Nine

Early morning. The small front porch of Annie's small house. Buster is the sheriff of the nearest town, Silver Creek. He comes up the porch, looks around a bit. Looks for a bell to ring. There is none. It is freezing out—still, he takes off his glove to prepare to knock on the door.

Annie opens the door just as he's about to knock.

ANNIE. Oh my!

BUSTER. Sorry, didn't mean to startle you. You didn't give me a chance to knock.

ANNIE. I'm not all that used to visitors out here. What can I do for you, Sheriff?

BUSTER. Ms. Wilkes, isn't it?

ANNIE. That's right.

BUSTER. I'm sorry to be bothering you so early, Ms. Wilkes. I've been going nuts with phone calls from New York—so I'm asking everyone in these parts if they've seen something. There's a writer, comes here often from New York; he was supposed to show up back home a few days ago and he didn't. Guess he checked out of the Silver Creek Lodge two weeks back, and now there's people back East scared something bad happened to him.

ANNIE. *(Shocked.)* Writer from New York? Oh my God, Paul Sheldon was staying there! He's my hero! I got all the Misery books inside. I'm just reading the new one, *Misery's Child*. Is it him you're looking for?

BUSTER. *(Shows photo.)* Yes, ma'am. Here's a photo here.

ANNIE. Oh my God. What are people saying at the Lodge?

BUSTER. Nothing unusual, ma'am. Checked out the morning of that blizzard. Said he was driving a '65 Mustang. Blue. Doubt it had chains and that was some mother of a storm—guess he coulda gone off the road near here. I was up in the helicopter yesterday and it's hard to see if a car's buried. Snow's still piled high.

ANNIE. *(Shakes her head, visibly upset.)* I don't think God would let anything bad happen to Paul Sheldon.

BUSTER. Yeah, I don't know that he's been gone long enough to worry. I told his agent when she called, maybe he decided to make a stop on his way home. Or maybe he had enough of this damn winter, went to Florida instead. But she insists he would have been in touch.

ANNIE. I have to believe he's safe. Will you let me know if you hear anything, Sheriff?

BUSTER. Oh, I think everyone will hear about it if we find him. And please, call me Buster, everyone does.

ANNIE. All my fingers are crossed for you, Buster.

Buster nods.

Annie closes the porch door—very softly.

