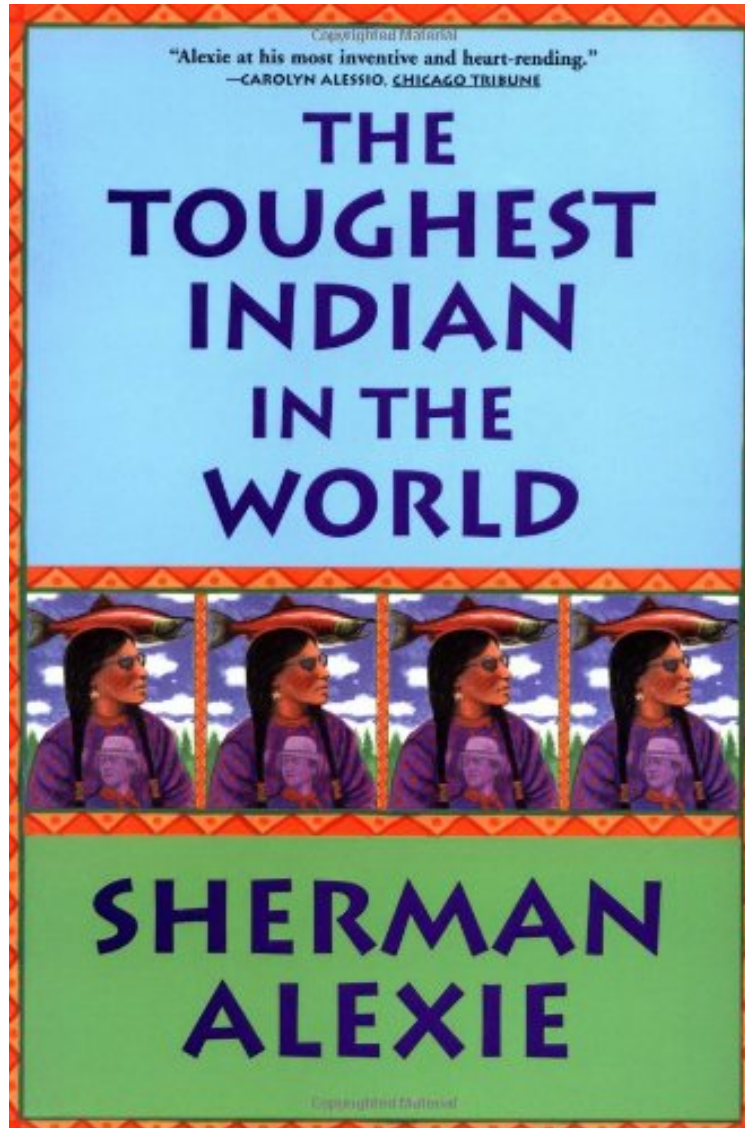


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The Toughest Indian in the World

Sherman Alexie

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Sherman Alexie : The Toughest Indian in the World before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Toughest Indian in the World:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. All of Sherman Alexie's books are excellent. This is By Bill Hansen All of Sherman Alexie's books are excellent. This is, I think, his first one. It's an autobiographic story told partly with clever cartoons, but mostly with insightful and sympathetic narration of Alexie's family and acquaintances. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Engaging, irreverent, beautiful, ugly, funny, sad! By M. Shearer Morphing into Junior's psyche is a trip of belonging/not belonging, being embraced/rejected, but

underneath is a resonance of love and respect for family, friends, culture, and honor. A great read! 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Wise in thought and feeling
By Customer
This book is more impactful than any I have read, and I am a compulsive reader. There is grief and pain fully developed and love and joy that bring honest joy to the reader.

A beloved American writer whose books are championed by critics and readers alike, Sherman Alexie has been hailed by Time as "one of the better new novelists, Indian or otherwise." Now his acclaimed new collection, *The Toughest Indian in the World*, which received universal praise in hardcover, is available in paperback. In these stories, we meet the kind of American Indians we rarely see in literature -- the kind who pay their bills, hold down jobs, fall in and out of love. A Spokane Indian journalist transplanted from the reservation to the city picks up a hitchhiker, a Lummi boxer looking to take on the toughest Indian in the world. A Spokane son waits for his diabetic father to come home from the hospital, tossing out the Hershey Kisses the father has hidden all over the house. An estranged interracial couple, separated in the midst of a traffic accident, rediscover their love for each other. A white drifter holds up an International House of Pancakes, demanding a dollar per customer and someone to love, and emerges with \$42 and an overweight Indian he dubs Salmon Boy. Sherman Alexie's voice is one of remarkable passion, and these stories are love stories -- between parents and children, white people and Indians, movie stars and ordinary people. Witty, tender, and fierce, *The Toughest Indian in the World* is a virtuoso performance by one of the country's finest writers.

.com Call Sherman Alexie any number of things--novelist, poet, filmmaker, thorn in the side of white liberalism--just don't call him "universal." Aside from his well-documented distaste for the word, its fuzziness misses the point. *The Toughest Indian in the World*, Alexie's second collection, succeeds as brilliantly as it does because of its particularity. These aren't stories about the Indian Condition; they're stories about Indians--urban and reservation, street fighters and yuppies, husbands and wives. "She understood that white people were eccentric and complicated and she only wanted to be understood as eccentric and complicated as well," thinks the Coeur d'Alene narrator of "Assimilation," who's married (unhappily) to a white man. And yet the issue of race has taken up permanent residence inside her house: the marriage survives, but it's love that's the most thorough assimilation of all. Like *The Lone Ranger* and *Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*, much of *The Toughest Indian in the World* combines deft psychological realism with the kind of narrative logic more commonly found in dreams. In "South by Southwest," a white drifter finds love on a "nonviolent killing spree" with an overweight Indian he calls Salmon Boy; in "Dear John Wayne," the cowboy actor falls in love with a young Spokane woman and proves himself a charmingly feminist hero. ("Oh, sons, you're just engaging in some harmless gender play," he tells his boys when he finds them trying on lipstick.) But for every bear hibernating on top of the Catholic church, there's also a GAP-wearing, Toyota-driving urban Indian on a quest for his roots. In both realist and surrealist modes, Alexie writes incantatory prose--as well as the kind of dialogue that makes even secondary characters leap into sudden focus: "'What?' asked Wonder Horse, as simple a question as could possibly be tendered, though he made it sound as if he'd asked Where's the tumor?" Alexie is sometimes guilty of painting his white characters with too broad a brush. (Is any anthropologist truly as obtuse as the one in "Dear John Wayne"? Could any reader really want Mary Lynn, the narrator of "Assimilation," to stay with her boorish white husband?) Yet his kind of firebrand politics still has the power to shock. A harrowing fable about whites kidnapping Indians for the medical properties of their blood, "The Sin Eaters" could be dismissed as paranoid if it weren't so hauntingly written: On that morning, the sun rose and bloomed like blood in a glass syringe. The entire Spokane Indian Reservation and all of its people and places were clean and scrubbed. The Spokane River rose up from its bed like a man who had been healed and joyously wept all the way down to its confluence with the Columbia River. There was water everywhere: a thousand streams interrupted by makeshift waterfalls; small ponds hidden beneath a mask of thick fronds and anonymous blossoms; blankets of dew draped over the shoulders of isolated knolls. An entire civilization of insects lived in the mud puddle formed by one truck tire and a recent rain storm. The blades of grass, the narrow pine needles, and the stalks of roadside wheat were as sharp and bright as surgical tools. It's a hard story to read, and that's only right. *The Toughest Indian in the World* offers so many pleasures, who could deny it the power to disturb us as well? Funny, dreamlike, heartbreaking, angry--these are stories that could have been written by no one but Sherman Alexie. --Mary Park
From Publishers Weekly
A prolific novelist, poet and screenplay writer, Alexie (*Indian Killer*; *Reservation Blues*) has been hailed as one of the best young writers of his generation. This dexterous second collection of stories contains what may be one of the best short fiction pieces of the year. "The Toughest Indian in the World" follows a young Spokane Indian who works at an all-white newspaper in Seattle and, in a forlorn attempt to reconnect with his roots, has his first homosexual experience with a tough Lummi fighter. It's a moving story that skillfully employs symbolism and flashbacks to construct an ending that is both uplifting and sorrowful. Many of the eight other stories in this collection also deal with urban Indians who are straddling two worlds: an intimate but indigent life on the reservation and an affluent but strange and sometimes hostile white middle-class existence. Their solutions to this double bind are rarely ordinary. "Assimilation" tells of a Coeur d'Alene woman who deliberately cheats on her white husband, only to rediscover her affection for him in the middle of a traffic jam. "Class" features a Spokane who

sometimes tells white women he's Aztec, because "there were aphrodisiacal benefits from claiming to be descended from ritual cannibals." In "South by Southwest" a white man and a fat Indian nicknamed Salmon Boy, who declares he's not homosexual but does believe in love, set off on a nonviolent killing spree. Two tales, "Saint Junior" and "A Good Man," deal with marriage and death on the rez. The anger in these narratives is leavened by Alexie's acerbic wit and his obvious belief in the redemptive power of love. One exception, however, is "The Sin Eaters," an apocalyptic tale in which America's Indians are rounded up into massive underground prisons where soldiers force them to breed and give up their blood. Humorous, disturbing, formally inventive and heartwarming, Alexie's stories continually surprise, revealing him once again as a master of his craft. Agent, Nancy Cahoon, N. Stauffer Assoc. (May) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Alexie may not be the toughest Indian in the world (in this stunning new collection, that honor goes to a Lummi fighter picked up by the narrator Dor perhaps it's the durable narrator himself), but he definitely writes some of the toughest prose around. This work, Alexie's first collection since *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*, offers nine stories rendered in muscular, unencumbered language that can deliver a shock like a good, hard punch. No, we shouldn't be much surprised when a character announces, "Indians just like to believe that white people will vanish, perhaps explode into smoke, if they are ignored enough times," but the delivery is so cool we are caught off guard. As the stories proceed from an Indian wife reconnecting with her husband after a calculated tryst to a lesbian couple (one Indian, one white) whose lives are complicated by a down-and-out male friend to an Indian father happy (is he really?) that his son has a good life with a white stepfather, Alexie moves in for the kill, consistently surprising us with stories that are neither sentimental nor angry but far more emotionally complex. Highly recommended. DBarbara Hoffert, "Library Journal" Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.