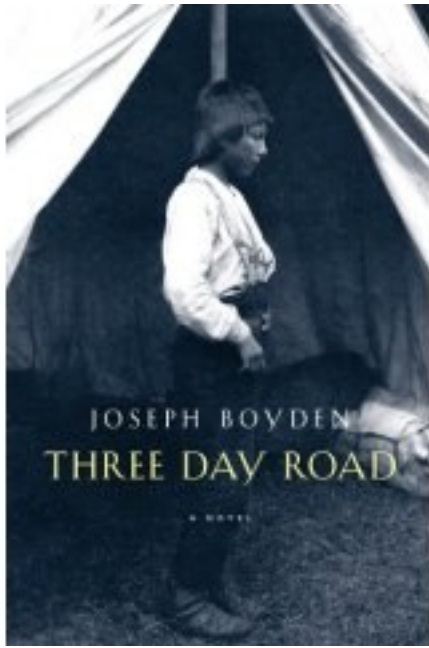


# Three-Day Road



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著者:Joseph Boyden

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In 1919, Niska, an old medicine woman, ventures into civilization to retrieve one of the two boys she reluctantly sent to war. She speaks of the townspeople: "I must look a thin and wild old woman to them, an Indian animal straight out of the bush." She expects Elijah Whiskeyjack to return, but is it Xavier Bird who gets off the train. He is a mere shadow of his former self; he is without a leg, addicted to morphine, and near death. The three-day road is a journey between life and death. Niska, the medicine woman, paddles Xavier in her canoe, and as they travel, in an attempt to keep him alive, she tells him her life story. In return he tells her of his and Elijah's terrible experiences in the First World War. As they travel, hovering over them like a dark cloud is the "Windigo", a terrible Indian spirit monster. A Windigo is what a man becomes after eating human flesh. Niska's father bravely killed a Windigo, but was tried by white

men and died in captivity.

Xavier and Elijah grow up together, become fine hunters, and without understanding the consequences, enlist in the Canadian Army. They are sent to France where both boys, because of their extraordinary marksmanship, become snipers. They are eerily successful at what they do and become heroes of sorts, and legends among both the Allies and the Germans. "Elijah has reached 356 kills as of today, and these are only the ones of which he is quite positive. Today is a new personal record for one day and he says as much to the others . . . They offer congratulations . . . stare at the thin Indian with the sharp nose and blackened face."

The war scenes are some of the most violent and terrible ever put to the page, more shocking than most WWI writing, but authentic and realistic. While Xavier considers sniping a dirty job that must be done, Elijah revels in it, makes wild forays into enemy territory, risks his life repeatedly, and always comes away unscathed—at least physically. Like Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*, Elijah descends into madness, and flirts dangerously with the legend of the Windigo. Eventually, Xavier is witness to soul-shattering events and has to make a terrible choice. The language is clear, the characters sympathetic, and only occasionally do Niska or Xavier use a word or two that seem out of place in their natural world. The descriptions of nature are brilliantly done: "I listen to the sounds of the night animals not far away. I hear the fox and the marten chasing mice. I hear the whoosh of great wings as an Arctic owl sweeps close by, and after that the almost silent step of a bigger animal, a lynx perhaps, keeping watch with her yellow eyes." *Three Day Road* is as fine a novel as I have seen during the five years I have been reading first novels. My prediction is that it will win every award for which it is nominated, and that it will become a Canadian and international classic.

W.P. Kinsella (Books in Canada)

作者介绍:

in the horrific trenches of World War I. Loosely based on the real life of a famous Canadian sniper, the story is told from two first-person views: those of Xavier and his old aunt and only living relative, Niska. After the war, Niska is taking her wounded nephew back home north to the bush in a canoe. Their trip is the three-day road of the title, which also refers to the journey taken after death. The story of the war is told in flashbacks on this journey as Xavier recovers from morphine addiction. Niska also relates various stories to Xavier, believing there is "medicine in the tale."

Boyden is a natural storyteller. Both the Native tales of the north and the grim accounts of the war in France and Belgium have the ring of truth. His images can be subtly appropriate--raiders who go over the top are "eaten by the night"--and his characterizations are excellent, especially the three main players and Xavier's Canadian trenchmates. Eventually, Elijah seems to feed on the death all around him, becoming a "windigo," while Xavier begins to question the sanity of the war and his friend's growing madness, realizing "we all fight on two fronts, the one facing the enemy, the one facing what we do to the enemy." Not for the squeamish reader, this is a powerful novel that takes a new angle on a popular subject, "the war to end all wars."  
--Mark Frutkin

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