



The Road to Lame Deer

Jerry Mader

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A bittersweet cross-cultural friendship and the richness and melancholy of modern Cheyenne life are unforgettably recorded in the words and photographs of *The Road to Lame Deer*.

In the 1970s photographer and writer Jerry Mader was drawn into the community of Lame Deer on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation in Montana. The winding road to Lame Deer allowed Mader to gradually perceive something of both the pain and the continuing vitality of the Cheyennes' distinctive world. Mader's narrative is centered on what he believed to be his last visit to the reservation and on the memories it awakened. In particular he explores his initial feelings about and first perceptions of the community and how Lame Deer, as well as Mader and the relationships he forged there, changed over time. As he learned about the people and began to take photographs of Cheyenne elders, images of the reservation and its people became seared in his memory and are movingly recalled throughout this work—the hot, dry dust of an afternoon whirlwind, a quest for a stone woman, the haunting melody of a Cheyenne flute, and the desolation and desperation of the bars scattered along the edges of the reservation.

At the heart of the book is Mader's relationship and friendship with Cheyenne elder Henry Tall Bull, which was punctuated by both insight and misunderstanding and ultimately ended in tragedy. Witty, knowledgeable, and bearing a bitterness that could flare into white-hot anger under the influence of alcohol, Tall Bull guided Mader through the maze of relationships and obligations that girded and defined the Lame Deer community. The memory of the doomed friendship between photographer and Cheyenne elder haunts Mader still as he continues to travel the long road to Lame Deer in his dreams.

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