ANNIE. Maybe it was a bee.

Paul looks at her. She blushes red.

I saw it once at the hospital. Sometimes a beesting can cause a comatose condition which can make a person seem dead. Similar to a cataleptic state.

She is embarrassed.

Oh gosh, you're the writer, not me. Just forget I said anything. I'm sorry.

PAUL. Don't be sorry—

But she closes the door and is gone, her footsteps hurrying towards to the kitchen.

Long pause as he considers this, rejects it, considers it again, turning over ideas in his head, rejecting, combining, connecting. Then, it hits.

Holy shit. Goddamnit, Annie.

Paul reaches for the paper. Puts it in the machine. Still working through his thought, he begins to type, slowly. It feels different than when he started earlier. His typing gets a bit faster. He removes his sling with some pain and continues typing, faster now, with both hands. It gains some momentum. He types and types, as the sun begins to rise.

PAUL

Fourteen

Now it's bright sunlight. Paul sits at the table. He is very tired and very nervous. Annie sits across the room studying some typed pages. Now she looks at him—hard to tell what she's thinking.

START

PAUL. Well? Should I keep going?

Annie suddenly looks as joyous as we've yet seen her.

ANNIE. I'll kill you if you don't, Mister Man! *(Building into a fervor.)* —Oh, Paul, when Ian realized that the reason they'd buried Misery alive was because a beesting had put her in a temporary coma—

(Even bigger.) —and when Gravedigger Wilkes remembered how thirty years earlier, the same thing had happened to Lady Evelyn-Hyde and then old Doctor Cleary deduced that Misery must be Lady Evelyn-Hyde's long-lost daughter because of the rarity of deadly beestings—well, my heart just leapt!

Paul watches her—it's as if he had nothing to do with it.

I've known from the very first book that Misery had to be born of nobility—and I was right!

PAUL. And it's fair?

ANNIE. Yes. It's fair. And it's exciting. But it's gruesome too. Misery's bloody hands scratching to get out of her coffin... It's not like any of the other Misery books.

PAUL. Well, different circumstances.

Annie touches the pages with such gentleness.

ANNIE. I'm wild to know what happens next. Will she be her old self now that Ian has dug her out or will she have amnesia?

PAUL. Have to wait.

ANNIE. Will she still love him with that special perfect love?

PAUL. Have to wait.

ANNIE. *(Pleading.)* Not even a hint?

Pause.

PAUL. It's good, isn't it?

This is a very big moment for Paul.

Annie begins to spin around the room like a happy child.

ANNIE. Misery's alive. Misery's alive! Oh, this house is going to be filled with romance—I'm going to play all my Liberace records for us! Oh, Paul, can I read each chapter when you finish?—Please, please, please—it would be almost like the chapter plays when I was a kid. I could fill in all the "n"s for you.

PAUL. Only on the condition that you do something for me?

ANNIE. What?

PAUL. Would you have dinner with me tonight?

She is stunned, thrilled, can't speak.

To celebrate Misery's return—I could never have done it without you.

ANNIE. Oh Paul—It would be an honor.

And she dashes excitedly out of the room.

PAUL. *(A whisper.)* Please, God…

We stay locked on Paul, as the lights fade. **END**

Fifteen

Liberace begins to sing for us.

Louder than he's yet been.

Lights up on the kitchen.

Annie has set up a table with her best silverware and china. There are wine glasses, a bottle of Gallo red wine.

The whole place is as romantic as Annie can make anything.

And Annie—we've never seen her dolled up like this. She wheels Paul to the table.

ANNIE. I hope you like it.

PAUL. This looks wonderful.

He takes one.

And you look very pretty.

Annie starts to reply, is too embarrassed, stops.

ANNIE. *(Delighted, almost shy.)* Well I'm not going to tell you what you can say.

The awkward silence goes on.

PAUL. Where did you get a dress like that?

ANNIE. It was my mother's. It's old-fashioned.

PAUL. I like it, it's modest.

ANNIE. It is modest. I don't mean to pry, but I read in *People* magazine that you were seeing that model who does those disgusting jeans commercials. And I said it can't be true. Paul Sheldon would never waste his time with a trampy woman like that.

PAUL. Shouldn't I be in the hospital?

ANNIE. I'll get you to a hospital, as soon as the roads open. I tried calling but the phone lines are still down. But I could hear the bones moving when I worked on you, so it really is best for your legs to remain immobile for now.

Now she gently puts the sheet back over him.

PAUL. How long have I been here?

ANNIE. This is your fourth morning.

PAUL. And I was unconscious that whole time?

ANNIE. Almost all the time. But when I heard your first scream, I was so relieved.

PAUL. I was screaming?

ANNIE. Dying men rarely scream. They don't have the energy for it. I know.

~~*Annie indicates a makeshift IV stand.*~~

~~We don't need this anymore. That's some good news.~~

~~*Paul looks at his arm, touches it, but it hurts to move.*~~

PAUL. Will I be able to walk again?

ANNIE. Well, you won't go dancing for a while, but yes, you sure will. That's a promise.

Annie turns to go.

PAUL. Hey. Ma'am. In the car, next to me, there was a leather case…

ANNIE. I have it, Paul. It's safe.

PAUL. *(Very relieved.)* Thank God… thank you.

ANNIE. You're welcome. Now, no more questions. You need your rest. You almost died.

Paul takes this in.

You're in good hands, Paul. After all, I'm your number one…

PAUL. *(And now the memory of what he heard while unconscious makes sense.)* …my number one fan.

ANNIE. Your number one fan. Yes, I sure am. *(Smiles down at him.)* And trust me, there ain't no number two.

END

She exits, leaving the door ajar.