Ten

The following dawn. But things have changed—a lot! Paul is not in bed. He is sitting—sitting in a wheelchair. A table has been set up in the corner of the room.

ANNIE. *(So excited.)* Like it so far?

PAUL. *(Manages a nod.)* I'll say—I've always wanted to visit the other side of the room.

ANNIE. Now don't poke fun—I promised you the biggest surprise of your life, remember?

PAUL. If I knew a wheelchair was my surprise I would have burned all my books.

ANNIE. That chair was expensive, even if it was secondhand. But that's only part of the surprise.

PAUL. Can I have my pills?

ANNIE. It's not time yet. Now you just sit tight while I set everything up.

Annie hurries out the door.

PAUL. I don't know how long I can sit in this chair without my Novril, Annie.

ANNIE. *(Off.)* I know it hurts now, but there will come a day—and sooner than you think—when it hurts less.

PAUL. Yeah, well, that's not today.

ANNIE. Don't be a crybaby. This is one of the most important days of your life. This is the surprise.

And she returns with an old-model typewriter.

Well? What do you think?

PAUL. It's a real antique.

ANNIE. I didn't get it for an antique. *(Indicating the table.)* It's your new studio—writers need a place to work, right?

She clunks the typewriter down on the table.

PAUL. Work? You mean write? What in the world do you think I'd write?

She has never been more excited.

ANNIE. Oh but Paul, I don't think, I know. Now that you've gotten rid of that piece of filth, you can go back to doing what you're great at—you're going to write a new novel—your greatest achievement ever— *(Big.) MISERY'S RETURN.*

Hard for Paul to answer. He just sits there.

PAUL. Annie, Misery is dead.

ANNIE. No, she's not. Even when I was so mad at you, I knew you didn't mean it when you killed her. And now you'll make it right.

An almost religious fervor now.

And this will be a book in my honor. Dedicated to me for saving your life and nursing you back to health. I'll be the very first person to read it. Oh, Paul, you're going to make me the envy of the world!

She hurries to the door again.

PAUL. *(Calling out to her.)* You just expect me to whip something off?

ANNIE. I absolutely do—I expect nothing less than your masterpiece.

PAUL. I don't have any of my notes. I have two big binders keeping

track of characters, timelines, places. I don't even have any of the books.

Now she's back—this time she carries typing paper, pens, pencils, a sharpener. And all of the Misery books.

ANNIE. I have all the books, silly. Plus paper, pens, pencils, a sharpener, anything you need.

PAUL. Somehow I don't think Tolstoy wrote this way.

ANNIE. I couldn't say, you're the only genius I've ever had in this house. I have total confidence in your brilliance.

Annie opens the curtains.

Besides, the view will inspire you.

Paul looks out the window: sky, mountain, barn, open land. Desolate.

PAUL. I guess you don't get bothered by neighbors much.

ANNIE. Which is so good for you, because you can have total solitude.

PAUL. Great.

ANNIE. This is the most expensive typing paper anywhere. And I got a great deal on this fifty-pound clunker on account of the "n" key is broken—it came loose, see.

She wiggles the "n" key. Paul's eyes light up.

PAUL. Came loose, huh?

ANNIE. So she gave me five dollars off.

PAUL. Gave you? You mean you didn't dicker?

ANNIE. I might have. *(Smiles, letting him in on a secret.)* I told the saleslady "n" was one of the letters in my favorite writer's name, Paul Sheldon.

Paul smiles too.

PAUL. It's two of the letters in my favorite nurse's name—An-nie.

ANNIE. You fooler.

PAUL. *(Embarrassed—blushing.)* I'm not. Not at all.

ANNIE. *(Really wanting to please.)* Did I do good?

PAUL. You did great.

Delighted, she puts paper in the typewriter and her fingers do a little dance on the keys.

Except for just one little thing. This is Corrasable Bond—it smudges. Maybe you wouldn't mind going back into town and getting me some white, long-grained mimeo?

Pause.

ANNIE. It's a trick. You don't want to write my book so you're making up excuses not to start.

PAUL. Bring that over here, I'll show you the problem.

ANNIE. This paper cost the most so I don't see how it can smudge.

She hands him the paper and he runs his thumb over the typing.

Well, it does smudge after all—how fascinating is that?

PAUL. I thought you'd be interested. I'd like you to be in on everything, Annie—not just the finished book but how it's written.

ANNIE. I'm so touched you're thinking of me.

A wonderful smile now.

Anything else I can get for you while I'm in town? Any other crucial requirements that might need satisfying?

PAUL. Just the paper will be fine.

The smile goes—she's agitated now.

ANNIE. Are you sure? I could bring you a tape recorder—or maybe you'd like a handmade pair of writing slippers. 'Cause if you want, I'll bring back the whole store for you.

PAUL. Annie, what's the matter?

ANNIE. What's the matter? I'll tell you what's the matter. I go out of my way for you. I do everything I can to try and make you happy. I feed you, I clean you, I dress you. And what thanks do I get? "You brought the wrong paper, Annie. I can't write on this paper, Annie." Well, I'll get you your stupid paper, but you better start showing me a little more appreciation around here, Mister Man.

Suddenly she is in a rage, charging at him. She takes the ream of paper and slams it on his damaged knees. Paul's pain is both sudden and shocking, and he cries out.

You may think you can trick me. I know I look slow and stupid to you. But I am not stupid, Paul. And I am not slow.

Annie storms to the door, opens it, slams it shut, locks it.

