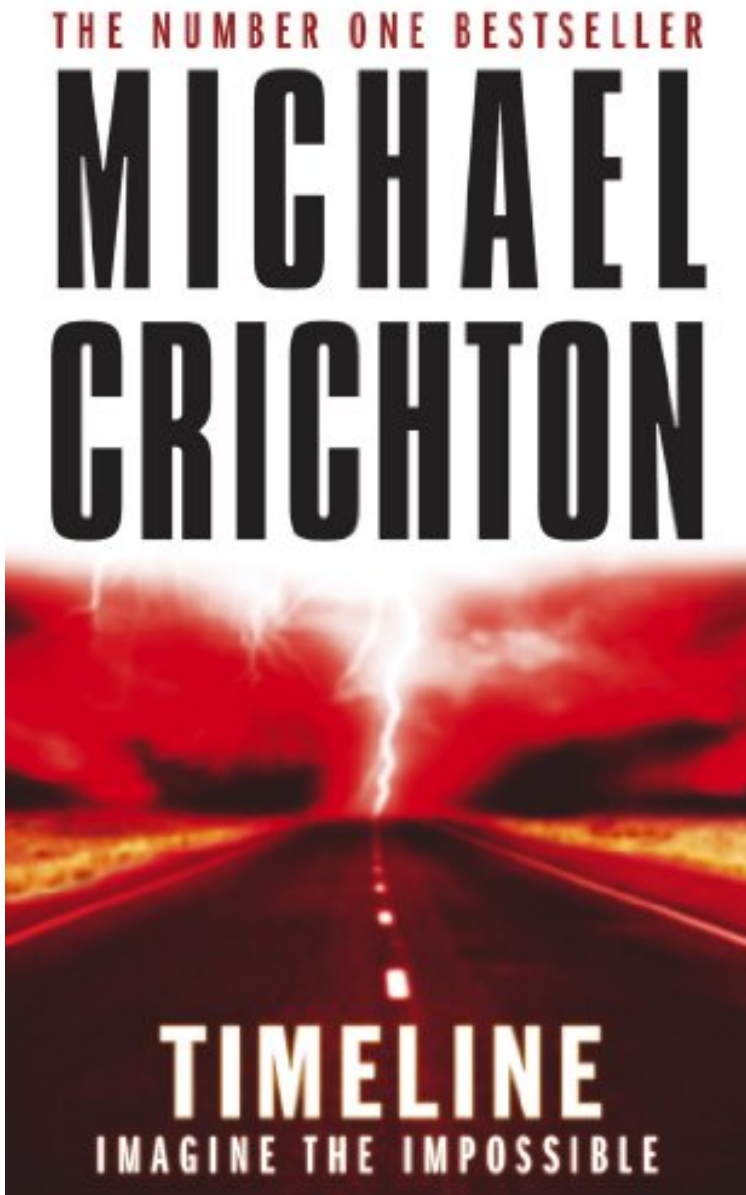


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Timeline



*Par Michael Crichton
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurAn old man wearing a brown robe is found wandering disoriented in the Arizona desert. He is miles from any human habitation and has no memory of how he got to be there, or who he is.

The only clue to his identity is the plan of a medieval monastery in his pocket.So begins the mystery of Timeline, a story that will catapult a group of young scientists back to the Middle Ages and into the heart of the Hundred Years' War.Timeline cements Michael Crichton's place as the king of the high-concept thriller, and a master storyteller to boot..comWhen you step into a time machine, fax yourself through a "quantum foam wormhole," and step out in feudal France circa 1357, be very, very afraid. If you aren't strapped back

in precisely 37 hours after your visit begins, you'll miss the quantum bus back to 1999 and be stranded in a civil war, caught between crafty abbots, mad lords, and peasant bandits all eager to cut your throat. You'll also have to dodge catapults that hurl sizzling pitch over castle battlements. On the social front, you should avoid provoking "the butcher of Crecy" or Sir Oliver may lop your head off with a swoosh of his broadsword or cage and immerse you in "Milady's Bath," a brackish dungeon pit into which live rats are tossed now and then for prisoners to eat. This is the plight of the heroes of Timeline, Michael Crichton's thriller. They're historians in 1999 employed by a tech billionaire-genius with more than a few of Bill Gates's most unlovable quirks. Like the entrepreneur in Crichton's Jurassic Park, Doniger plans a theme park featuring artifacts from a lost world revived via cutting-edge science. When the project's chief historian sends a distress call to 1999 from 1357, the boss man doesn't tell the younger historians the risks they'll face trying to save him. At first, the interplay between eras is clever, but Timeline swiftly becomes a swashbuckling old-fashioned adventure, with just a dash of science and time paradox in the mix. Most of the cool facts are about the Middle Ages, and Crichton marvelously brings the past to life without ever letting the pulse-pounding action slow down. At one point, a time-tripper tries to enter the Chapel of Green Death. Unfortunately, its custodian, a crazed giant with terrible teeth and a bad case of lice, soon has her head on a block. "She saw a shadow move across the grass as he raised his ax into the air." I dare you not to turn the page! Through the narrative can be glimpsed the glowing bones of the movie that may be made from Timeline and the cutting-edge computer game that should hit the market in 2000. Expect many clashing swords and chase scenes through secret castle passages. But the book stands alone, tall and scary as a knight in armor shining with blood. --Tim Appelo

ExtraitHe should never have taken that shortcut.Dan Baker winced as his new Mercedes S500 sedan bounced down the dirt road, heading deeper into the Navajo reservation in northern Arizona. Around them, the landscape was increasingly desolate: distant red mesas to the east, flat desert stretching away in the west. They had passed a village half an hour earlier- dusty houses, a church and a small school, huddled against a cliff- but since then, they'd seen nothing at all, not even a fence. Just empty red desert. They hadn't seen another car for an hour. Now it was noon, the sun glaring down at them. Baker, a forty-year old building contractor in Phoenix, was beginning to feel uneasy. Especially since his wife, an architect, was one of those artistic people who wasn't practical about things like gas and water. His tank was half-empty. And the car was starting to run hot. "Liz," he said, "are you sure this is the way?" Sitting beside him, his wife was bent over the map, tracing the route with his finger. "It has to be," she said. "The guide-book said four miles beyond the Corazon Canyon turnoff." "But we passed Corazon Canyon twenty minutes ago. We must have missed it." "How could we miss the trading post?" she said. "I don't know." Baker stared at the road ahead. "But there's nothing out here. Are you sure you want to do this? I mean, we can get great Navajo rugs in Sedona. They sell all kinds of rugs in Sedona." "Sedona," she sniffed, "is not authentic." "Of course it's authentic, honey. A rug is a rug." "Weaving." "Okay." He sighed. "A weaving." "And no, it's not the same," she said. "Those Sedona stores carry tourist junk- they're acrylic, not wool. I want the weavings that they sell on the reservation. And supposedly the trading post has an old Sandpainting weaving from the twenties, by Hosteen Klah. And I want it." "Okay Liz." Personally, Baker didn't see why they needed another Navajo rug-weaving- anyway. They already had two dozen. She had them all over the house. And packed away in closets, too. They drove on in silence. The road ahead shimmered in the heat so it looked like a silver lake. And there were mirages, houses or people rising up on the road, but always when you came closer, there was nothing there. Dan Baker sighed again. "We must've passed it." "Let's go a few more miles," his wife said. "How many more?" "I don't know. A few more." "How many, Liz? Let's decide how far we'll go with this thing." "Ten more minutes," she said. "Okay," he said, "ten minutes." He was looking at his gas gauge when Liz threw her hand to her mouth and said, "Dan!" Baker turned back to the road just in time to see a shape flash by- a man, in brown, at the side of the road- and hear a loud thump from the side of the car. "Oh my God!" she said. "We hit him!" "What?" "We hit that guy." "No, we didn't. We hit a pothole." In the rearview mirror, Baker could see the man still standing at the side of the road. A figure in brown, rapidly disappearing in the dust cloud behind the car as they drove away. "We couldn't have hit him," Baker said. "He's still standing." "Dan. We hit him. I saw it." "I don't think so, honey." Baker looked again in the rearview mirror. But now he saw nothing except the cloud of dust behind the car. "We better go back," she said. "Why?" Baker was pretty sure that his wife was wrong and that they hadn't hit the man on the road. But if they had hit him, and if he was even slightly injured- just a head cut, a scratch- then it was going to mean a very long delay in their trip. They'd never get to Phoenix by nightfall. Anybody out here was undoubtedly a Navajo; they'd have to take him to a hospital, or at least to the nearest big town, which was Gallup, and that

was out of their way-"I thought you wanted to go back,": she said."I do.""Then let's go back.""I just don't want any problems, Liz.""Dan.I don't believe this."He sighed, and slowed the car."Okay, I'm turning.I'm turning."And he turned around, being careful not to get stuck in the red sand at the side of the road, and headed back the way they had come."Oh Jesus."Baker pulled over, and jumped out into the dust cloud of his own car.He gasped as he felt the blast of heat on his face and body.It must be 120 degrees out here, he thought.As the dust cleared, he saw the man lying down at the side of the road, trying to raise himself up on his elbow.The guy was shaky, about seventy, balding and bearded.His skin was pale; he didn't look Navajo.His brown clothes were fashioned into long robes.Maybe he's a priest, Baker thought."Are you all right?" Baker said as he helped the man to sit up on the dirt road.The old man coughed."Yeah.I'm all right.""Do you want to stand up?" he said.He was relieved not to see any blood."In a minute."Baker looked around."Where's your car?" he said.The man coughed again.Head hanging limply, he stared at the dirt road."Dan, I think he's hurt," his wife said."Yeah," Baker said.The old guy certainly seemed to be confused.Baker looked around again: there was nothing but flat desert in all directions, stretching away into shimmering haze.No car.Nothing."How'd he get out here?" Baker said."Come on," Liz said, "we have to take him to the hospital."Baker put his hands on under the man's armpits and helped the old guy to his feet.The man's clothes were heavy, made of a material like felt, but he wasn't sweating in the heat.In fact, his body felt cool, almost cold.The old guy leaned heavily on Baker as they crossed the road.Liz opened the back door.The old man said, "I can walk.I can talk.""Okay. Fine." Baker eased him into the back seat.The man lay down on the leather, curling into a fetal position.Underneath his robes, he was wearing ordinary clothes: jeans, a checked shirt, Nikes.He closed the door, and Liz got back in the front seat.Baker hesitated, remaining outside in the heat.How was it possible the old guy was out here all alone?Wearing all those clothes and not sweating?#160...