

Four Souls



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A strange and compelling unkillable woman decides to leave home, and the story begins. Fleur Pillager takes her mother's name, Four Souls, for strength and walks from her Ojibwe reservation to the cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul. She is seeking restitution from and revenge on the lumber baron who has stripped her reservation. But revenge is never simple, and she quickly finds her intentions complicated by her own dangerous compassion for the man who wronged her. The two narrators of Four Souls are from utterly different worlds. Nanapush, a "smart man and a fool," is both Fleur's savior and her conscience. He tells Fleur's story and tells his own. He would like a calm and discriminating love with his sweetheart, Margaret. He is old and would like to face death with his love beside him. Instead the two find themselves battling out their last years. When the childhood nemesis of Nanapush appears and casts his eye toward Margaret, Nanapush acts out an absurd revenge of his own and nearly ends up destroying everything. The other narrator, Polly Elizabeth Gheen, is a pretentious and vulnerable upper-crust fringe element, a hanger-on in a wealthy Minneapolis family, a woman aware of her precarious hold on those around her. To her own great surprise the entrance of Fleur Pillager into her household and her life effects a transformation she could never have predicted. In the world of interconnected novels by Louise Erdrich, Four Souls is most closely linked to Tracks . All these works continue and

elaborate the intricate story of life on a reservation peopled by saints and false saints, heroes and sinners, clever fools and tenacious women. Four Souls reminds us of the deep spirituality and the ordinary humanity of this world, and is as beautiful and lyrical as anything Louise Erdrich has written.

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