She leaves. Paul looks at his hand that has caught the kiss, looks after Annie. He swallows the Novril, and sits for a while, as rain starts to fall outside.

ANNIE

Seven

Paul's room is dark. Outside a storm has begun. Growing. Paul lies in bed.

Suddenly, the door to the room flies open. Annie looks different now than she ever has. And boy, is she ever not smiling.

START

ANNIE. You dirty bird! SHE CANNOT BE DEAD! MISERY CHASTAIN CANNOT BE DEAD!

PAUL. Annie—please listen to me—

ANNIE. HOW COULD YOU KILL HER?!

PAUL. In 1871 women died in childbirth all the time—but her spirit is the important thing, and Misery's spirit is still alive—

ANNIE. I DON'T WANT HER SPIRIT! I WANT HER—AND YOU MURDERED HER!!

PAUL. I didn't murder her—

ANNIE. —THEN WHO DID?

PAUL. No one… she just died… she slipped away, that's all…

ANNIE. SLIPPED AWAY?! SHE DIDN'T JUST SLIP AWAY! YOU KILLED HER! Do you think I was born yesterday? A writer is God to the people in a story, he made them up just like God made us up. As far as Misery goes, God just happens to have a couple of broken legs and be in *my* house, eating *my* food, SO DON'T TELL ME YOU DIDN'T KILL HER BECAUSE YOU DID IT! YOU DID IT! YOU MURDERED MY MISERY!!!

She nearly hits him but manages to stop herself.

I thought you were good, Paul, but you're not good, you're just another dirty birdie—

PAUL. Annie…

ANNIE. I think I better go now. I don't think I better be around you for a while. I don't think it's—wise.

PAUL. Go? Where?

Annie moves to the door.

Will you be back to give me my medication?

ANNIE. Oh I think you've caused enough suffering and now it's your turn to suffer. And don't even think about anybody coming for you, not the doctors, not your agent, not your daughter, because I never called them. Nobody knows you're here. And you better hope nothing happens to me because if I don't come back, you die. **END**

And on that, she's gone. For the first time, the door slams all the way shut.

Paul is alone.

Deafening thunder.

And now another growling sound—a car motor.

Growling, then gone. Paul takes a breath—

—stares across at the closed door—

—makes a decision.

Deep breath now.

Now another.

And here he goes.

Slowly getting out of bed.

He reaches down with his left arm, the good one—the right shoulder is the bandaged one, the shoulder that was dislocated—reaches to the floor—

—planning to gradually bring himself down.

Good plan—

—not such good execution.

His body twists as he falls—

—falls hard—

—landing dead on his dislocated shoulder.

PAUL/ANNIE

Nineteen

START *In the dark, thunder and lightning. Then, lights up on Paul's room. It is a beautiful day. The storm is over. "Moonlight Sonata" plays. Liberace has never been more romantic.**

Paul sleeps.

Annie is standing there by his bed. Paul blinks, tries to move—

—but he's groggy—

—helpless—

—He has been strapped to his bed.

Annie stands there, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed.

ANNIE. Hi, Punkin.

Paul manages a nod.

Guess what?—I know you've been out.

PAUL. What… What are you talking about? What's going on?

ANNIE. You've been out of your room.

PAUL. No I haven't. Annie, what is this?

ANNIE. You've been out at least twice. I warned you not to try to trick me, Paul.

Paul says nothing, just stares at her, waiting. Annie walks slowly back to the foot of the bed.

PAUL. I don't know what you're talking about.

ANNIE. You left marks with the wheelchair the first time you got out. I know there's Novril missing. And you shouldn't have turned off the timer, Paul. At first I was so confused as to how in the world you got out, then last night I found your key.

Now she holds up the typewriter key.

PAUL. Okay, I went out the two times, once because YOU left me here in pain and I needed pills, and the other to get water so I didn't die of thirst.

* See Note on Songs/Recordings at the back of this volume.

ANNIE. I suppose you never tried the doors, or the phone?

PAUL. Sure I did, but you know the phone doesn't work and the doors are locked, and where am I going?

ANNIE. So you went out twice, once for pills and once for water.

PAUL. Yes, Annie, that's it, I swear.

ANNIE. You're lying to me. But that's okay, Paul.

Beat.

Looking for this?

Annie pulls out the knife. Paul knows the jig is up.

I found this right in the bed before I gave you your pre-op shot.

PAUL. Pre-op?

ANNIE. Last night it became so clear. Would you ever really want to stay? I had to ask myself that. And as much as I wanted to pull the wool over my own eyes, I suppose I knew the answer even before I found your key.

She holds up the typewriter "n" key.

Paul, do you know about the early days at the Kimberly Diamond Mine? Do you know what they did to the native workers who stole diamonds? Now don't you worry, they didn't kill them—that would be like junking a Mercedes just because it had a broken spring.

She is building to climax now.

No, if they caught them, they had to make sure they could go on working—but they also had to make sure they could never run away. What they did was called hobbling.

And with that she reaches down out of sight and comes up holding a block of wood.

PAUL. Annie—whatever you're thinking about doing, please don't do it.

Annie wedges the block firmly between his legs just above the ankles, secures it and adjusts his feet.

ANNIE. Now don't fuss. I gave you a shot of Fentanyl to relax you.

PAUL. Why would I run away? I'm a writer, Annie—it's all I am—and I've never written this well—even you said that this is my best,

didn't you? Didn't you? Why would I leave a place where I'm doing my best work? It doesn't make any sense.

ANNIE. Now, don't fuss.

Annie picks up a sledgehammer.

PAUL. Annie, I promise I'll never leave my room again. I'll stay here forever. Annie, I'll be good, I swear, I'll be good! Please, PLEASE, please, I'm begging you, don't do this. I'll be good!

She pulls the sledgehammer back—

ANNIE. Darling trust me, it's for the best.

—gets ready to strike.

PAUL. Annie, for God's sake please!

ANNIE. Darling, relax… I'm a trained nurse.

END

And with that, she swings the sledgehammer against his right ankle—

—there is the sound of metal crushing bone—

Paul's scream is terrifying.

Almost done—just one more.

She swings the sledgehammer against his other ankle.

God I love you.

Paul cannot stop screaming. The set rotates.

Twenty

A week later. Annie's front porch. It's spring now. Annie opens the door, and the TV is on loudly in the background.

ANNIE. Sheriff?

BUSTER. Hope I'm not interrupting. I tried calling but there was never an answer, phone just rang and rang.

ANNIE. Oh goodness, I turn the TV up full volume, my hearing is not what it used to be—I'll never hear the phone when *M.A.S.H.* is on! Do you like *M.A.S.H.*?