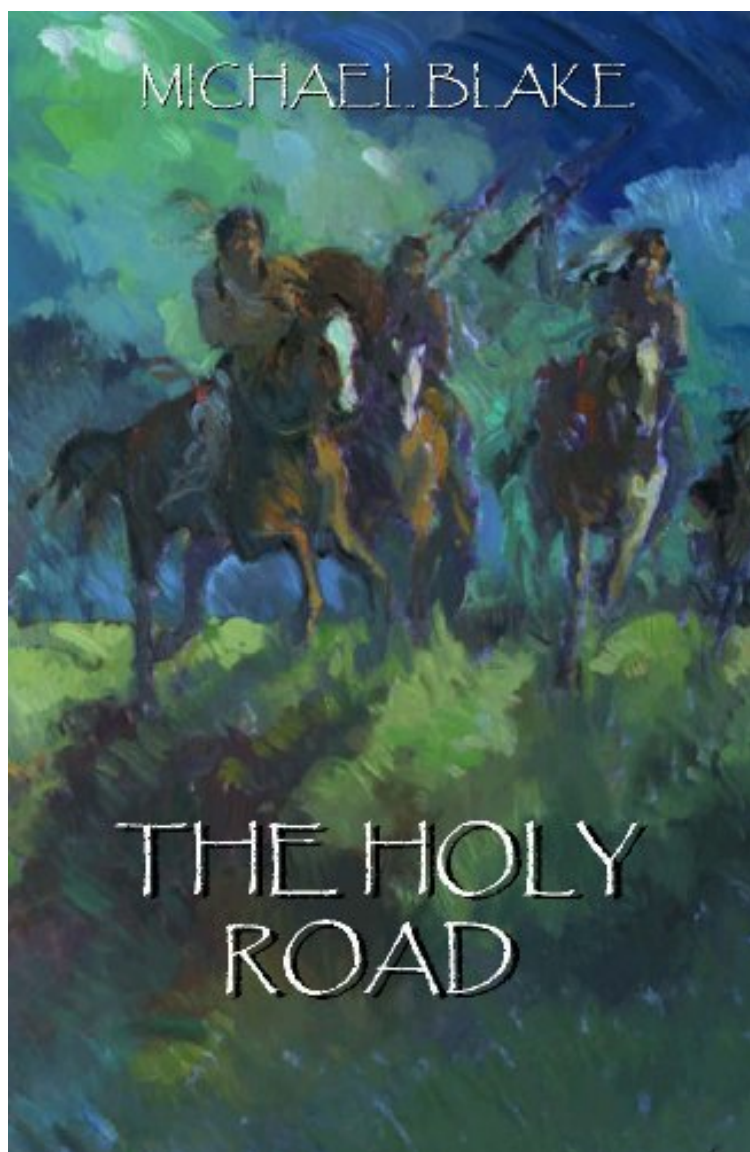


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The Holy Road (English Edition)



*Par Michael Blake
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurThe compelling sequel to Dances With WolvesEleven years have passed since Lieutenant John Dunbar became the Comanche warrior Dances With Wolves and married Stands With A Fist, a white-born woman raised as a Comanche from early childhood. With their three children, they live peacefully in the village of Ten Bears. But there is unease in the air, caused by increased reports of violent confrontations with white soldiers, who want to drive the Comanche onto reservations.Disquiet turns to horror, and then to rage, when a band of white rangers descends on Ten Bear's village, slaughtering half its inhabitants and abducting Stands With A Fist and her infant daughter. The three surviving great warriors - Wind In His Hair, Kicking Bird, and Dances With Wolves - decide they must go to war with the white

invaders. At the same time, Dances With Wolves realizes that only he can rescue his wife and child. Told with the same sweep, insight, and majesty that have made Dances With Wolves a worldwide phenomenon, The Holy Road is an epic story of courage and honor. Extrait CHAPTER I The scalp was red and thick but what made it especially extraordinary was its great length. It was the longest shock of hair anyone had ever seen, so long that its owner had to sit on the shoulders of another warrior to tie it to the rafters of his lodge. Had it not been tied so high the hair would have dragged the ground and people living in the lodge would have been forever brushing it aside, reducing it from a vaunted trophy of war to an unwanted, everyday annoyance. Still, it fell to a point about chest high and Wind In His Hairs wives grumbled about its presence from the moment it assumed a prominent place among the many other scalps hanging in their large home. The grumbling was something the wives did under their breath and out of earshot of their husband for they knew that to complain openly about such a thing would cause unnecessary trouble. And it would be unfair to a husband who had sired so many healthy children, had unfailingly provided an abundance for his family, and was widely revered as the highest-ranking member of the elite warrior society known to all as the Hard Shields, the combat unit that viewed protection of the village and its people as their most sacred responsibility. They might challenge their husband on the proximity of the family lodge to water, or the sleeping habits of the children, or the preparation of a feast, but they kept their misgivings about the white womans scalp to themselves. How their husband displayed his souvenir, taken in honorable combat at the cost of his own disfigurement, was simply none of their business. Nor was it the business of anyone else in the village, and, like the wives of Wind In His Hair, every member of the community kept his feelings about the scalp hidden from public view. But the unvoiced opinions only added to a sense of dread that had been growing steadily among them for years. The presence of the white womans scalp in the village served as a constant reminder of the strange, unfathomable threat that had come to dominate their lives. It was the worst kind of threat a people can endure, an invisible horror that disturbs good sleep, confuses clear thinking, and makes the steadiest heart skip with odd, little ripples of fear at what tomorrow might bring. Even Wind In His Hair was not immune. In the deepest reaches of his instinctive, reactive soul, a soul as purely Comanche as any that had ever been born, he could feel occasional and upsetting echoes. He had always slept well, but in the last year he often woke inexplicably in the night. And sometimes as he lay blinking in the dim light of his fires embers, his eyes would pick up the outline of the long, red-haired scalp and he would wonder how many white people he might have to kill to safeguard the only life he knew. Having no answer grated against his mind, and it was only when he had reassured himself that an answer was not important, that his only responsibility in this life was to be a father, a husband, and a warrior without fear, could he turn on his side and let sleep descend once again. CHAPTER II Ten bears, too, had trouble sleeping, a condition that had been unknown to him for most of his long life. The anxiety that dogged all of his band was a heavy burden for an old man already weighted down with increasing infirmity. He could no longer ride, and when camp was moved he was forced to travel like a piece of baggage sprawled on a travois. Having outlived half a dozen wives, the last of whom had died the spring before, he depended on his daughters to boil his meat and tend his fire. The eyes that had served him through so many snows were as hazy as twilight and he knew that they would never grow brighter, only darker. He tired easily and would doze between daily interviews in which he arbitrated disputes, listened to complaints, offered advice, or fielded questions about news from the wider world. He talked less and less, preferring to meditate carefully on the words of others before uttering brief, concise opinions packed with wisdom. As his sight diminished, his hearing seemed to grow sharper, so sharp in fact that he began to hear the words of others just as he heard the wind waving through the grass, or the percussive rhythms of rain- fall against the walls of his lodge. He had begun to listen to an eternal communication beyond mere language that enabled him to hear into a person, to hear the heart and lungs and blood. He had stumbled onto this wondrous gift of concentration in an effort to stay awake during conversations. For a time he had fallen into a pattern of losing consciousness in mid-discussion, a development that chagrined him so greatly that he wished for death to spare him further embarrassment. But despite his longing for release from the rigors of life, the old man was unable to throw himself away. If a generation ago he had wanted to make such an exit, he could have done so by simply refusing to move on the breaking of camp. His lodge would have been struck around him and he would have been left to sit like a shelled pea on the ground, a cup of water and a bowl of food beside him. The sun would glare down upon him, the wind would rush over his wrinkled flesh, and eventually he would recline on his back, never to rise again, content with the thought that soon he would melt back into the body of his mother the earth. Such a death seemed a luxury now. He imagined it in the same way a boy dreams of winning honors in battle or a

girl looks forward to making a family of her own. But no matter how much he wished it to be, Ten Bears could not take the hand death had extended. The present generation was the most challenging he had ever known in his life as a Comanche. In any other era his time would come and go and his own earthly presence would be replaced by another, just as it had happened with the Comanches since they first appeared on the earth. But now the great wheel of life seemed to be slowing and whether it would continue to revolve or stop completely was impossible to know. The whole of Comanche life was hanging in the balance, and so long as it did Ten Bears willed his tired lungs to draw breath. If he were to begin his long journey across the stars today, he would leave his people to be scattered like chaff in the coming whirlwind. So he stayed, listening carefully to the blood of all those who came before him. When the sun was starting down, one of his granddaughters, Hunting For Something, usually came by with a small bowl of buffalo and berries which she herself had pounded into a mush. If the day was fair, Ten Bears would wrap the food in a piece of cloth, grab up his walking stick, and stand listening at the entrance of his lodge, waiting for a lull in the rhythm of human traffic outside. At the appropriate moment Ten Bears would bend his creaky frame and start into the sunlight, charting a course for the open prairie and whatever scant stand of trees lay by a spring or pond or stream close to camp. No one interrupted these sojourns. The entire community knew that Ten Bears had somehow acquired the ability to hear blood and that for him to maintain the gift it was necessary that he be free of distraction. When people saw him stride stiffly out of camp they let him go, in the knowledge that surely he was sifting weighty and mysterious thoughts. No one could have guessed that Ten Bears primary objective was to find a secluded spot where he could nap uninterrupted. But by the time he reached his place of peace the idea of napping usually gave way to a sense of wonder that his old legs had been able to carry him this far from camp yet again. If he was lucky he would find a small grove of cottonwoods situated next to running water. He would finger the medicine in the pouch hanging from his neck or perhaps he would light his pipe as he sat listening to the breeze make music in the cottonwoods leaves, and to the eternal trickle of the stream. At times he would lie flat like a corpse and gaze as best he could at the clouds overhead, opening his mind to anything that wished to enter. That scalp at Wind In His Hairs . . . no one likes it. I dont like it. But who is to blame? Not Wind In His Hair. Not the Comanches. The Comanches didnt fire first. The white woman had a gun that shoots twice. She shot out Wind In His Hairs eye. He took her scalp and brought it back and hung it in his lodge. Thats his right. Hes a warrior. Kicking Bird doesnt like it. He doesnt go to Wind In His Hairs home anymore. He wants peace. How can there be peace? If I got up now . . . I wont get up now, Im happy on the ground. If I were on my feet at this moment, if I looked in the four directions, perhaps I would see them. No, I wouldnt see them, not here. But they are out there somewhere. They are in the east and the west, in the north and south. They are all around us. They are closer every day. This country is good. It gives us everything we need. It will last all summer. But where will we go when the leaves die? Where will we go that doesnt carry us closer to them? How could you forget, old man! The great hole in the earth. You were born there. The Comanches will go down into the earth this winter as they always have. The Kiowa will be there, and the Cheyenne too. And the buffalo. Food and water and space for everyone in a place where no white person has ever walked. We will sleep as the snow banks up against the lodges. Hunting For Something will bring me treats and tend my fire . . . Those hawks circling in the sky . . . perhaps they are vultures. Maybe they are two vultures trying to decide to come down. If they fly down here Ill close my eyes and lie still. Ill wait while they land, wait until I hear the rustle of their wings coming closer. Then Ill sit up and give them a shock . . . ha! I cant see them anymore. Must have been hawks. No white person has walked this country either. . . .
Revue de presse "Epic, tragic . . . Inhuman agony, brilliantly portrayed."--Kirkus s (starred review) "The young men were especially troubled. They had planned and dreamed and striven all their lives for opportunities to prove themselves, but the perplexing rush of events that culminated in the most recent council denied them the chance to live fully. If there were no buffalo, how could anyone hunt? Or feed a family? Or have a family? If there were no horses to steal, how could a man grow rich? How could a man win honors if there was no enemy to fight?"--from The Holy Road