

# PAUL SIDE #1

*Smiles sweetly at him now.*

ANNIE. I have the biggest surprise of your life coming up—but first, there is one thing you must do.

PAUL. (*Through great pain.*) How about my pills and a little snack while I wait for my surprise.

ANNIE. I'll get them for you, but first you must listen to me. Now I know that sometimes my thinking is a little muddy. I can't always tell what's right. I accept that. But this time I thought so clearly—because I asked God about you. (*Carefully choosing her words.*) And God said, "I delivered Paul Sheldon unto you so that you could shew him the way."

PAUL. "Shew" me the way?

ANNIE. Yes.

*And now she steps out of the room—*

*—but only for an instant—*

*—and now here she comes in again—*

*—wheeling something.*

*It's a charcoal barbecue.*

*You'd use it in summer for cooking hamburgers.*

*She also carries several items in her arms.*

*A box of Diamond Blue Tip wooden matches.*

*A can of lighter fluid.*

*And Paul's manuscript.*

*Paul can only stare as she approaches.*

*He does not believe what he sees.*

*Annie takes off the lid of the barbecue, puts the manuscript into the barbecue itself where the charcoal goes—*

*The barbecue is close to the bed now, very close.*

START →

PAUL. Before, when I mentioned a snack, I was thinking more along the lines of cheese and crackers.

ANNIE. This is not a time for jokes, Paul. I've been trying to understand you. Trying to understand what made you kill Misery.

Wanting to believe that you really are good. I went back and finished the swearing book last night, at least I tried to, and I had a revelation. You must rid the world of this filth.

PAUL. You're going to burn my book?

ANNIE. No, Paul—you're going to do it.

*She tosses the box of matches onto the bed.*

PAUL. Annie, I've been lying on the floor all night. I need my pills.

ANNIE. And I'll get them for you. But this is first.

PAUL. Annie, can we talk about this tomorrow? I'm in so much pain I can't think straight.

ANNIE. I know this may be difficult for you.

PAUL. It's... really not difficult at all, Annie. There's stuff about publishing you don't know. I mailed a copy to my agent and by now she's made dozens of copies—every powerful publisher in New York is reading it. So if you want to burn this copy, fine—but you're not ridding the world of anything.

ANNIE. *(Just watching him.)* Then light the match.

PAUL. If that's what you want, sure.

ANNIE. Then do it.

*Paul holds the box of matches—*

*—and he tries for a smile—*

*—but it won't hold—*

*—and worse, his hands are starting to tremble.*

I know this is the only copy in the world, Paul. When you were twenty-four you wrote your first novel, but you didn't make a copy because you didn't think anyone would take you seriously. But they did. And ever since you've never made a copy because you're so superstitious—it's why you always come back here to the Silver Creek Lodge to finish your books—you told that story on Johnny Carson eleven years ago.

PAUL. Annie, this book will go to auction in New York and will sell for a lot of money... my attorney will make sure you get half of it... Nobody deserves it more than you.

ANNIE. This is not about money. It's about purity and God's values.

PAUL. You're right. I'll tell you what—I won't publish it—I'll just keep it for myself. No one will even know it exists.

*Long silence now. Annie seems like she's about to agree with him.*

ANNIE. As long as it does exist, your mind won't ever be free. You'll never write the books you're meant to write. I think you should light the match now.

PAUL. Annie, please listen. I know you hated the profanity, and I'm not saying you're wrong, but you've got to understand something. This book was hard to write. I quit so many times, but I kept coming back—I needed to write it. Every ambition I have as a writer is in those pages.

*Pause.*

It took me three years to write this book.

*He stares at her.*

Three years. A thousand days. If you care about me, how can you want me to destroy a thousand days?

ANNIE. It's not a very good book, Paul.

*This hits Paul.*

And I know good when I see it. You are good. All you need is a little help. This is the only way. God's never wrong.

*Paul is silent this time. No way he can do it.*

PAUL. No...

ANNIE. Paul...

PAUL. No!

END

ANNIE. Please let me help you, dear.

*And now she flicks some drops of lighter fluid on his bed.*

We're only put on this earth to help people, nothing else matters.

*Now more lighter fluid flicks out.*

You're so brilliant Paul, I think you'd be able to see that. (Smiles.) I think you do see it.

*And now she flicks a few more.*

*And a few more.*