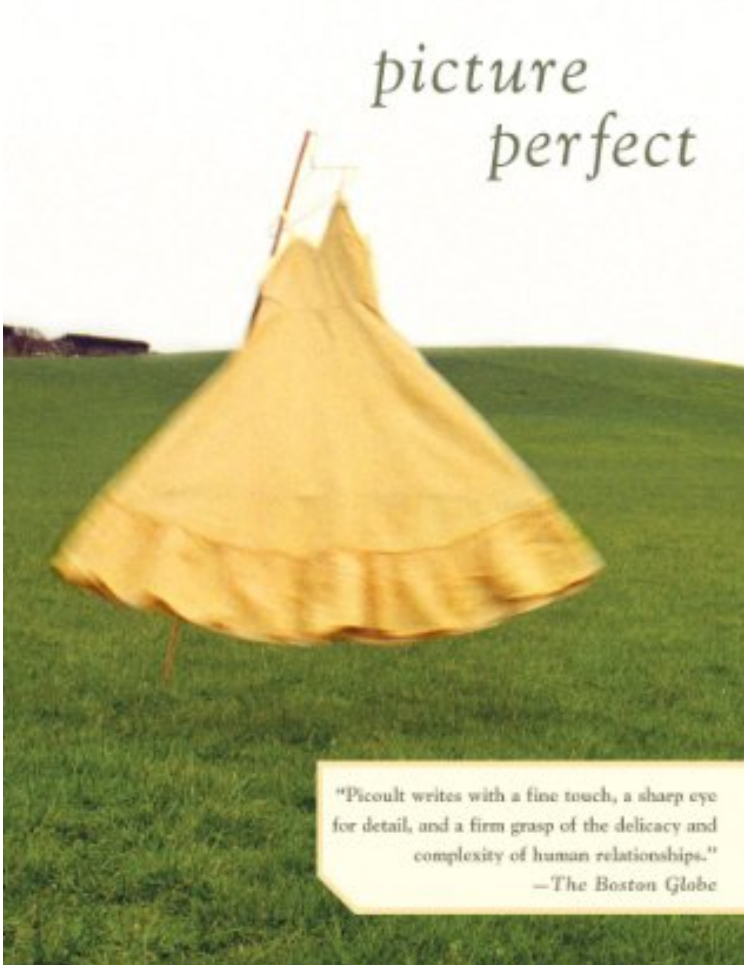


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CHAPTER ONE

THE first thing the groundskeeper saw when he went to tend to the small cemetery behind St. Sebastians was the body that someone had forgotten to bury. She was lying on top of a grave, her head pressed close to the headstone, her arms crossed over her stomach. She was almost as white as the seven faded granite markers that surrounded her. The groundskeeper took a deep breath, dropped his trowel, and crossed himself. He inched toward the body and leaned over, casting a shadow. Somewhere overhead a gull screamed, and as the woman's eyes flew open, the groundskeeper turned and ran through the iron gate into the dizzying streets of Los Angeles. The woman looked into the sky. She did not know where she was, but it was quiet; and since her head was pounding, she was grateful. She tried to remember how she had gotten there in the first place. Sitting up, she touched the gravestone and squinted as the letters dipped and blurred before her eyes. She pulled herself to her feet and balanced against the stone for support. Then she leaned over and retched, clutching her stomach and blinking back tears at the pain shooting through her temples. A church, she said aloud, jumping at the pitch of her own voice. This is a church. She walked to the gate and stared at the cars and buses going by. She had taken three steps away from the church before she realized she did not know where she was supposed to go. Think, she commanded herself. She put a hand to her forehead and felt the slip of her own blood. Jesus, she said. Her hand was trembling. She felt for a tissue in the pocket of her jacket, a worn bomber jacket she couldn't remember buying, and came up instead with a tube of Blistex and \$2.24 in change. She stepped back toward the graveyard and looked behind the headstones for a pocketbook, a knapsack, a clue. I was mugged, she said, wiping her brow with her sleeve. I must have been mugged. She ran to the door of the rectory and banged, but it was locked. She moved to the gate again, planning to go to the closest police station and tell them what had happened. She would give her address and she would call. Who would she call? She stared at a bus sighing at the corner stop. She didn't know where she was. She didn't know the closest police station. She didn't even know her own name. Chewing on a fingernail, she stepped back inside the gate, where she felt safer. She knelt beside the grave she'd been lying upon and rested her forehead against the cool headstone. Maybe the priest would be back soon, she thought. Maybe someone would come by and offer to help her. Maybe she'd just stay right there. Her head began to throb, a drumbeat that threatened to split her in two. She sank to the ground and lay back against the gravestone again, pulling her jacket close to ward off the chill of the earth. She would wait. She opened her eyes, hoping for answers, but all she could see were clouds that covered the sky like a bruise. THERE WASNT ENOUGH LAND IN CALIFORNIA. He could feel it, beating like a hammer at the base of his throat, this claustrophobia born of the hissing asphalt under his tires and the condos pressed so close they left no room to breathe. So he kept driving west to find the ocean, hopefully before it got dark. He had never seen it. There had only been pictures, and accounts from his mother and his father. He remembered stories his father had told him, stories he hadn't believed at the time, of Indians jailed in the 1800s who died overnight because they couldn't stand the confinement. He thought of the statistics from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which said that sixty-six percent of Indians who left the reservations returned, unable to live in the cities. Of course, he was not entirely Sioux. But he was not entirely white, either. He smelled it before he saw it. The wind carried him the salt from the waves. He parked the rusted secondhand pickup on the shoulder of the road and ran down the sloping dune. He did not stop running until his sneakers were submerged, until water stained the thighs of his jeans like tears. A gull screamed. William Flying Horse stood with his arms outstretched, his eyes fixed on the Pacific Ocean but seeing, instead, the brindled plains and rolling Dakota hills that he would not call home. ON THE PINE RIDGE RESERVATION IN SOUTH DAKOTA, ROUTE 18 took you into town, and if you wanted to get anywhere else you navigated by natural landmarks or long-abandoned vehicles, since there weren't many other roads. But it had been three days since he'd moved to Los Angeles and Will had yet to get his bearings. He was renting a little row house in Reseda, which was close enough to the LAPD to eliminate the need for a long commute, and far enough away for him to feel like he wasn't attached to his job. He didn't have to report to work until tomorrow; the paperwork for the position had been done through the mail and he had planned to use this time to find his way around L.A. Will slammed his fist onto the steering wheel. Where the hell was he? He groped along the front seat, looking for the map he'd tossed away minutes before. He squinted at the

tiny red roads, but the overhead light in the pickup had been one of the first things to go, so he pulled to the curb underneath a streetlight. He peered at the map in the soft glow. Shit, he said. Beverly Hills. I was here an hour ago. For the first time in decades, he wished he was more of an Indian. He blamed his faulty sense of direction on his wasicun blood. All his life hed heard stories of his grandfathers father, who tracked the goddamned buffalo by the slightest rising of the wind. And when the woman his father loved had left without a word, hadnt he ridden for miles using only his intuition to find her? Compared to that, how difficult could it be to find the San Diego Freeway? Once, when Will was little, hed followed his grandmother into the woods to collect roots and leaves for her medicines. Hed picked the ones she pointed to, cedar and sweet flag and wild licorice. Hed turned his back only for a moment, and his grandmother had disappeared. For a while Will had wandered in circles, trying to remember his fathers lessons about footprints left on broken leaves, snapped branches, the sense of movement in the heavy air. It was hours before his grandmother found him again, cold and curled beneath the burl of an oak. Wordlessly she pulled him by the hand in the direction of home. When the small log house came into view, she turned and cupped Wills chin in her hand. You, she sighed. So white. He had only been ten, but that was the moment he knew he would never be like his grandparents. To them, to everyone who lived around him, he would always be iyaska, a mixed-blood. He had spent the next twenty-five years acting as white as he could, figuring if he could not be like his fathers people, he would be like his mothers. He threw himself into his schoolwork so that hed be able to go to college. He spoke only English, even at his grandparents home where Lakota was the primary language. He nodded when his white bosses described the Sioux as lazy alcoholics and when the words ran cold through his blood; he wrapped his indifference around him like a cloak. Well, he was white now. He was off the reservation and he was planning to stay, and as for finding his way out of Beverly Hills, hed do what every other white man would do: hed find a gas station and get directions. Shifting gears, Will eased the truck away from the curb and started down the street again. The opulence of Beverly Hills amazed him the wrought-iron gates and the pink marble fountains, the lights that winked from great Palladian windows. There was a party going on at one of the houses. Will slowed down to glimpse the silent ballet of waiters and guests and it took a moment for him to notice the flashing lights of the police cruiser pulling up behind him. Co-workers, he thought, as he stepped out of the pickup to ask directions. There were two officers. One was blond, and that was all Will had time to notice before the man slammed his head against the cab of his truck, pinning his arm behind him. Look what we got here, Joe, he said. Another fucking spic. Listen, Will heard himself rasp, and the cop brought his free hand down between Wills shoulder blades. Dont talk back to me, Pedro, he said. Weve been following you for ten minutes. What the hell business do you have in a neighborhood like this? Im a cop. Wills words fell heavy to the pavement. The man released his wrist, and Will pushed away from the truck and faced him. Lets see your badge. Will swallowed and looked him in the eye. I dont have it yet. I dont have my piece, either. I just got here; I start work tomorrow. The officers eyes narrowed. Yeah, well, if I dont see no badge, I dont see no cop. He nodded to his partner, who started to walk back to the cruiser. Get the fuck out of here. Will clenched and unclenched his fists as he watched the cops retreating back. Im one of you, he shouted, and behind the thick plate glass of the police cruisers windshield, he saw the officer laugh. Walking back to his truck, he stared at the people at the party on the hill, laughing and drinking like nothing at all had happened. The moon slid behind a cloud as if it were embarrassed, and at that moment two truths struck Will: He did not like L.A. And he was not white. WHEN SHE AWAKENED THE SUN HAD SET. SHE SAT UP AND LEANED against the familiar gravestone. Somewhere to the east, a searchlight was cutting across the sky, and she wondered if some awards show was scheduled for that night they were a dime a dozen in L.A. She pulled herself to her feet and began to walk toward the gate. With each footstep, she spoke aloud a different female name, hoping that one might jar her memory. Alice, she said. Barbara. Cicely. She had gotten to Marta by the time she reached the street. Sunset Boulevard, she knew it right away and she realized she was making progress, since she hadnt remembered that earlier. She sat at the curb, in front of the sign that listed the name of St. Sebastians priest and the hours of confession and masses. She knew she wasnt a member of the congregation that she wasnt even Catholic but she felt shed been there before. She felt shed hidden there, really, or taken refuge. What would she possibly have been running from? Shrugging, she dismissed the thought and peered into the distance. Across the street and down the block was a billboard for a movie. Taboo, she read aloud, wondering if shed seen it, since the title seemed so familiar. The poster showed a man half in silhouette, but even with the shaded features it was easy to tell that the actor was Alex Rivers, Americas sweetheart. Hed successfully starred in everything from action thrillers to Shakespeare, and she remembered reading

somewhere that his Q-rating for recognition ranked above the Presidents. He was smiling at her. At theaters everywhere, she read, hearing the catch in her own voice. LATER ON, WHEN WILL THOUGHT BACK TO THE MOMENT, he realized it was the owls fault. If he hadnt braked at the sound of that screech owl, he never would have stopped; and if he had never stopped, he wouldnt have made all the wrong decisions. By some stroke of luck hed found Sunset Boulevard, and although he knew Sunset Boulevard ran into the freeway, he wasnt sure if he was going in the right direction. The two gas stations hed passed had been closed, and by now his right eye had nearly swollen shut and all he wanted to do was crawl into his bed and try to forget what had made him move to California in the first place. He had just passed a McDonalds when he heard the call, sharp and piercing, like the cry of a child. Will had certainly heard owls before, but not since hed left South Dakota. His grandparents, like many people on the reservation, believed strongly in the omens of birds. Since birds took flight, they were closer to the spirit world than man was, so ignoring a message from a bird might mean missing some warning or promise from powers greater than oneself. Will, in keeping with his rejection of the Sioux culture, had shrugged off the significance of hawks and eagles and ravens, although he couldnt bring himself to completely disregard owls, which his grandmother said were signs of death. Maybe its the car, he said aloud, and almost simultaneously he heard it again, a shrill scream that pulled at his insides. He braked. Behind him, a van swerved, its driver cursing through the open window. Will pulled over in front of a Catholic church and parked in a towaway zone. He got out of the truck and stepped onto the sidewalk, lifting his face to the sky. Okay, he said sarcastically. Now what? The woman who came through the gate at the side of the church was faintly outlined in white, like a ghost. She saw Will and started to walk a little faster, a smile breaking across her face. Stunned, Will stared at her. She reached just as high as his shoulder and she had dried blood at the edge of her scalp. She came closer, until she stood just inches away, looking at the bruise above his eye. She reached out, this woman Will did not know, and brushed her fingers over the skin. He had never felt anything like it: a touch more quiet than a breath. Not you too, she whispered, and then her eyes rolled back and she started to fall to the ground. Will caught her and settled her in the passenger seat of his truck. When she started to stir, he sat as far back against the drivers-side door as he could, certain shed scream when she found herself in a strangers car. But her eyes blinked open and she smiled so easily that Will found himself smiling back. Are you okay? he asked. She swallowed and ran her hand over her hair, smoothing it away from her face. I think so, she said. Have you been waiting long? She spoke as if she had known him all her life, which made Will grin. No, he said. I just happened to be passing by. He stared at her for a moment. Listen, he said, if youre waiting for someone, I can wait with you until they get here. The woman froze. You dont know me? Will shook his head. Oh God. She rubbed her eyes. God. She looked up at him through tears. Well, that makes two of us. Will wondered what he had gotten himself into, sitting in his own truck with a woman who was crazy, or so high she couldnt think clearly. He smiled hesitantly, waiting for her to fall back to reality. You mean you dont know me either. I mean I dont know me, the woman whispered. Will looked carefully at her clear eyes, at the clotted cut on her temple. Amnesia, he thought. You dont know your name? He switched automatically into the questioning hed learned as a tribal police officer in South Dakota. Do you remember what happened to you? What brought you to the church? The woman glanced away. I dont remember any of that, she said flatly. I suppose I should turn myself in to the police. The way she said it, like shed committed a capital crime, made Will smile. He thought of driving her downtown to the Academy, the headquarters of the LAPD. Even if he wasnt officially on the roster, he surely could pull some strings and check the APBs, see if in fact anyone had been looking for her. He shifted slightly, wincing at the pain that shot over his eye. He remembered the blond cop in Beverly Hills, and he wondered if they all would be like that come Monday. Im the police, he said quietly, and even as the words were forming Will knew he would not take this woman to the LAPD, not after what had happened to him, not right away. Her eyes narrowed. Do you have a badge? Will shook his head slowly. I just moved here. I live in Reseda. I start work tomorrow. He caught her eye. Ill take care of you, he said. Do you trust me? She looked at the sharp angles of his face, at the light shifting over his black hair. Nobody else had come. Yet when he had appeared, shed run to him without any hesitation. Surely for someone who was not thinking with reason, but only with gut instinct, that had to count for something. She nodded. He held out his hand. Im William Flying Horse. Will. She smiled. Jane Doe. She placed her fingertips against his palm, and with her touch this strange city fell into place. Will thought about the song of the owl, and this gift that had literally dropped into his arms, and as he glanced at her he knew that in some way she was now his. CHAPTER TWOSHE kept skipping October. She was supposed to be reciting the names of the months in reverse order, as per instructions of the emergency room

doctor, but she kept jumping from November to September. Her face flushed, and she looked up at the man who had been examining her. Im sorry, she said. Let me try that again. From across the room where hed been watching for ten minutes, Will exploded. Jesus, he said, moving closer. Im perfectly fine, and I wouldnt be able to do that without messing up. He glared at the doctor. Hed brought the woman to the emergency room because it was correct police procedure, at least in South Dakota, but now he was having second thoughts.

As far as Will could tell, these stupid exercises had done nothing but make her more frazzled. Shes lost consciousness at least twice in the past few hours, the doctor said dispassionately. He held up a pen, inches from her face. What is this? She rolled her eyes. Already shed answered questions about where she was, what day it was, who the President was. Shed counted forward and backward by threes and memorized a short list of fruits and vegetables. Its a pen. And this? A pen cap. She glanced at Will and grinned. Or is it a cow? As the doctors eyes snapped up to hers, she laughed. Im kidding, she said. Just a little joke. See? Will said. She can make jokes. Shes fine. He crossed his arms, uneasy. Hospitals made him nervous; they had ever since he was nine years old and had watched his father die in one. Three days after the car accident, his mother already buried, Will had sat with his grandfather waiting for his father to regain consciousness. He had stared for hours at his fathers lax brown hand contrasting against the white sheets, the white lights, and the white walls, and he knew it was only a matter of time before his father left to go somewhere he belonged. All right. At the sound of the doctors voice, both Jane and Will stood straighter. You appear to have a mild concussion, but you seem to be on the mend. Chances are youll recover your more distant memories before you recover the recent ones. There may be a few minutes surrounding the actual blow to the head that you never recall. He turned to Will. And you are? Officer William Flying Horse, LAPD. The doctor nodded. Tell whoever comes to get her that she should be observed overnight. They need to wake her every few hours and just check her level of alertness; you know, ask her who she is, and how shes feeling, things like that. Wait, Jane said. How long until I remember who I am? The doctor smiled for the first time in the hour hed been with her. I cant say. It could be hours; it could be weeks. But Im sure your husband will be waiting for you downtown. He slipped his pen into his jacket pocket and patted her shoulder. Hell be filling you in on the details in no time. The doctor swung open the door of the examination room and left, his white coat flying behind him. Husband? she said. She stared down at her left hand, watching the diamonds on the simple band catch the fluorescent light. She glanced up at Will. How could I have missed this? Will shrugged. He had not noticed it himself. Can you remember him? Jane closed her eyes and tried to conjure a face, a gesture, even the pitch of a voice. She shook her head. I dont feel married. Will laughed. Well, then half the wives in America would probably kill for your kind of blow to the head. He walked to the door and held it open for her. Come on. He could feel her one step behind him the entire way to the parking lot. When they reached the truck, he unlocked her door first and helped her into the seat. He turned the ignition and fastened his seat belt before he spoke. Look, he said. If your husbands looking for you, he cant file a missing persons report until twenty-four hours go by. We can go down to the station now if you want, or we can go first thing in the morning. She stared at him. Why dont you want to take me there? What are you talking about? Youre hedging, Jane said. I can hear it in your voice. Will faced straight ahead and put the truck into reverse. Well, then youre not listening too well. A muscle jumped along the side of his jaw. Its up to you. She stared at his profile, a chiseled silhouette. She wondered what she had said to make him so angry. For right now, at least, he was her only friend. Maybe if I get some rest, she said carefully, Ill remember everything when I wake up. Maybe everything will look different. Will turned to her, taking in the tremor of her voice and the hope she was holding out to him. This woman he knew nothing about, this woman who knew nothing about him, was putting herself in his hands. It was the most hed ever been given. Maybe, he said. **JANE WAS ASLEEP BY THE TIME THEY REACHED THE HOUSE IN RESEDA.** Will carried her back to the bedroom, settling her on the naked mattress and covering her with the only blanket hed unpacked. He took off her shoes, but that was as far as hed go. She was another mans wife. At Oglala Community College, in some culture class hed been forced to take to graduate, Will had learned the punishment the Sioux meted out for a womans adultery in the days of the buffalo. It had completely shocked him: If his wife had run away with another man, the husband had the right to cut off the tip of her nose, so shed be marked for life. To Will, it seemed to contradict everything else he knew about the Sioux. After all, they did not understand ownership of the land. They believed in giving away money, food, and clothing to friends down on their luck, even if it meant that theyd become poor as well. Yet they branded a wife as property, a husband as an owner. He watched Jane sleep. In a way, he envied her. Shed managed to discard her past so easily, when Will had to work so hard to put his own history out of his mind. Will touched the edge of Janes collar where blood had

dried. He would get some cold water and soak that. He brushed her hair away from her forehead and looked over her features. She had ordinary brown hair, a small nose, a stubborn chin. Freckles. She was not the blond bombshell of his adolescent dreams, but she was pretty in a simple way. Someone must have been frantic to find her missing. He lifted his palm from her neck, planning to get a washcloth, but was stopped when her hand shot up from her side, her fingers closing around his wrist with lightning speed. Jesus, he thought, the reflexes of a cougar. Her eyes opened, and she glanced around wildly as if she had been trapped. Shh, Will soothed, and as he gently tugged to free himself, Jane let go, frowning as if she wasn't really sure why she had grabbed him at all. Who are you? she asked. Will walked to the door and turned off the light. He looked away so that she would not be able to see his face. You don't want to know, he said.

WILLS FIRST MEMORY INVOLVED BAILING HIS FATHER OUT FROM JAIL. He was three, and he remembered the way his mother looked standing in front of the sheriff. She was tall and proud and even in the dim lighting she looked very, very pale. There's been a mistake, she said. Mr. Flying Horse is one of my employees. Will did not understand why his mother would say his father worked for her, when she knew that he worked for Mr. Lundt on the ranch. He did not understand the word assault although he thought battery had something to do with making Christmas toys work. The sheriff, a man with a florid cauliflower face, stared closely at Will and then spat not an inch away from his foot. Aint no mistake, ma'am, the sheriff said. You know these goddamned Indians. His mother's face had pinched closed, and she pulled out her wallet to pay the fines his father had been charged. Release him, she hissed, and the sheriff turned to walk down a corridor. Will watched him grow smaller and smaller, the pistol at his hip winking each time he passed a window. Will's mother knelt down beside him. Don't you believe a word he says, she told him. Your father was trying to help. What he learned, years later, was that Zachary Flying Horse had been in a bar when there was an incident. A woman was being hassled by two rednecks, and when he had stepped in to intervene, a fight had broken out. The woman had run out of the bar, so when the police came it was Zack's word against that of two white locals. Zachary stepped out of the corridor in the jail behind the sheriff. He did not touch his wife. Missus, he said solemnly. Will. He lifted his boy up onto his shoulders and carried him into the hot Dakota sun. They walked halfway down the block before Will's father swung him off his shoulders and caught his wife up in a tight embrace. Oh, Anne, he sighed against her hair. I'm sorry to put you through that. Will pulled on the edge of his father's plaid shirt. What did you do, Pa? Zack grabbed Will's hand and started down the street again. I was born, he said.

IT WOULD HAVE BEEN IMPOSSIBLE FOR HER TO MISS THE NOTE Will had left her, sitting as it was on the toilet lid with a fresh towel, toothpaste, a twenty-dollar bill, and a key. Jane, Will had written, I've gone to work. I'll ask around about your husband, and I'll try to call later today with some answers. I don't have anything in the refrigerator so if you get hungry, go down to the market (3 blocks east). Hope you're feeling better. Will. She brushed her teeth with her finger and looked at the note again. He hadn't said anything about what she should do if she awakened with a perfect understanding of her name and address not that it really mattered, since she still couldn't remember. At least she was lucky. Her chances of running into a drug addict or a pimp on Sunset Boulevard had been much greater than running into someone from out of town, someone who'd leave a perfect stranger his house key and twenty dollars without asking any questions or expecting something in return. A light came into her eyes. She could do something in return; she could unpack for him. Her taste in decorating might not be like his in fact, she had no idea what her own taste was like but surely having the pots and pans in the cabinets and the towels in the linen closet would be a nice thing to come home to. Jane threw herself into the task of putting Will's house in order. She organized the kitchen and the bathroom and the broom closet, but she didn't really have to get creative until she got to the living room. There, in two boxes, carefully layered in newspaper, was a series of Native American relics. She unwrapped beautiful quilled moccasins and a long tanned hide painted with the image of a hunt. There was an intricate quilt and a fan made of feathers and a circular beaded medallion. At the bottom of the box was a small leather pouch trimmed with beads and bright feathers, on which was drawn a running horse. It was closed tight with a sinew thong, and although she tried, she could not open the bag to see its contents. She did not know what most of these objects were but she handled them as gently as she could, and she began to piece together more about Will. She looked around the bare walls and thought, If I were in a strange place, I'd want something that reminds me of home.

NO ONE HAD COME BY THE ACADEMY LOOKING FOR A MISSING woman. Will spent the day being introduced by the captain to other people in the LAPD, getting his badge and his assignment. When he registered for his gun, the officer who took down the information asked if he'd rather have a tomahawk; his new partner got a great kick out of calling him Crazy Horse. But these were things he'd faced before. He did

not see the officer whod blackened his eye; however, Beverly Hills was a separate precinct. When giggling secretaries asked about the bruise, he shrugged and said someone had gotten in his way. It was after four o'clock before he got up the nerve to knock on his new captains door and tell him about Jane. Come over here, Watkins said, waving Will inside. You think you got the hang of things yet? Will shook his head. Its different. Watkins grinned. South Dakota its not, he said. A couple of celebrity traffic violations, a drug bust, and itll be old hat. Will shifted in his seat. I wanted to speak to you about a missing persons case, he said. Actually, I want to know if He stopped, and smoothed his palms against his thighs to gain his composure. There was no right way to go about saying hed skirted procedure; Jane should have been brought into the precinct and photographed by now. I found a woman last night whos got amnesia. We went to the hospital, but since it was late, I didnt bring her in right away. Will looked up at the captain. Have you heard anything? The older man shook his head slowly. Since you werent on duty yet, he said, Im not going to count this against you. But she needs to be brought in for questioning. Watkins looked up at Will, and at that moment Will knew that in spite of the captains absolution, he would start out with a strike against him. Could be her memory loss is related to a crime. Watkins fixed Will with a sharp glance. I assume you still know her whereabouts. Id suggest you bring her down as soon as possible, he said. Will nodded, and started toward the door. And Officer, Watkins called after him, from here on, you play by the rules. WILL PULLED ON THE COLLAR OF HIS UNIFORM THE WHOLE DRIVE back to Reseda. The goddamn shirt was choking him. He wouldnt last a week wearing it. He turned the corner of his block wondering if Jane had remembered her name. He wondered if shed still be there. She met him at the door wearing one of his good white shirts, knotted at the waist, and a pair of his running shorts. Is someone looking for me? she asked. Will shook his head and stepped over the threshold of his house. He stood perfectly still in the entrance, surveying the neatly stacked, empty boxes and the proof of his history hanging over the walls where anyone could see. The fury came so quickly he forgot to hide it away. Who the hell gave you the right to go through my things? he yelled, stomping across the carpet into the middle of the living room. He whirled to pin his gaze on Jane and found her crouched against the wall, her hands overhead as if to ward off a blow. The anger ran out of him. He stood quietly, waiting for the rage to clear out of his vision. He did not say anything. Jane lowered her arms and stiffly got to her feet, but she wouldnt look Will in the eye. I thought Id be helping you, she said. I wanted to thank you for everything, and this seemed to be the best way. Her eyes raked the wall where the little leather pouch hung beside the painted hunting scene. I could always change things if you dont like them hanging this way. I dont like them hanging at all, Will said, lifting the moccasins from their spot on the fireplace mantel. He grabbed an empty carton and began tossing the items back inside. Jane knelt beside the box and tried to organize the fragile pieces so they wouldnt be crushed. She had to do it carefully; she had to make it right. She ran her fingers over the feathers of the small leather pouch. What is this? Will barely glanced at what she was holding. A medicine bundle, he said. Whats in it? Will shrugged. The only people who know are my great-great-grandfather and his shaman, and both of them are dead. Its beautiful, Jane said. Its worthless, Will tossed back. Its supposed to keep you safe, but my great-great-grandfather was gored by a buffalo. He turned to see Jane fingering the bundle, and his face softened as she looked up at him. Im sorry, he said. I didnt mean to go off like that. I just dont like these things hanging where I can see them all the time. I thought youd want something to remind you of where you came from, Jane said. Will sank to the floor. Thats exactly what I ran away from, he said. He sighed and ran a hand through his hair, looking to change the subject. Howre you feeling? She blinked at him, noticing for the first time that he was wearing the blue shirt of a police officer, the LAPD patch over his upper arm. Youre wearing a uniform, she blurted out. Will smirked. You were expecting a headdress? Jane stood up and offered her hand to Will, pulling him to his feet. I remembered how to cook, she said. You want dinner? She had fried chicken, steamed beans, and baked potatoes. Will carried the platter to the center of the living room floor and chose a breast for each of them, placing the meat onto two plates. He told her about his first day of work, and she told him how shed gotten lost on her way to the market. The sun bled through the windows and cast Jane and Will into silhouette as they fell into an easy silence. Will picked at the pieces of the chicken, sucked the meat from the bones. Suddenly, he felt Janes hand close over his. Oh, lets do this, she said, her eyes bright, and he realized he was holding the wishbone. He pulled and she pulled, the white bones slipping through their greasy fingers, and finally he came away with the bigger piece. Disappointed, Jane leaned back against a stack of boxes. What did you wish for? He had wished for her memory, but he wouldnt tell her. If you say it, it wont come true, he said, surprising himself. He smiled at Jane. My mother used to say that. In fact, she was the last person who pulled a wishbone with me. Jane hugged her knees to her chest.

Does she live in South Dakota? He almost didn't hear her question, as he was thinking about the fine curve of his mother's jaw and the spark of her copper hair. He pictured her hand and his own curled over the edges of the forked chicken bone, and he wondered if her wishes had ever come true. Will looked up. My mother died when I was nine, in a car accident with my father. Oh, how awful, Jane said, and Will was amazed that her voice could hold so much pain for a stranger. She was white, he heard himself saying. After the accident, I lived with my father's parents on the rez. As he started to speak, Jane reached onto the platter and pulled out a pile of bones Will had left. She settled them onto her plate and moved them around with her hands, seemingly unaware of what she was doing. She glanced up at him and smiled. Go on, she said. Tell me how they met. Will had told this story many times before, because it tended to wrap itself around a woman's heart so neatly she'd tumble into his bed. My mother was a schoolteacher in Pine Ridge town, and my father saw her one day when he was getting some feed for his boss at the ranch. And her being white, and him being Lakota, he didn't really understand his attraction, much less what he was going to do about it. Mesmerized, he watched Jane's hands wrap a strip of sinew from one bone around a second one. Anyway, they went out a couple of times, and then it came to summer vacation and she decided things were moving along too fast, so she just up and left without telling my father where she was going. Jane neatly laid five bones in parallel lines against the edge of her plate. I'm listening, she said. Well, it sounds stupid, but my father said he was riding fence and he just knew. So he left in the middle of the day, on this borrowed horse, and he set out sort of north-northwest without any idea where he was headed. Jane looked up, her hands stilling. Did he find her? Will nodded. About thirty-five miles away at a diner, where she was waiting for a friend to pick her up and drive her home to Seattle. My father pulled her in front of him on the horse and wrapped an extra saddle blanket around them. Will had listened to this story so many times as a child that even now, he imagined the words in his mother's voice instead of his own. Years ago, this is how my people fell in love, your father told me, and he wrapped that blanket so close we were sharing one heartbeat. I would have come to you at night, and we would sit outside in this cocoon, and with all the stars as witnesses I would tell you that I loved you. My God, Jane sighed. That is the most romantic thing I've ever heard. She pulled a new handful of bones from the tray between them. Did your mother go back with him? Will laughed. No, she went to Seattle. But she wrote him letters all summer and they got married a year later. Jane smiled and wiped her hands on a napkin. How come people don't do things like that nowadays? You grope around in the back of a sedan in high school and you think you're in love. Nobody gets swept off their feet anymore. Shaking her head, she stood up to clear the plates. She picked up the near-empty serving platter and then dropped it, hearing its ring and the splatter of grease. On her plate she'd re-created the skeleton of the chicken. The bones were carefully structured, in some cases even bound together at the joints. The wings were folded neatly against the rib cage; the powerful legs were bent as if running. She put her hand to her forehead as a wealth of terms and images flooded her mind: the slender arm bone of a ramapithecus, a string of molars and cranial fragments, green tents in Ethiopia that covered tables laden with hundreds of catalogued bones. Physical anthropology. She'd spent entire months in Kenya and Budapest and Greece on excavations, tracking the history of man. It had been such a tremendous part of her life, she was shocked even a blow to the head could make her forget it. She lightly touched the femur of the reconstructed chicken. Will, she said, and when she lifted her face her eyes were shining. I know what I do. CHAPTER THREE WILL liked Jane better before she remembered she was an anthropologist. She kept trying to explain her science to him. Anthropology, she said, was the study of how people fit into their world. That much he understood, but most of the other things she said sounded like a foreign language. On the drive to the police station Monday evening, she'd outlined the best methods for skeletal excavation. When Watkins questioned her for a notice he'd insert in the Times, she'd told him that until someone came to claim her, she'd be happy to help in forensics. And now, the following morning, while Will was working his way through a bowl of Cheerios, she was trying to explain the evolution of man. She was drawing lines across her napkin, labeling each branch with names. Will was beginning to see why her husband hadn't shown up. I can't follow this, he said. I can't even do math this early. Jane ignored him. When she finished, she sighed and leaned back in her chair. God, it feels so good to know something. Will thought there were probably other things more worth knowing, but he didn't say this. He pointed to a spot on the napkin. Why'd they become extinct? Jane frowned. They weren't able to adapt to the world, she said. Will snorted. Yeah, well, half the time neither can I, he said. He picked up his hat, getting ready to leave. Jane's eyes brightened as she turned to him. I wonder if I've discovered something really important, like the Lucy skeleton, or that Stone Age man in the Tyrolean Alps. Will smiled. He thought of her crouched over a site in the red sand of a desert, doing what made her

happy. Feel free to dig in the backyard, he said. THAT TUESDAY MORNING, THE LAPD RAN JANES PICTURE IN THE L.A. Times with a small blurb requesting information about her, and Jane remembered discovering the hand. After Will had left, Jane took herself to the local public library. It was a small branch library, but it did have a neat little section of textbooks on anthropology and archaeology. She found the most recent book, hunched over the polished table, and began to read. Familiar words jarred images in her mind. She saw herself in the British countryside, kneeling beside an open pit in which lay the tangled remains of an ancient Iron Age battle. She could remember brushing earth from the bones; feeling for the pits on a sternum made by lances and arrowheads, or the cleanly severed vertebrae that cried decapitation. She had been someones assistant then, she remembered, labeling specimens with India ink, carrying trays of bones to dry in the sun. Jane flipped the page and that's when she saw the hand. It was exactly as it had been when she'd found it in Tanzania, fossilized into a stratum of sedimentary rock, tightly grasping a chisel made of stone. Hundreds of anthropologists had combed Tanzania looking for evidence of the stone-tool industry they thought primitive man had the level of intellect to conceive. Following the lead of her colleagues, she had gone down one year to reopen a forgotten excavation site. She hadn't been looking when she found the hand. She'd just sort of turned around, and there it was, shoulder level, as if it had been reaching for her. It was an extraordinary find; delicate bones were rarely preserved. For fossilization to occur, skeletons had to remain undisturbed by animals and swirling waters and shifts of the earth, and if any pieces of a skeleton were lost, they tended to be the extremities. Even as she was working, she had known this would be her break into the field. She had found what everyone had been searching for. She had carefully labeled the chisel, the hundreds of digits of bone, had cleaned them and preserved them with a synthetic resin. Jane turned back to the book and read the caption beside the photograph of the hand. Dated to over 2.8 million years, this hominid hand and chisel are the oldest known proof of stone-tool industry [Barrett et al., 1990]. From Publishers Weekly This politically correct Hollywood romance leaves no plotting stone unturned. For her discovery of an ancient human relic, glamorous UCLA anthropologist Cassie Barrett is rocketed to the prominence of a '90s-style Margaret Mead. As if that's not enough, she goes to Kenya as technical consultant on a movie starring hunk-of-the-month Alex Rivers. After a whirlwind romance, Cassie becomes the new Mrs. Rivers, toast of filmdom's beautiful people. But all is not bliss for the newlyweds: Alex's tortured past just won't let go, and Cassie must bear the brunt of his emotional scars. Perhaps attempting to salvage the predictable plot, Picoult administers to Cassie's bland character a dose of adrenalin-pumping amnesia. She also throws in a dollop of Native American culture and a noble savage who skirts the periphery of Cassie's tumultuous existence, always ready with sage advice, spiritual healing techniques and warm embraces. Some rather prettily told Indian legends are added to the mix, but the total effect is wide of the mark. Literary Guild and Doubleday Book Club selection; film rights to Dove Audio; audio rights to Brilliance. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.