



War Dances

By Sherman Alexie

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In his first new fiction since winning the National Book Award for *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, best-selling author Sherman Alexie delivers a virtuoso collection of tender, witty, and soulful stories that expertly capture modern relationships from the most diverse angles. *War Dances* brims with Alexie's poetic and revolutionary prose, and reminds us once again why he ranks as one of our country's finest writers.

With bright insight into the minds of artists, entrepreneurs, fathers, husbands, and sons, Alexie populates his stories with average men on the brink of exceptional change: In the title story, a son recalls his father's "natural Indian death" from alcohol and diabetes, just as he learns that he himself may have a brain tumor; "The Ballad of Paul Nonetheless," dissects a vintage clothing store owner's failing marriage and courtship of a Puma-clad stranger in airports across the country; and "Breaking and Entering" recounts a film editor's fateful confrontation with an thieving adolescent.

Brazen and wise *War Dances* takes us to the heart of what it means to be human. The new beginnings, successes, mistakes, and regrets that make up our daily lives are laid bare in this wide-ranging new work that is quintessential

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War Dances By Sherman Alexie Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

From National Book Award-winner Alexie comes a new collection of stories, poems, question and answer sequences, and hybrids of all three and beyond. In a penetrating voice that mixes humor with anger, Alexie pointedly asks, If it is true that children pay for the sins of their fathers, then is it also true that fathers pay for the sins of their children? Many of the stories revolve around the complexities of fatherhood; in the title story, the Native American narrator recalls his alcoholic father's death as he confronts his own mortality, and The Ballad of Paul Nonetheless is the tale of an eccentric vintage clothing salesman whose sexual attraction to his wife fades following the birth of their children. The collection also contains stirring defenses of artistic integrity; Fearful Symmetry is an incisive account of working as a young screenwriter for a Hollywood studio, and the poem Ode to Mix Tapes endorses hard work as the key ingredient behind any creation. Alexie unfurls highly expressive language, and while at times his jokes bomb and the characters' anger can feel forced, overall this is a spiritedly provocative array of tragic comedies. (Oct.)

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Review

“Sherman Alexie is not a finicky writer. He is often messy and in-your-face in a way that can make you laugh (or shudder) when you least expect to. . . . *War Dances* is Alexie’s fiercely freewheeling collection of stories and poems about the tragicomedies of ordinary lives.” —*O, the Oprah Magazine*

“Alexie has a wry, subversive sensibility. . . . The structure [in *War Dances*] is sophisticated yet playful, a subtle way to bring lightness to heavy topics such as senility, bigotry, cancer, and loneliness. . . . A mix tape of a book, with many voices, pieces of different length, shifting rhythms, an evolving story.” —*Los Angeles Times*

“Smart modern stories interspersed with witty and deep-feeling verse.” —*San Francisco Chronicle*

“Sherman Alexie mixes up comedy and tragedy, shoots it through with tenderness, then delivers with a provocateur’s don’t-give-a-damn flourish. He’s unique, and his new book, *War Dances*, is another case in point.” —*Seattle Times*

“Alexie’s works are piercing yet rueful. He writes odes to anguished pay-phone calls, to boys who would drive through blizzards to see a girl, to couples who need to sit together on airplane flights even though the computer thinks otherwise. . . . [A] marvelous collection.” —*Miami Herald*

“*War Dances* taps every vein and nerve, every tissue, every issue that quickens the current blood-pulse: parenthood, divorce, broken links, sex, gender and racial conflict, substance abuse, medical neglect, 9/11, Official Narrative vs. What Really Happened, settler religion vs. native spirituality, marketing, shopping, and war, war, war. All the heartbreak ways we don’t live now—this is the caring, eye-opening beauty of this rollicking, bittersweet gem of a book.” —PEN/Faulkner judge Al Young

“Few other contemporary writers seem willing to deal with issues of race, class, and sexuality as explicitly as Alexie . . . [“War Dances”] is a virtuoso performance of wit and pathos, a cultural and familial critique and a son’s quiet, worthless scream against the night as his father expires . . . [that] reminds me of the early 20th Century master of the short form Akutagawa Ryunosuke. . . . Yet again Sherman Alexie has given us a hell

of a ride.”—Barnes & Noble Reviews

“*War Dances* is maybe the most personal book Alexie has ever published, and it’s certainly one of his most readable. The closest thing to a historical precedent for this book is *Palm Sunday*, Kurt Vonnegut’s wildly entertaining self-described ‘autobiographical collage’ of anecdotes, fiction, reminiscences, and other work. . . . Each piece firmly builds on some part of the other, like the songs on a good mix tape. . . . The asymmetrical collection on display in *War Dances* works as a supremely gratifying reading experience.”—*The Stranger*

“Penetrating . . . Alexie unfurls highly expressive language . . . [in] this spiritedly provocative array of tragic comedies.”—*Publishers Weekly*

“Encounter [Alexie’s work] once and you’ll never forget it.”—*Library Journal*

“Alexie is at his best in this collection of hilarious and touching stories.”—*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

“[With *War Dances*], Sherman Alexie enhances his stature as a multitalented writer and an astute observer of life among Native Americans in the Pacific Northwest. . . . [An] edgy and frequently surprising collection.”—*Bookpage*

“Remarkable . . . Wonderful . . . [Alexie’s] work reveals both the light and dark within native American life. A paradox in his writing is that you can be in the middle of delighted laughter when he will hit you with a sentence so true to the core of a character’s pain that you suck your breath or are startled to realize you are crying.”—*The Globe and Mail*

“Alexie is a master storyteller whose prose is laced with metaphoric realities of life, mixed with triumph and tragedy. . . . *War Dances* is vintage Alexie . . . [and] should be savored. . . . Fans will not be disappointed.”—*The Grand Rapids Press*

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drive through blizzards to see a girl, to couples who need to sit together on airplane flights even though the computer thinks otherwise. . . . [A] marvelous collection.”—Connie Ogle, *Miami Herald*

“Sherman Alexie is a rare creature in contemporary literature, a writer who can make you laugh as easily as he can make you cry. He’s also frighteningly versatile, as a poet, screenwriter, short story author, and novelist.”—Ben Fulton, *The Salt Lake Tribune*

“Remarkable . . . Wonderful . . . [Alexie’s] work reveals both the light and dark within native American life. A paradox in his writing is that you can be in the middle of delighted laughter when he will hit you with a sentence so true to the core of a character’s pain that you suck your breath or are startled to realize you are crying.”—Gale Zoe Garnett, *The Globe and Mail*

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“May be his best work yet . . . An odd grab bag of images, insights, and loose ends . . . yet each piece asks a similar set of questions: What’s the point of all this? If there is a point, what’s the point of that? And isn’t life really goddamn funny? . . . A book about searching.”—Mike Dumke, *Chicago Reader*

“Complex . . . Unpredictable . . . Thought-provoking.”—Michelle Peters, *Winnipeg Free Press*

“Beautiful . . . [Alexie] tells wryly amusing, bittersweet stories. . . . He makes you laugh, he makes you cry. Perfect reasons to read him.”—Frank Zoretich, *Albuquerque Journal*

“Penetrating . . . Alexie unfurls highly expressive language . . . [in] this spiritedly provocative array of tragic comedies.”—*Publishers Weekly*

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From reader reviews:

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John Sledge:

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