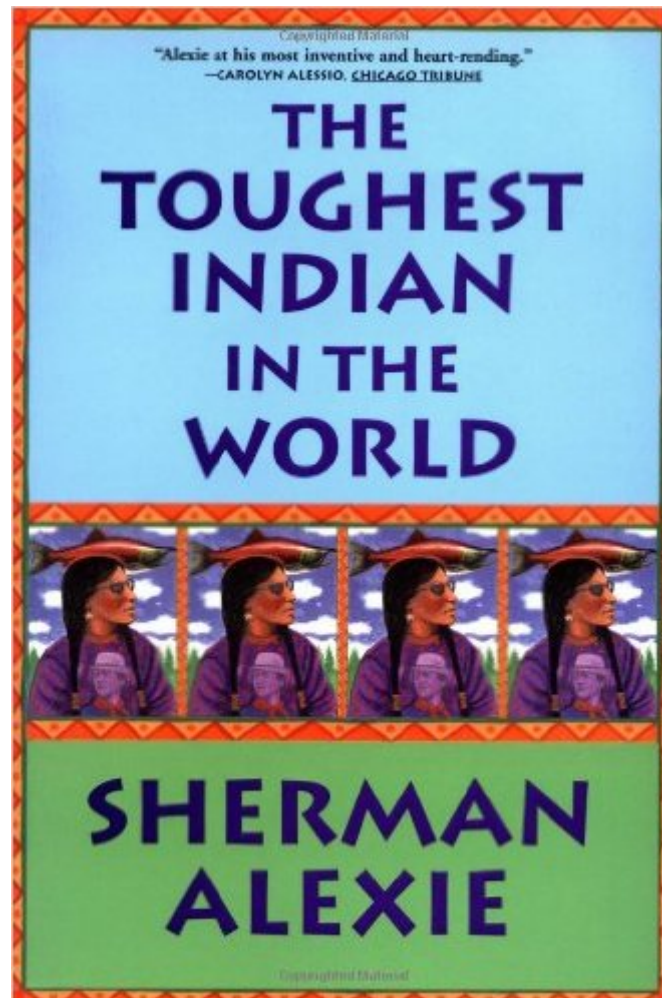


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# The Toughest Indian In The World



## Synopsis

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.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Mr. President you ought to know that this nation is more a 'Tale of Two Cities' than it is just a 'Shining City on a Hill.' "-- Mario Cuomo, 1984 National Democratic Convention Keynote Address" 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. So opines high school student and sometime cartoonist Arnold Spirit, aka Junior, who is despondent as his father prepares to shoot Arnold's suffering dog because there is no money to pay for a veterinarian's services. But a math teacher -- whose nose is broken when Arnold, in his frustration, angrily throws his generations-old math book -- endeavors to change Arnold's sense of helplessness: "You can't give up. You won't give up. You threw that book in my face because somewhere inside you refuse to give up." "I didn't know what he was talking about. Or maybe I just didn't want to know." "Jeez, it was a lot of pressure to put on a kid. I was carrying the burden of my race, you know? I was going to get a bad back from it." "If you stay on this rez," Mr. P said, "they're going to kill you. I'm going to kill you. We're all going to kill you. You can't fight us forever." "I don't want to fight anybody," I said. "You've been fighting since you were born," he said. "You fought off that brain surgery. You fought off those seizures. You fought off all the drunks and drug addicts. You kept your hope. And now, you have to take your hope and go somewhere where other people have hope."

TATDOAPTI may be a teen fiction book and I have been out of that awkward phase of life for five years, but I could not resist this story of a contemporary Walter Mitty transplanted in the heart of a Washington reservation. In Sherman Alexie's narrator, there's a boundless energy and a high-strung desire to prove the system--and the world--wrong when it comes to Native Americans. Arnold (known as Junior) Spirit is an aspiring cartoonist (samples of his work can be found throughout the book) has a plethora of problems: he has medical issues ranging from poor eyesight and a past onset of seizures, one friend, and a troubled yet loving family. His world gets upturned when a teacher tells him to get off the reservation, not figuratively, but psychologically and spiritually. Junior's never had someone inform him of his full potential to be something other than "another troubled drunken Indian," so when the chance comes to transfer to a good school in the middle of a racist town outside his home, Junior leaps at the chance. While there, Junior struggles with the mere fact that he's a Native American in a sea of white students and teachers; this fact continues to plague him when his friend turns his back on him and his whole reservation thinks he's a sell-out. But Junior, Lord bless him, is determined to make a name for himself, and even finds a little romance, convoluted as it is, and makes a few friends who help him expand his mind and reach his goals. Narrated like random passages from a journal (hence the title), I have nothing but love for

this funny, sweet, and conflicted boy. If he were older, I would totally go out with him. But, since he is a character in a novel, all I can say is he is a wonderful voice for a life that no one notices.

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