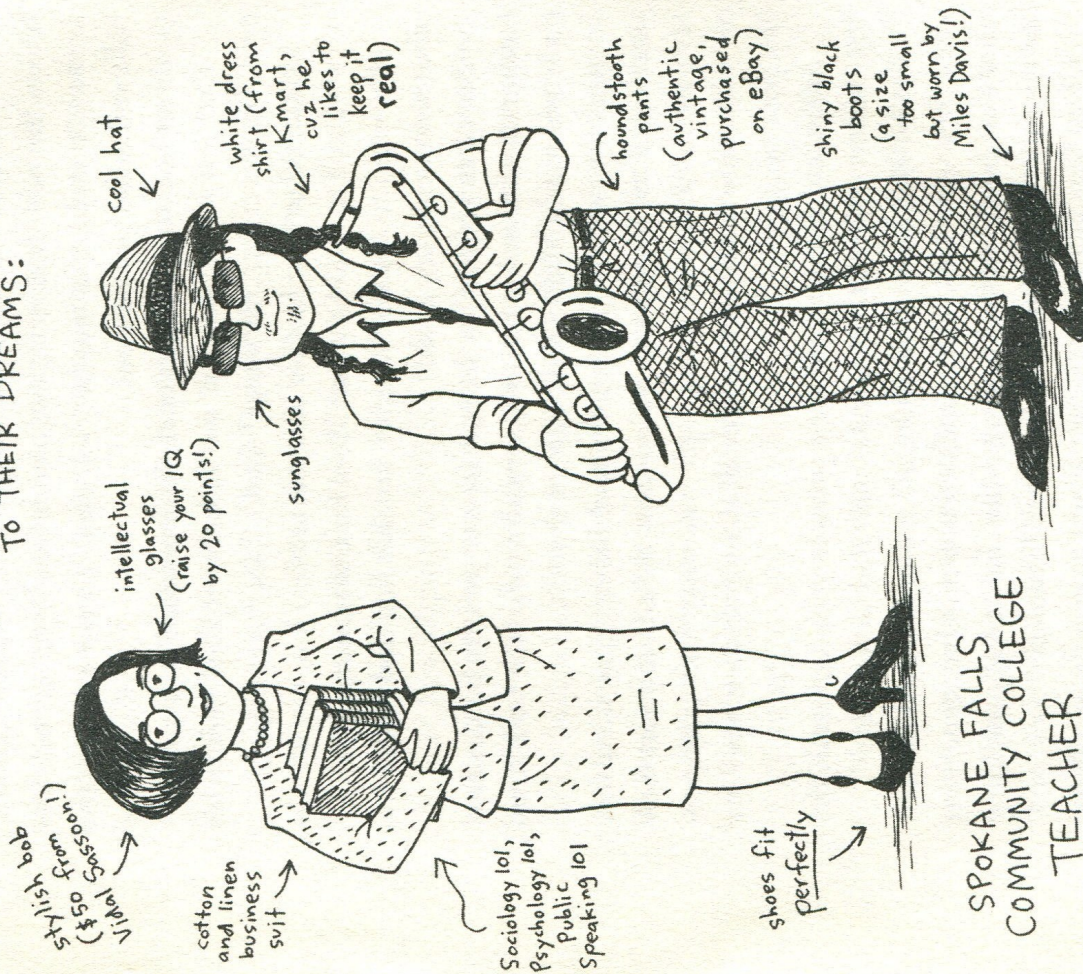
Seriously, I know my mother and father had their dreams when they were kids. They dreamed about being something other than poor, but they never got the chance to be anything because nobody paid attention to their dreams.

Given the chance, my mother would have gone to college. She still reads books like crazy. She buys them by the pound. And she remembers everything she reads. She can



# WHO MY PARENTS WOULD HAVE BEEN

IF SOMEBODY HAD PAID ATTENTION TO THEIR DREAMS:



SPOKANE FALLS  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
TEACHER  
OF THE YEAR  
1992-98

THE  
FIFTH-BEST JAZZ SAX PLAYER  
WEST OF THE MISSISSIPPI

recite whole pages by memory. She's a human tape recorder. Really, my mom can read the newspaper in fifteen minutes and tell me baseball scores, the location of every war, the latest guy to win the Lottery, and the high temperature in Des Moines, Iowa.

Given the chance, my father would have been a musician. When he gets drunk, he sings old country songs. And blues, too. And he sounds good. Like a pro. Like he should be on the radio. He plays the guitar and the piano a little bit. And he has this old saxophone from high school that he keeps all clean and shiny, like he's going to join a band at any moment. But we reservation Indians don't get to realize our dreams. We don't get those chances. Or choices. We're just poor. That's all we are.

It sucks to be poor, and it sucks to feel that you somehow *deserve* to be poor. You start believing that you're poor because you're stupid and ugly. And then you start believing that you're stupid and ugly because you're Indian. And because you're Indian you start believing you're destined to be poor. It's an ugly circle and *there's nothing you can do about it.*

Poverty doesn't give you strength or teach you lessons about perseverance. No, poverty only teaches you how to be poor.

So, poor and small and weak, I picked up Oscar. He licked my face because he loved and trusted me. And I carried him out to the lawn, and I laid him down beneath our green apple tree. "I love you, Oscar," I said.

He looked at me and I swear to you that he understood what was happening. He knew what Dad was going to do. But Oscar wasn't scared. He was relieved.

But not me.

I ran away from there as fast as I could.



I wanted to run faster than the speed of sound, but nobody, no matter how much pain they're in, can run that fast. So I heard the boom of my father's rifle when he shot my best friend.

A bullet only costs about two cents, and anybody can afford that.

## Revenge Is My Middle Name \*

After Oscar died, I was so depressed that I thought about crawling into a hole and disappearing forever.

But Rowdy talked me out of it.

"It's not like anybody's going to notice if you go away," he said. "So you might as well gut it out."

Isn't that tough love?

Rowdy is the toughest kid on the rez. He is long and lean and strong like a snake.

His heart is as strong and mean as a snake, too.



But he is my best human friend and he cares about me, so he would always tell me the truth.

And he is right. Nobody would miss me if I was gone.

Well, Rowdy would miss me, but he'd never admit that he'd miss me. He is way too tough for that kind of emotion.

But aside from Rowdy, and my parents and sister and grandmother, nobody would miss me.

I am a zero on the rez. And if you subtract zero from zero, you still have zero. So what's the point of subtracting when the answer is always the same?

So I gut it out.

I have to, I guess, especially since Rowdy is having one of the worst summers of his life.

His father is drinking hard and throwing hard punches, so Rowdy and his mother are always walking around with bruised and bloody faces.

"It's war paint," Rowdy always says. "It just makes me look tougher."

And I suppose it does make him look tougher, because Rowdy never tries to hide his wounds. He walks around the rez with a black eye and split lip.

This morning, he limped into our house, slumped in a chair, threw his sprained knee up on the table, and smirked. He had a bandage over his left ear.

"What happened to your head?" I asked.

"Dad said I wasn't listening," Rowdy said. "So he got all drunk and tried to make my ear a little bigger."

My mother and father are drunks, too, but they aren't mean like that. Not at all. They sometimes ignore me. Sometimes they yell at me. But they never, ever, never, ever hit me. I've never even been spanked. Really. I think my mother sometimes wants to haul off and give me a slap, but my father won't let it happen.

He doesn't believe in physical punishment; he believes in staring so cold at me that I turn into a ice-covered ice cube with an icy filling.

My house is a safe place, so Rowdy spends most of his time with us. It's like he's a family member, an extra brother and son.

"You want to head down to the powwow?" Rowdy asked.

"Nah," I said.

The Spokane Tribe holds their annual powwow celebration over the Labor Day weekend. This was the 127th annual one, and there would be singing, war dancing, gambling, storytelling, laughter, fry bread, hamburgers, hot dogs, arts and crafts, and plenty of alcoholic brawling.

I wanted no part of it.

Oh, the dancing and singing are great. Beautiful, in fact, but I'm afraid of all the Indians who aren't dancers and singers. Those rhythmless, talentless, tuneless Indians are most likely going to get drunk and beat the shit out of any available losers.

And I am always the most available loser.

"Come on," Rowdy said. "I'll protect you."

He knew that I was afraid of getting beat up. And he also knew that he'd probably have to fight for me.

Rowdy has protected me since we were born.

Both of us were pushed into the world on November 5, 1992, at Sacred Heart Hospital in Spokane. I'm two hours older than Rowdy. I was born all broken and twisted, and he was born mad.

He was always crying and screaming and kicking and punching.

He bit his mother's breast when she tried to nurse him. He kept biting her, so she gave up and fed him formula.

He really hasn't changed much since then.



Well, at fourteen years old, it's not like he runs around biting women's breasts, but he does punch and kick and spit. He got into his first fistfight in kindergarten. He took on three first graders during a snowball fight because one of them had thrown a piece of ice. Rowdy punched them out pretty quickly. And then he punched the teacher who came to stop the fight.

He didn't hurt the teacher, not at all, but man, let me tell you, that teacher was angry.

"What's wrong with you?" he yelled.

"Everything!" Rowdy yelled back.

Rowdy fought everybody.

He fought boys and girls.

Men and women.

He fought stray dogs.

Hell, he fought the weather.

He'd throw wild punches at rain.

Honestly.

"Come on, you wuss," Rowdy said. "Let's go to powwow. You can't hide in your house forever. You'll turn into some kind of troll or something."

"What if somebody picks on me?" I asked.

"Then I'll pick on them."

"What if somebody picks my nose?" I asked.

"Then I'll pick your nose, too," Rowdy said.

"You're my hero," I said.

"Come to the powwow," Rowdy said. "Please."

It's a big deal when Rowdy is polite.

"Okay, okay," I said.

So Rowdy and I walked the three miles to the powwow grounds. It was dark, maybe eight o'clock or so, and the drummers and singers were loud and wonderful.

I was excited. But I was getting hypothermic, too.

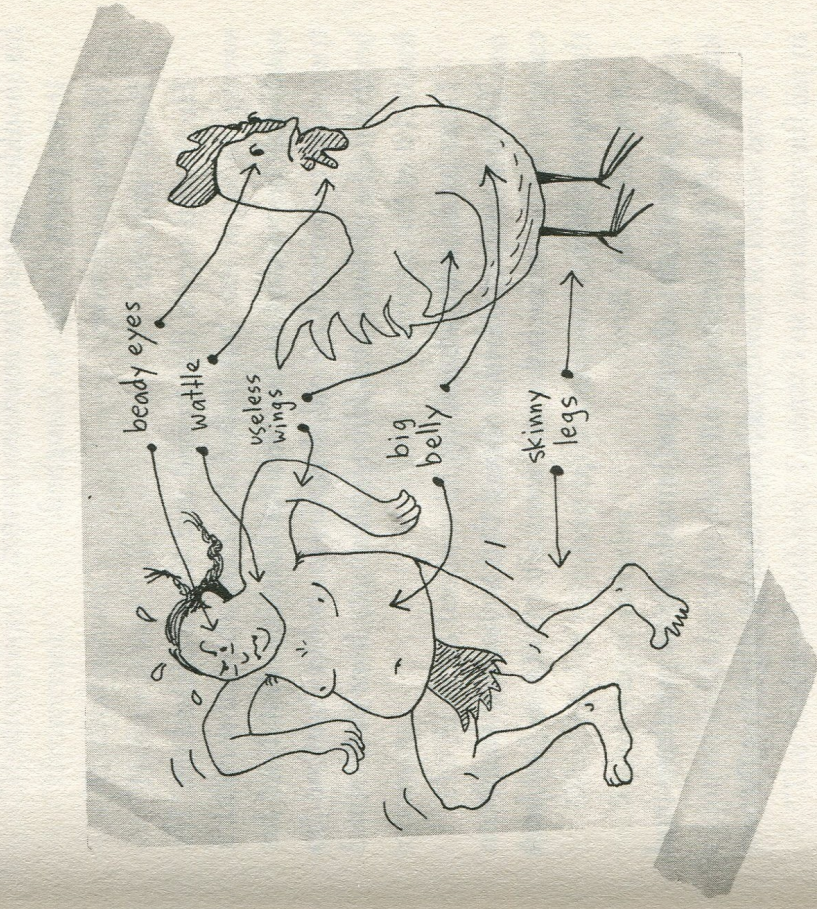
The Spokane Powwow is wicked hot during the day and freezing cold at night.

"I should have worn my coat," I said.

"Toughen up," Rowdy said.

"Let's go watch the chicken dancers," I said.

I think the chicken dancers are cool because, well, they dance like chickens. And you already know how much I love chicken.



"This crap is boring," Rowdy said.

"We'll just watch for a little while," I said. "And then we'll go gamble or something."



“Okay,” Rowdy said. He is the only person who listens to me. We weaved our way through the parked cars, vans, SUVs, RVs, plastic tents, and deer-hide tepees.

“Hey, let’s go buy some bootleg whiskey,” Rowdy said. “I got five bucks.”

“Don’t get drunk,” I said. “You’ll just get ugly.”

“I’m already ugly,” Rowdy said.

He laughed, tripped over a tent pole, and stumbled into a minivan. He bumped his face against a window and jammed his shoulder against the rearview mirror.

It was pretty funny, so I laughed.

That was a mistake.

Rowdy got mad.

He shoved me to the ground and almost kicked me. He swung his leg at me, but pulled it back at the last second. I could tell he wanted to hurt me for laughing. But I am his friend, his best friend, his only friend. He couldn’t hurt me. So he grabbed a garbage sack filled with empty beer bottles and hucked it at the minivan.

Glass broke everywhere.

Then Rowdy grabbed a shovel that somebody had been using to dig barbecue holes and went after that van. Just beat the crap out of it.

*Smash! Boom! Bam!*

He dented the doors and smashed the windows and knocked off the mirrors.

I was scared of Rowdy and I was scared of getting thrown in jail for vandalism, so I ran.

That was a mistake.

I ran right into the Andruss brothers’ camp. The Andrusses — John, Jim, and Joe — are the cruelest triplets in the history of the world.

“Hey, look,” one of them said. “It’s Hydro Head.”

Yep, those bastards were making fun of my brain disorder. Charming, huh?

“Nah, he ain’t Hydro,” said another one of the brothers. “He’s Hydrogen.”

I don’t know which one said that. I couldn’t tell them apart. I decided to run again, but one of them grabbed me, and shoved me toward another brother. All three of them shoved me to and fro. They were playing catch with me.

“Hydromatic.”

“Hydrocarbon.”

“Hydrocrack.”

“Hydrodynamic.”

“Hydroelectric.”

“Hydro-and-Low.”

“Hydro-and-Seek.”

I fell down. One of the brothers picked me up, dusted me off, and then kneed me in the balls.

I fell down again, holding my tender crotch, and tried not to scream.

The Andruss brothers laughed and walked away.

Oh, by the way, did I mention that the Andruss triplets are thirty years old?

What kind of men beat up a fourteen-year-old boy?

Major-league assholes.

I was lying on the ground, holding my nuts as tenderly as a squirrel holds his nuts, when Rowdy walked up.

“Who did this to you?” he asked.

“The Andruss brothers,” I said.

“Did they hit you in the head?” Rowdy asked. He knows that my brain is fragile. If those Andruss brothers had punched a hole in the aquarium of my skull, I might have flooded out the entire powwow.

“My brain is fine,” I said. “But my balls are dying.”



"I'm going to kill those bastards," Rowdy said.

Of course, Rowdy didn't kill them, but we hid near the Andruss brothers' camp until three in the morning. They staggered back and passed out in their tent. Then Rowdy snuck in, shaved off their eyebrows, and cut off their braids.

That's about the worst thing you can do to an Indian guy. It had taken them years to grow their hair. And Rowdy cut that away in five seconds.

I loved Rowdy for doing that. I felt guilty for loving him for that. But revenge also feels pretty good.

The Andruss brothers never did figure out who cut their eyebrows and hair. Rowdy started a rumor that it was a bunch of Makah Indians from the coast who did it.

"You can't trust them whale hunters," Rowdy said. "They'll do anything."

But before you think Rowdy is only good for revenge, and kicking the shit out of minivans, raindrops, and people, let me tell you something sweet about him: he loves comic books.

But not the cool superhero ones like *Daredevil* or *X-Men*. No, he reads the goofy old ones, like *Richie Rich* and *Archie* and *Casper the Friendly Ghost*. Kid stuff. He keeps them hidden in a hole in the wall of his bedroom closet. Almost every day, I'll head over to his house and we'll read those comics together.

Rowdy isn't a fast reader, but he's persistent. And he'll just laugh and laugh at the dumb jokes, no matter how many times he's read the same comic.



I like the sound of Rowdy's laughter. I don't hear it very often, but it's always sort of this avalanche of ha-ha and ho-ho and hee-hee.

I like to make him laugh. He loves my cartoons.

He's a big, goofy dreamer, too, just like me. He likes to pretend he lives inside the comic books. I guess a fake life inside a cartoon is a lot better than his real life.

So I draw cartoons to make him happy, to give him other worlds to live inside.

I draw his dreams.

And he only talks about his dreams with me. And I only talk about my dreams with him.



I tell him about my fears.

I think Rowdy might be the most important person in my life. Maybe more important than my family. Can your best friend be more important than your family?

I think so.

I mean, after all, I spend a lot more time with Rowdy than I do with anyone else.

Let's do the math.

I figure Rowdy and I have spent an average of eight hours a day together for the last fourteen years.

That's eight hours times 365 days times fourteen years.

So that means Rowdy and I have spent 40,880 hours in each other's company.

Nobody else comes anywhere close to that.

Trust me.

Rowdy and I are inseparable.

# BECAUSE GEOMETRY IS NOT A COUNTRY SOMEWHERE NEAR FRANCE \*

I was fourteen and it was my first day of high school. I was happy about that. And I was most especially excited about my first geometry class.

Yep, I have to admit that isosceles triangles make me feel *hormonal*.

Most guys, no matter what age, get excited about curves and circles, but not me. Don't get me wrong. I like girls and their curves. And I really like women and their curvier curves.

I spend *hours* in the bathroom with a magazine that has one thousand pictures of naked movie stars:



Sherman Alexie

# Dagboek van een halve indiaan

Voor Wellpinit en Reardan,  
de plaatsen die mijn thuis zijn

*vertaling:*

*Aleid van Eekelen-Benders*

*illustraties: Ellen Forney*

Lemniscaat  Rotterdam

Er bestaat nóg een wereld, maar die  
bevindt zich in deze.

W.B. Yeats

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# De 'Blauw Oog van de Maand'-club

Ik ben geboren met water in mijn hersenen.

Nou ja, dat klopt niet helemaal. Eigenlijk ben ik geboren met te veel cerebrospinale vloeistof in mijn hersenpan. Maar cerebrospinale vloeistof is gewoon de dure doktersterm voor hersensmeer. En hersensmeer werkt net zo in de kwabben als smeerolie in een motor. Het zorgt ervoor dat alles vlot en soepel blijft lopen. Maar ik ben zo'n aparte figuur, ik ben geboren met te veel vet in mijn hersenpan, en dat werd allemaal dik, troebel en smerig, zodat de boel alleen maar verstopt raakte. Mijn motor voor denken, ademen en leven ging trager werken en liep vol.

Mijn hersenen verzopen in het vet.

Maar als je het zo zegt, klinkt het alleen maar vreemd en grappig, alsof mijn brein een enorme patat is, en daarom lijkt het serieuzer, poëtischer en juister om te zeggen: 'Ik ben geboren met water in mijn hersenen.'

Nou ja, misschien is dat óók niet zo'n ontzettend serieuze manier om het te zeggen. Misschien is het allemaal ook wel vreemd en grappig.

Maar vonden mijn vader en moeder, grote zus, oma, neven, nichten, ooms en tantes het soms zo grappig toen de dokters mijn schedeltje openzaagden en al dat overtollige water er met een piepklein pompje uit zogen?

Ik was pas een half jaar en ze dachten dat ik tijdens de operatie de pijp uit zou gaan. En zelfs al overleefde ik die minipomp, dan

zou ik tijdens de procedure ernstige hersenbeschadiging oplopen en de rest van mijn leven als een plant doorbrengen.

Nou, dat ik de operatie overleefde is duidelijk. Anders was ik dit nu niet aan het schrijven, maar ik heb wel allerlei lichamelijke problemen die een rechtstreeks gevolg zijn van mijn hersenbeschadiging.

Ten eerste kreeg ik alles bij elkaar tweeënveertig tanden en kiezen. Een gewoon mens heeft er tweeëndertig, hè? Maar ik had er tweeënveertig.

Tien meer dan gebruikelijk.

Tien meer dan normaal.

Tien meer dan menselijk.

Het werd zo vol in mijn mond dat ik hem nauwelijks meer dicht kreeg. Ik ging naar het indiaanse gezondheidscentrum om er een paar te laten trekken, om normaal te kunnen eten en niet meer als een kwijlende gier. Maar omdat je in het indiaanse gezondheidscentrum maar eens per jaar een uitvoerige tandartsbehandeling vergoed kreeg, moest ik ze alle tien in één keer laten trekken.

En wat erger is, onze blanke tandarts geloofde dat indianen maar half zoveel pijn voelen als blanken, en daarom gaf hij ons maar half zoveel verdoving.

Wat een klootzak, hè?

Het indiaanse gezondheidscentrum vergoedde ook de aanschaf van een bril maar eens per jaar en leverde maar één model: zo'n montuur van dik zwart plastic.

Als gevolg van mijn hersenbeschadiging was mijn ene oog bijziend en het andere verziend, en dus waren de glazen van mijn lelijke bril totaal ongelijk doordat mijn ogen zo ongelijk waren. Ik heb vaak hoofdpijn omdat mijn ogen, zeg maar, vijanden zijn, snap je, alsof ze eerst met elkaar getrouwd waren maar elkaar nu niet meer kunnen uitstaan.

En omdat ik mijn eerste bril kreeg toen ik drie was leek ik wel een drierjarige indiaanse opa wanneer ik rondrende in het reservaat.

O ja, en mager was ik ook. Als ik een kwartslag draaide, zag je me niet meer.

Maar mijn handen en voeten waren enorm. In de derde klas had ik al schoenmaat vierenveertig! Met mijn grote voeten en mijn potloodlijf leek ik net een hoofdletter L die over de weg liep.

En mijn schedel was kolossaal.

Indrukwekkend.

Mijn hoofd was zo groot dat er kleine indiaanse schedeltjes als satellieten omheen cirkelden. Sommige kinderen noemden mij Planeet. Andere noemden me gewoon Wereldbol. De pestkoppen tilden me op, draaiden me een paar keer rond, zetten hun vinger op mijn schedel en zeiden: 'Daar wil ik naartoe.'

Dat ik er vanbuiten idioot uitzag is dus wel duidelijk, maar wat binnenin zat was nog erger.

Ten eerste had ik toevallen. Minstens twee keer per week. Dus ik beschadigde mijn hersenen aan de lopende band. Maar het punt is, die toevallen kreeg ik omdat ik al hersenletsel had, dus elke keer dat ik er een kreeg, heropende ik oude wonden.

Ja ja, elke keer dat ik een toeval had, beschadigde ik mijn beschadiging.

Nu heb ik al zeven jaar geen toeval meer gehad, maar de dokters zeggen dat ik 'gevoelig voor convulsie-activiteit' ben.

*Gevoelig voor convulsie-activiteit.*

Rolt dat niet als poëzie van je tong?

Verder stotterde en sliste ik. Of misschien moet ik zeggen dat ik st-st-st-stotterde en sssjissssjite.

Je zou denken dat er niets levensbedreigends is aan spraakgebreken, maar neem maar van mij aan dat niets gevaarlijker is dan een kind zijn dat stottert en slist.



Een vijfjarige is schattig wanneer hij slist en stottert. Sterker nog, de meeste populaire kindacteurs zijn door slissen en stotteren een ster geworden.

En ja hoor, je bent nog steeds best schattig als je een stotterende, slissende zes-, zeven- of achtjarige bent, maar tegen de tijd dat je negen of tien wordt, is het afgelopen.

Dan maken je gestotter en geslis je achterlijk.

En als je veertien bent, zoals ik, en je stottert en slist nog steeds, dan word je de grootste randdebiel van de wereld.

Iedereen in het reservaat noemt mij zo'n twee keer per dag een randdebiel. Ze noemen me randdebiel als ze me mijn broek uittrekken, als ze mijn kop in de wc duwen of als ze me gewoon een dreun tegen mijn hoofd geven.

Ik schrijf dit verhaal niet eens op zoals ik in werkelijkheid praat, want dan zou ik het vol gestotter en geslis moeten zetten, en dan zou jij je afvragen waarom je een verhaal zat te lezen dat door zo'n randdebiel was geschreven.

Weet je wat er in het reservaat met randdebielen gebeurt?

We worden in elkaar geslagen.

Minstens eens per maand.

Ja hoor, ik ben lid van de 'Blauw Oog van de Maand'-club.

Natuurlijk wil ik naar buiten. Ieder kind wil naar buiten. Maar het is veiliger om binnen te blijven. Daarom zit ik meestal in mijn eentje in mijn kamer te lezen en cartoons te tekenen.

Ik ben altijd aan het tekenen.

Ik teken cartoons van mijn vader en moeder, mijn zus en mijn grootmoeder, mijn beste vriend, Rowdy, en iedereen in het reservaat.

Dit is er een van mezelf:



Ik teken omdat woorden te onvoorspelbaar zijn.

Ik teken omdat woorden te beperkt zijn.

Als je in het Engels spreekt en schrijft, of in het Spaans of Chinees of welke taal dan ook, dan begrijpt maar één op de zoveel mensen waar je het over hebt.

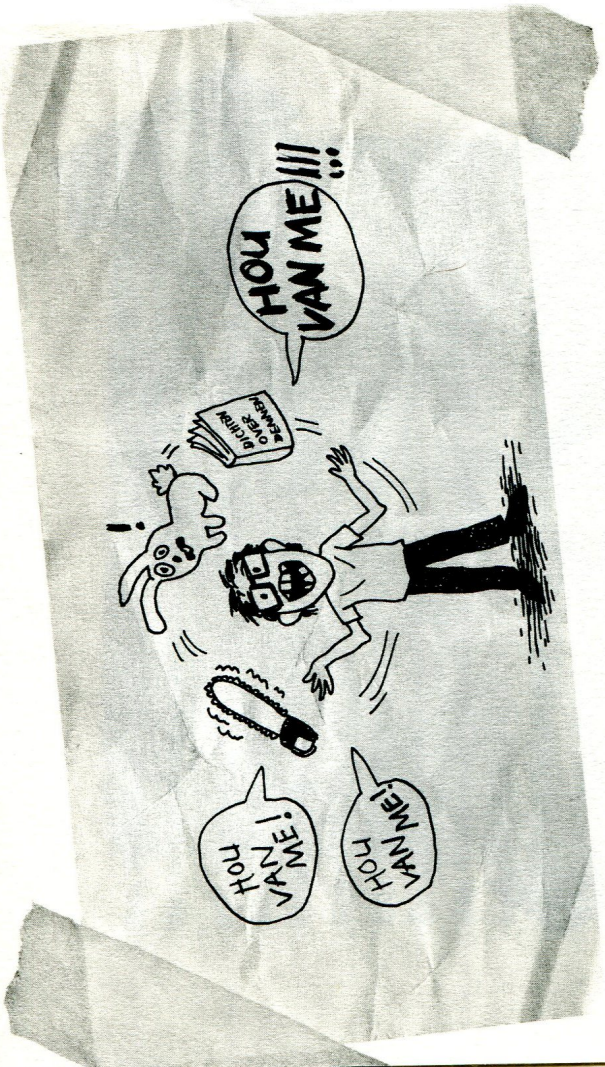
Maar als je een plaatje tekent, snapt iedereen het.

Als ik een tekening maak van een bloem, weet iedere man, vrouw of kind die ernaar kijkt: 'Dat is een bloem.'

Dus teken ik omdat ik tegen de wereld wil praten. En ik wil dat de wereld naar me luistert.

Met een pen in mijn hand voel ik me belangrijk. Dan heb ik het gevoel dat ik later wel eens een belangrijk iemand zou kunnen worden. Een kunstenaar. Misschien wel een beroemde kunstenaar. Misschien wel een rijke kunstenaar.





Dat is de enige manier waarop ik rijk en beroemd kan worden. Kijk maar eens om je heen. Bijna alle rijke en beroemde bruine mensen zijn kunstenaars. Het zijn zangers, acteurs, schrijvers, dansers, regisseurs en dichters. Daarom teken ik, omdat ik het gevoel heb dat het wel eens mijn enige kans kon zijn om uit het reservaat te ontsnappen. Ik denk dat de wereld een reeks doorgebroken dammen en overstromingen is, en dat mijn cartoons piepkleine reddingsbootjes zijn.

## Waarom kip zoveel voor me betekent

Zo, nu weet je dat ik cartoontekenaar ben. En volgens mij ben ik ook best een goede. Maar hoe goed ik ook ben, mijn cartoons zullen nooit de plaats van eten of geld kunnen innemen. Ik wou dat ik een boterham met pindaas kon tekenen, of een handvol dollarbiljetten, en dan een of andere goocheltruc kon uithalen zodat het echt werd. Maar dat kan ik niet. Dat kan niemand, zelfs de hongerigste goochelaar ter wereld niet.

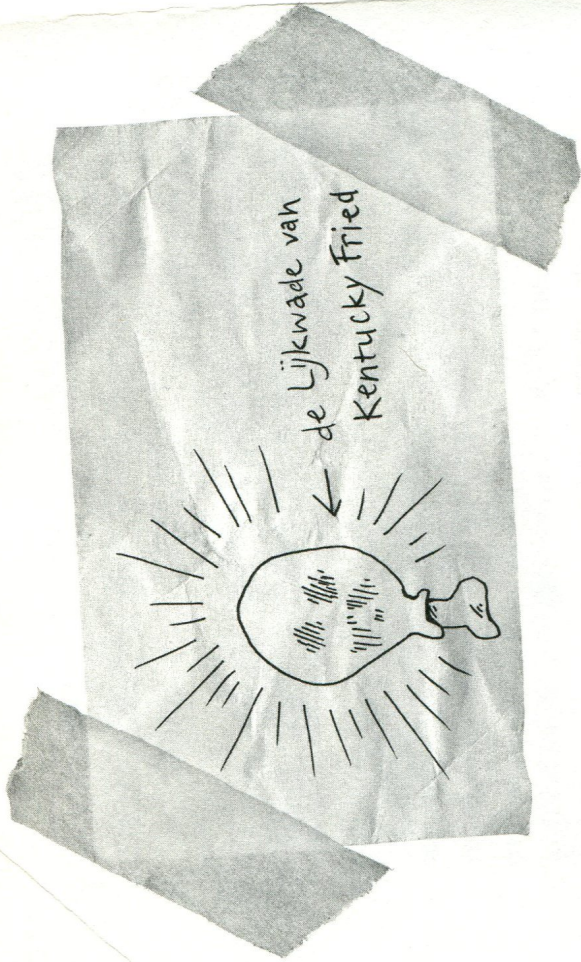
Ik wou dat ik magische krachten had, maar ik ben eigenlijk gewoon een straatarme reservaatjongen die met zijn straatarme familie in het straatarme Spokane-indianenreservaat woont. Weet je wat het ergst is van arm zijn? O, misschien heb je al in gedachten zitten rekenen en denk je:

*Armoede = lege koelkast + lege maag*

En ja, soms slaan wij thuis een keer het eten over en is slaap het enige waaruit ons avondmaal bestaat, maar ik weet dat mijn ouders vroeg of laat binnen komen stormen met een emmer Kentucky Fried Chicken. Origineel recept.

En moet je horen, op een rare manier maakt honger dat eten lekkerder smaakt. Wanneer je (ongeveer) achttieneenhalf uur geen eten hebt gehad, smaakt niets zo lekker als een kippenpoot. En een flink stuk kip kan iedereen zover krijgen dat hij in het bestaan van God gaat geloven, neem dat maar van mij aan.





Dus honger is niet het ergste van arm zijn. En nu vraag je vast en zeker: 'Oké, oké, meneer de Hongerkunstenaar, meneer Mondvolwoorden, meneer Owatbenikzielig, wat is dan het ergste van arm zijn?' Nou, goed, dat zal ik je vertellen. Vorige week werd mijn beste vriend Oscar heel erg ziek. Eerst dacht ik dat hij gewoon uitgeput was door de hitte of zo. Ik bedoel, het was een idioot hete julidag (negenendertig graden met een luchtvochtigheid van negentig procent) en er waren zoveel mensen die bezweken van de hitte, dus waarom zou een hondje in bontjas dat niet doen? Ik probeerde hem water te geven, maar daar moest hij niets van hebben. Hij lag met rode, waterige, snotterige oogjes op zijn bed. Hij piepte van de pijn. Toen ik hem aanraakte, jankte hij als een gek. Het leek wel of zijn zenuwen tien centimeter buiten zijn vel uitstaken. Ik dacht dat het vast beter zou gaan als hij rustig bleef liggen, maar toen moest hij overgeven en spoot de diarree eruit, en hij

kreeg krampen waarbij zijn pootjes maar schopten en schopten. En natuurlijk was Oscar maar een geadopteerd zwerfhondje, maar hij was het enige levende wezen waarop ik kon vertrouwen. Hij was betrouwbaarder dan mijn ouders, grootmoeder, tantes, ooms, neven, nichten en grote zus. Hij had me meer geleerd dan alle leraren ooit hebben gedaan. Eerlijk, Oscar was een beter mens dan alle mensen die ik ooit had gekend.

'Ma,' zei ik. 'We moeten met Oscar naar de dierenarts.'  
'Hij wordt wel beter,' zei ze.  
Maar ze loog. Haar ogen werden altijd donkerder in het midden als ze loog. Ze was een Spokane-indiaan en kon slecht liegen, wat nergens op sloeg. Wij indianen zouden echt beter moeten kunnen liegen, als je nagaat hoe vaak er tegen ons gelogen wordt. 'Hij is heel erg ziek, ma,' zei ik. 'Als we niet met hem naar de dokter gaan, gaat hij dood.'  
Ze keek me ernstig aan. En haar ogen waren niet donker meer, zodat ik wist dat ze nu de waarheid ging spreken. En geloof me, er zijn momenten dat de waarheid wel het laatste is wat je wilt horen.

'Junior, lieverd,' zei ma. 'Het spijt me, maar we hebben geen geld voor Oscar.'  
'Ik betaal het terug,' zei ik. 'Dat beloof ik.'  
'Het gaat honderden dollars kosten, jongen, misschien wel duizend.'  
'Ik betaal het terug, wat de dokter kost. Ik zoek een baantje.'  
Mijn moeder glimlachte heel droevig en drukte me dicht tegen zich aan.

Jee, hoe kon ik zo stom zijn? Wat kan een jongen uit het indianenreservaat nou voor baantje krijgen? Ik was te jong om blackjackdealer in het casino te worden, er waren maar een stuk of



vijftien groene gazons in het reservaat (en geen van hun eigenaars besteedde het maaien uit) en de enige krantenwijk was in het bezit van een stamoudere die Wally heette. En die hield maar vijftig kranten te bezorgen, dus zijn baantje was meer een hobby.

Ik kon niets doen om Oscar te redden.

Niets.

Niets.

Niets.

Daarom ging ik naast hem op de grond liggen en aaide over zijn kop en fluisterde zijn naam. Urenlang.

Toen kwam mijn vader thuis van weetikwaar en had een van die lange gesprekken met mijn moeder, en zij namen zónder mij een besluit.

En toen haalde mijn vader zijn geweer en kogels uit de kast.

'Junior,' zei hij, 'draag Oscar naar buiten.'

'Neel,' schreeuwde ik.

'Hij lijdt pijn,' zei mijn vader. 'We moeten hem helpen.'

'Dat mag je niet doen!' schreeuwde ik.

Ik wou mijn vader in zijn gezicht stompen. Ik wou hem op zijn neus stompen zodat hij ging bloeden. Ik wou hem op zijn ogen stompen zodat hij blind werd. Ik wou hem in zijn ballen trappen zodat hij van zijn stokje ging.

Ik kookte van woede. Ik was vulkaankwaad. Tsunamikwaad.

Mijn vader keek me alleen maar met ontzettend bedroefde ogen aan. Hij huilde. Hij zag er zwak uit.

Ik wou hem haten om zijn zwakheid.

Ik wou mijn vader en moeder haten om onze armoede.

Ik wou hun de schuld geven van mijn zieke hond en van alle andere ziekten in de wereld.

Maar ik kan mijn ouders niet de schuld geven van onze armoede omdat mijn vader en moeder de tweelingzonnen zijn waar ik

omheen cirkel, en omdat mijn wereld zou EXPLODEREN zonder hen.

En als mijn vader en moeder nu in rijkdom geboren waren. Als ze nu hun familiefortuin hadden vergokt. Maar mijn ouders kwamen van arme mensen die van arme mensen kwamen die van arme mensen kwamen, helemaal terug tot aan de allereerste arme mensen.

Adam en Eva bedekten hun geslachtsdelen met een vijgenblad, de eerste indianen bedekten ze *met hun handjes*.

Serius, ik weet dat mijn vader en moeder hun dromen hadden toen ze nog klein waren. Ze droomden dat ze iets anders zouden worden dan arm, maar ze kregen nooit de kans iets te worden omdat geen mens aandacht schonk aan hun dromen.

Als ze de kans had gekregen, was mijn moeder gaan studeren.

Ze verslindt nog steeds boeken. Ze koopt ze met kilo's tegelijk.

En alles wat ze leest, onthoudt ze.

Ze kan hele bladzijden uit haar hoofd voordragen. Ze is een menselijke taperecorder. Eerlijk waar, mijn moeder kan in een kwartier de krant lezen en me dan de baseballuitslagen vertellen, en waar er overal oorlog is, wie net de loterij heeft gewonnen en hoe warm het is in Des Moines, Iowa.

Als mijn vader de kans had gekregen, was hij muzikant geworden.

Wanneer hij dronken is zingt hij oude countryliedjes. En blues. En hij klinkt goed. Alsof hij beroeps is. Alsof hij op de radio zou moeten zijn. Hij speelt gitaar en een klein beetje piano. En hij heeft nog een oude saxofoon van de middelbare school, die hij glimmend gepoetst houdt, alsof hij elk ogenblik bij een band kan gaan.

Maar wij reservaatindianen kunnen onze dromen niet uit laten komen. Die kans krijgen wij niet. Of die keuze. Wij zijn alleen maar arm. Meer niet.



# WIE MIJN OUDERS

ZOUDEN ZIJN  
GEWEEST  
ALS ER IEMAND OOG HAD GEHAD  
VOOR HUN DROMEN:



SPOKANE FALLS  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

DOCENT  
VAN HET JAAR  
1992 - 98

DE  
OP VIER NA BESTE JAZZ SAX-  
SPELER TEN WESTEN VAN DE  
MISSISSIPPI

Het is beroerd om arm te zijn, en het is beroerd om het gevoel te hebben dat je het om de een of andere reden verdient om arm te zijn. Je gaat geloven dat je arm bent omdat je dom en lelijk bent. En dan ga je geloven dat je dom en lelijk bent omdat je indiaans bent. En omdat je indiaans bent, ga je geloven dat je voorbestemd bent om arm te zijn. Het is een akelige cirkel en je kunt er niets aan veranderen.

Armoede maakt je niet sterk en leert je niets over doorzettingsvermogen. Nee, armoede leert je alleen arm te zijn. Daarom tilde ik, arm en klein en zwak, Oscar op. Hij likte me in mijn gezicht omdat hij van me hield en me vertrouwde. En ik droeg hem naar buiten naar het grasveld en legde hem onder onze groene appelboom.

'Je bent de liefste van de wereld, Oscar,' zei ik.

Hij keek me aan en ik zweer je dat hij begreep wat er gebeurde. Hij wist wat mijn vader ging doen. Maar Oscar was niet bang. Hij was opgelucht.

Maar ik niet.

Ik rende zo hard ik kon daarvandaan.

Ik wilde harder rennen dan het geluid, maar zo hard kan niemand rennen, hoe verdrietig hij ook is. Daarom hoorde ik de knal van mijn vaders geweer toen hij mijn beste vriend doodschoot.

Een kogel kost maar een cent of twee, en dat kan iedereen nog wel missen.



## Wraak is zoet

Na Oscars dood was ik zo neerslachtig dat ik overwoog in een gat te kruipen en nooit meer tevoorschijn te komen.

Maar dat praatte Rowdy me uit mijn hoofd.

'Er is toch niemand die het merkt als jij weggaat,' zei hij. 'Dus je kunt het net zo goed uitzingen.'

Is dat geen liefde in een stoer jasje?

Rowdy is de stoerste jongen in het reservaat. Hij is lang en mager en sterk als een slang.

Zijn hart is ook net zo sterk en gemeen als een slang.

Maar hij is mijn beste menselijke vriend en hij geeft om me, en daarom zou hij nooit tegen me liegen.

En hij heeft gelijk. Niemand zou me missen als ik er niet meer was.

Nou ja, Rowdy zou me missen, maar dat zou hij nooit toegeven. Voor zulk emotioneel gedoe is hij veel te stoer.

Maar afgezien van Rowdy, en mijn ouders en mijn zus en mijn grootmoeder, zou niemand me missen.

Ik ben een nul in het reservaat. En als je nul van nul aftrekt, heb je nog steeds nul. Dus wat heeft aftrekken voor nut als het antwoord altijd hetzelfde blijft?

Daarom zing ik het uit.

Ik moet wel, denk ik, vooral omdat Rowdy een van de afschuwelijkste zomers van zijn leven doormaakt.

Zijn vader is zwaar aan de drank en deelt harde meppen uit, zodat Rowdy en zijn moeder voortdurend rondlopen met een gekneusd en bebloed gezicht.

'Oorlogskleuren,' zegt Rowdy altijd. 'Daarmee zie ik er gewoon stoerder uit.'

En daar heeft hij wel gelijk in, neem ik aan, want Rowdy probeert nooit zijn verwondingen te verbergen. Hij loopt rond in het reserveservaat met een blauw oog en een gespleten lip.

Vanochtend hinkte hij ons huis binnen, viel in een stoel neer, legde zijn verstuikte knie op tafel en grijnsde.

Hij had een verband over zijn linker oor.

'Wat is er met je hoofd gebeurd?' vroeg ik.

'Pa zei dat ik niet luisterde,' zei hij. 'En toen zoop hij zich klem en probeerde mijn oor wat groter te maken.'

Mijn vader en moeder zijn ook zatklappen, maar zij zijn niet zo gemeen. Beslist niet. Soms negeren ze me. Soms schreeuwen ze tegen me. Maar me slaan doen ze echt *nooit*. Ik heb zelfs nog nooit een pak voor mijn broek gekregen. Echt waar. Ik geloof dat mijn moeder wel eens wil uithalen om me een tik te geven, maar dat laat mijn vader niet toe.

Hij geloof niet in lichamelijke straf; hij geloof in me zo kil aanstaren dat ik verander in een ijsklontje met een ijslaagje eromheen en een vulling van ijs.

Ons huis is een veilige plek, en daarom zit Rowdy meestal bij ons. Het lijkt wel of hij bij de familie hoort, een extra broer en zoon. 'Heb je zin om naar de powwow te gaan?' vroeg hij.

'Neuh,' zei ik.

De Spokanestam viert de jaarlijkse powwow altijd tijdens het weekend van Labor Day. Dit was de honderdzeventwintigste viering, met zang, krijgsdansen, gokken, verhalen vertellen, lachen, gebakken brood, hamburgers, hotdogs, kunstnijverheid en volop alcoholisch geknok.

Ik moest er niets van hebben.

O, het dansen en zingen is geweldig, mooi zelfs, maar ik ben bang voor alle indianen die niet dansen of zingen. Die ritmeloze,



talentloze, melodieleze indianen gaan zich hoogstwaarschijnlijk bezatten om dan alle beschikbare sukkels lens te slaan.

En ik ben altijd de meest beschikbare sukkel.

'Kom op,' zei Rowdy. 'Ik bescherm je wel.'

Hij wist dat ik bang was een pak slaag te krijgen. En hij wist ook dat hij vermoedelijk voor me zou moeten vechten.

Rowdy beschermt me al sinds onze geboorte.

Allebei zijn we op vijf november negentientweënnegentig in het Sacred Heart Hospital de wereld in geperst. Ik ben twee uur ouder dan Rowdy. Ik werd helemaal gekneusd en verdraaid geboren en hij werd kwaad geboren.

Hij was altijd aan het huilen en schreeuwen, schoppen en stompen.

Wanneer zijn moeder hem wilde voeden, beet hij in haar borst. Omdat hij dat bleef doen, gaf ze het op en bracht hem met de fles groot.

Sindsdien is hij eigenlijk niet veel veranderd.

Nou ja, niet dat hij op zijn veertiende de hele tijd in vrouwenborsten bijt, maar stompen en schoppen en spugen doet hij wel. Hij ging voor het eerst op de vuist op de kleuterschool. Tijdens een sneeuwballengevecht nam hij het op tegen drie eersteklassers omdat een van hen een brok ijs had gegooid. Rowdy had ze in minder dan geen tijd neergeslagen.

En toen sloeg hij de leraar die een eind aan het vechten kwam maken.

Hij deed die leraar geen pijn, helemaal niet, maar man, wat was die vent kwaad.

'Wat mankeert jou?' brulde hij.

'Alles!' brulde Rowdy terug.

Rowdy vocht met iedereen.

Hij vocht met jongens en meisjes.

Mannen en vrouwen.

Hij vocht met zwerfhonden.

Verdomd, hij vocht zelfs met het weer.

Hij deelde woeste stompen uit aan de regen. Eerlijk waar.

'Kom op, sukkel,' zei hij nu. 'Ga mee naar de powwow. Je kunt je niet eeuwig in huis blijven verstoppert. Dan verander je in een trol of zoiets.'

'Als iemand me begint te jennen?' vroeg ik.

'Dan jen ik hém.'

'Of als iemand me op mijn kop zit?'

'Dan kom ik erbij zitten.'

'Je bent mijn held,' zei ik.

'Ga nou mee naar de powwow,' zei Rowdy. 'Alsjeblieft.'

Het wil heel wat zeggen als Rowdy beleefd doet.

'Oké, goed dan,' zei ik.

En zo liepen Rowdy en ik de vijf kilometer naar het powwow-terrein. Het was donker, een uur of acht misschien, en de drummers en zangers waren luidruchtig en geweldig.

Ik was opgewonden. Maar ik raakte ook onderkoeld. Tijdens de Spokane Powwow is het overdag bloedheet en 's avonds ijskoud.

'Ik had mijn jas moeten aantrekken,' zei ik.

'Word eens wat harder,' zei Rowdy.

'Kom op, dan gaan we naar de kippendansers kijken,' zei ik.

Ik vind de kippendansers cool omdat ze, nou, als kippen dansen. En je weet al hoe gek ik op kippen ben.

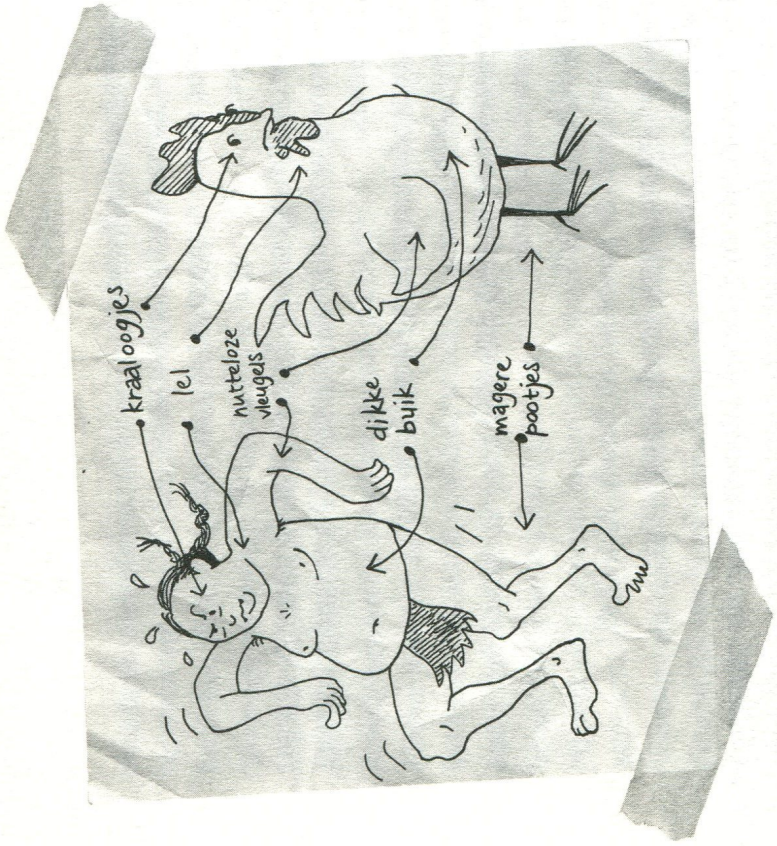
'Wat een stom gedoe,' zei Rowdy.

'We blijven maar eventjes kijken,' zei ik. 'En dan gaan we wel gokken of zo.'

'Oké,' zei Rowdy. Hij is de enige mens die naar me luistert.

We liepen zigzaggend tussen de geparkeerde auto's, busjes, SUV's, campers, plastic tenten en tipi's van hertenvellen door.





'Hé, zullen we zelfgestookte whisky gaan kopen,' zei Rowdy. 'Ik heb vijf dollar.'

'Kijk uit dat je niet dronken wordt,' zei ik. 'Daar word je maar lelijk van.'

'Ik ben al lelijk,' zei hij.

Hij lachte, struikelde over een tentpaal en botste tegen een minibusje op. Hij knalde met zijn gezicht tegen een raampje en kneusde zijn schouder tegen de zijspiegel.

Dat was nogal grappig, en daarom lachte ik.

Dat was niet slim.

Rowdy werd kwaad.

Hij duwde me tegen de grond en het scheelde niet veel of hij schopte me. Hij zwaaide zijn been in mijn richting, maar trok het op het laatste moment terug. Ik kon zien dat hij me wat wilde

doen omdat ik lachte. Maar ik ben zijn vriend, zijn enige vriend. Hij kon me niks doen. Daarom greep hij een vuilniszak vol lege bierflesjes en smeed die naar het minibusje.

Overal glasscherven.

Toen greep hij een schop die iemand had gebruikt om barbecue-kuilen te graven, en ging het busje te lijf. Hij gaf het een ongena-dig pak slaag.

Klets! Boem! Knal!

Hij sloeg deuken in de deuren, versplinterde de raampjes en mepte de spiegels eraf.

Ik was bang voor hem en ik was bang in de cel gegooid te worden voor vandalisme en daarom ging ik ervandoor.

Dat was niet slim.

Ik rende zo het kamp van de gebroeders Andruss in. De gebroeders Andruss – John, Jim en Joe – zijn de gemeenste drieling die ooit heeft bestaan.

'Hé, kijk,' zei een van hen. 'Daar heb je Waterhoofd.'

Precies, die eikels maakten geintjes over mijn hersenafwijking. Leuk hè?

'Neuh, dat is Waterhoofd niet,' zei een van de andere twee. 'Dat is Waterski.'

Ik weet niet welke broer dat zei. Ik kon ze niet uit elkaar houden.

Ik besloot er maar weer vandoor te gaan, maar toen greep een van hen me vast en schoof me naar de volgende broer. Met z'n drieën schoven ze me heen en weer. Ze speelden vangbal met me.

'Waterleiding.'

'Waterketel.'

'Waterpokken.'

'Waterval.'

'Watermeloen.'

'Waterpomptang.'



'Waterstofperoxide.'

Ik viel op de grond. Een van de broers raapte me op, stofte me af en gaf me toen een knietje.

Ik viel weer neer, hield mijn handen tegen mijn pijnlijke kruis en deed mijn best niet te schreeuwen.

De gebroeders Andruss liepen lachend weg.

O, heb ik trouwens al verteld dat de Andruss-drieling dertig jaar oud is?

Wat voor mannen slaan nou een jongen van veertien in elkaar?

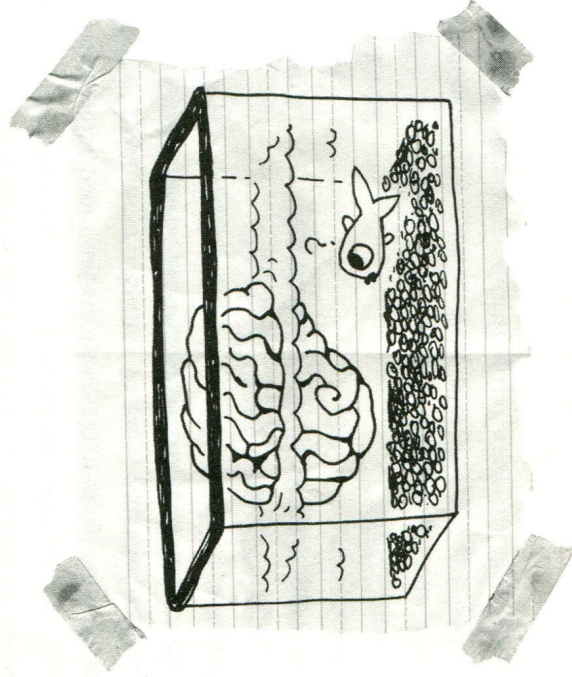
Eersteklas klootzakken.

Ik lag op de grond mijn ballen vast te houden, zo voorzichtig als een eekhoorn zijn nootjes vasthoudt, toen Rowdy kwam aanlopen.

'Aan wie heb je dat te danken?' vroeg hij.

'De gebroeders Andruss,' zei ik.

'Hebben ze je voor je kop geslagen?' vroeg Rowdy. Hij weet dat mijn brein kwetsbaar is. Als die broertjes Andruss het aquarium dat mijn schedel is lek hadden geslagen zou ik misschien wel de hele powwow overstroomd hebben.



'Met mijn hoofd is niks aan de hand,' zei ik, 'maar mijn ballen liggen op sterven.'

'Ik ga die eikels vermoorden,' zei Rowdy.

Natuurlijk deed hij dat niet echt, maar we verstoppen ons tot drie uur 's nachts in de buurt van hun kamp. Toen kwamen ze terug-wankelen en vielen laveloos neer in hun tent. Rowdy sloop naar binnen, schoor hun wenkbrauwen weg en sneed hun vlecht af. Dat is zo ongeveer het ergste wat je een indiaan kunt aandoen. Het had hun jaren gekost hun haar te laten groeien. En Rowdy sneed het in vijf seconden af.

Ik vond het geweldig van hem dat hij dat deed. En ik voelde me schuldig dat ik dat geweldig van hem vond. Maar wraak is een ontzettend lekker gevoel.

De gebroeders Andruss kwamen er nooit achter wie hen van hun wenkbrauwen en hun haar had afgeholpen, maar Rowdy verspreidde het gerucht dat het een stel Makah-indianen van de kust was geweest.

'Die walvisjagers zijn niet te vertrouwen,' zei Rowdy. 'Die zijn tot alles in staat.'

Maar voor je nu denkt dat Rowdy alleen maar goed is voor wraak, en om minibusjes, regendruppels en mensen op hun lutzer te geven, zal ik je iets liefs over hem vertellen: hij houdt van stripboeken.

En dan niet de spannende superheldenstrips als *Daredevil* of *X-Men*. Nee, hij leest die halfgare oude, zoals *Richie Rich* en *Archie* en *Casper het vriendelijke spookje*. Kinderspul. Hij houdt ze verstoppt in een gat in de wand van zijn slaapkamerkast. Haast elke dag ga ik naar zijn huis en dan lezen we samen die stripboeken. Rowdy leest niet erg snel, maar hij is wel vasthoudend. En hij blijft maar steeds lachen om die stomme grappen, hoe vaak hij een boek ook al gelezen heeft.





Ik vind het fijn Rowdy te horen lachen. Dat hoor ik niet zo vaak, maar het is altijd zo'n lawine van haha en hoho en hihi. Ik maak hem graag aan het lachen. Hij is gek op mijn cartoons. En hij is ook een grote dromerige sukkel, net als ik. Hij doet graag net of hij in die stripboeken leeft. Ik denk dat een nepleven in een strip heel wat prettiger is dan zijn echte leven. Daarom teken ik cartoons om hem op te vrolijken, om hem andere werelden te geven om in te leven. Ik teken zijn dromen. En hij praat alleen met mij over zijn dromen. En ik praat alleen met hem over mijn dromen.

Ik vertel hem waar ik bang voor ben.

Ik denk dat Rowdy misschien wel de belangrijkste mens in mijn leven is. Misschien nog wel belangrijker dan mijn familie. Kan je beste vriend belangrijker zijn dan je familie?

Volgens mij wel.

Tenslotte breng ik veel meer tijd door met Rowdy dan met iemand van mijn familie.

Eens even rekenen.

Ik denk dat Rowdy en ik de afgelopen veertien jaar gemiddeld acht uur per dag samen zijn geweest.

Dat is acht uur keer driehonderdvijfenzestig dagen keer veertien jaar.

Dat wil zeggen dat Rowdy en ik veertigduizend achthonderdtachtig uur in elkaars gezelschap hebben doorgebracht.

Daar komt niemand anders bij in de buurt.

Neem dat maar van mij aan.

Rowdy en ik zijn onafscheidelijk.