

# MISERY

Aiken Community Theatre

Audition Sides

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## SIDE 1: Annie and Paul

**PAUL.** Ms. Wilkes. Ms. Wilkes!

*Annie enters.*

**ANNIE.** Well you don't have to scream your head off, you know I'm on the other side of the door.

**PAUL.** Could I please have my pills now? My legs, very painful...

**ANNIE.** Oh poor dear, it's like clockwork how your pain comes. I have your pills right here.

Could I ask you a favor? I took the liberty of peeking inside your leather case. You don't mind, do you?

**PAUL.** Ms. Wilkes ...

**ANNIE.** Please, call me Annie. All my friends do.

**PAUL.** Annie. Please.

**ANNIE.** Anyway, I see there's a manuscript in there.

**PAUL.** And you want to read it?

**ANNIE.** You don't mind, do you? You wouldn't mind if I read it? I wouldn't presume to do such a thing without your permission. I respect you too much.

**PAUL.** Sorry, but I have a hard and fast rule about who can read my work at the early stage. Only my agent, my editor, and anyone who saves me from freezing to death in a car crash.

**ANNIE.** Oh my, you'll never know what a rare treat you're giving me.

Heavens! Forgive me for prattling away and making you feel all oogy.

There you go. You'll feel better in a few minutes. I just can't believe that my hero is recovering in my very own home. The man who gave the world Misery Chastain. And here he is: Paul Sheldon himself!

**PAUL.** *(To her offstage.)* I guess it was kind of a miracle ... you finding me.

**ANNIE.** *(From off)* Not a miracle at all — in a way, I was following you.

**PAUL.** Following me?

**ANNIE.** Well, seeing as how I'm your number one fan and all, it wasn't any secret to me you were staying at the Silver Creek Lodge these past five weeks. You finish all your new books there, any good fan knows that. So some nights, I'd just tool on down there and look up at the light in your cabin. And I'd try to imagine what was going on in the room of the world's greatest writer.

**PAUL.** Say that last part again — I couldn't quite hear you.

**ANNIE.** The world's greatest writer. Well, the other afternoon I was on my way home from town, racing 'cause I'd heard that the storm was coming in hard, and there you were leaving the Lodge. And I wondered why in the world would a literary genius go for a drive when there was this monster storm coming?

**PAUL.** The literary genius didn't know there was a storm coming.

**ANNIE.** Lucky for you I did. Lucky for me too, because now you're alive and you can write more books. Because the world needs more Misery books.

**SIDE 2: Annie**

**ANNIE.** I was married, you know. Years ago. In Denver. That did not work out. That was very, very hard. I was a nurse at a big hospital, so I threw myself into work just to get through the days. I worked nights too. Night shifts can be slow at a hospital so I had a lot of time to read. That was when I first discovered Misery. She came right at the point I needed her most. And after her horrible childhood, her miserable stepfather, to keep fighting like she does, she's always been a fighter. The whole world can be against her, but she knows that there's a justice higher than that of man, that God rewards the good in us. She makes me know I'm not alone in the world.

### **SIDE 3: Annie and Paul**

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

**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!

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?

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.

## SIDE 4: Annie and Paul

**ANNIE.** I'm sorry, Paul, but this is not right. You'll have to do it over again.

**PAUL.** You don't like it? What happened to "I'll treasure whatever you do"?

**ANNIE.** Like it? Of course I like it — it's beautiful! But it's not right. Throw it all out. Except for the part of naming Gravedigger Wilkes after me, you can leave that in.

**PAUL.** Maybe you're being a little hasty here?

**ANNIE.** Paul — what you've written just isn't fair.

**PAUL.** Fair? How is it not fair? It's Misery, alive, just like you asked for!

**ANNIE.** Remember, Ian did ride for Dr. Cleary at the end of the last book, that's okay, but his horse fell jumping that fence and Ian broke his shoulder and he never reached the doctor. So this book can't start with an "experimental blood transfusion" that saves her life, because she was dead and buried in the ground. You cheated.

**PAUL.** I wouldn't call that cheating —

**ANNIE.** When I was growing up in Bakersfield my favorite thing in the whole wide world was to go to movies on Saturday afternoons for the chapter plays —

**PAUL.** — cliffhangers —

**ANNIE.** — I know that Mister Man! They also call them chapter plays — I'm not stupid, you know.

Anyway, my favorite was Rocket Man and once it was a no-brakes chapter—the bad guys stuck him in a car on a mountain road and knocked him out and —and welded the doors shut and tore out the brakes and started him to his doom and he woke up and tried to steer and tried to get out but the car went off a cliff before he could escape and it crashed and burned —and I was so upset and excited and the next week you better believe I was first in line and they always start with the end of the last week and there was Rocket Man trying to get out and here came the cliff and JUST BEFORE the car went off he jumped free and all the kids cheered —but I didn't cheer, I stood right up and started shouting, "This isn't what happened last week — have you all got amnesia? Are you too stupid to remember? — THEY JUST CHEATED US — THIS WASN'T FAIR — " He was in the car when it went over! HE DIDN'T GET OUT OF THE COCKADOODIE CAR!"

**PAUL.** — they always cheated like that in cliff —in chapter plays.

**ANNIE.** But not you. Not with my Misery. Misery was buried in the ground at the end of the last book, Paul, so you'll have to start from there.

Do you understand?

## SIDE 5: Annie and Buster

**ANNIE.** What can I do for you, Sheriff?

**BUSTER.** I felt I should come by, ma'am. When I was here in February, you told me Paul Sheldon was your hero.

**ANNIE.** Is my hero. Oh my God — you're here to tell me you found him?

**BUSTER.** No ma'am. We didn't find him, but we did find his car. Crashed it off the side of a hill, just a few miles from here. The snow's all melted that way now. Looked like it sat at the bottom of the hill for months.

**ANNIE.** Are you telling me he's dead?

**BUSTER.** Well, I can't say for sure, ma'am, but the FBI is one hundred percent sure. They found his car and told me he must have crawled out after the crash and died.

**ANNIE.** But you don't think so?

**BUSTER.** Oh most likely they're right. They're the FBI. I thought the car door looked like it may have been pried open, but that didn't add up to them. They think — he couldn't have gotten too far if he was injured, and the body would have to be close by. But since we haven't found a body, I figured there's really only one explanation.

**ANNIE.** What's that?

**BUSTER.** The coyotes got to him.

**ANNIE.** No! Please, please no!

**BUSTER.** I hate being the one to tell you all this. Pete at the general store tells me you really are Paul Sheldon's biggest fan. Says you have him set the first copy aside for you every time a new novel comes out.

**ANNIE.** I told you as much.

**BUSTER.** Well, at least you got to see him in town.

**ANNIE.** I never saw him. I'd certainly remember if I had.

**BUSTER.** That's right, you said that.

**ANNIE.** I'm sure he came here for peace and quiet and not to be bothered by the likes of us.

**BUSTER.** It's strange, both of them coming to an end at the same time.

**ANNIE.** Both of them?

**BUSTER.** Paul Sheldon and Misery.

Oh ... I picked up Mr. Sheldon's last Misery book. Read the whole thing.

**ANNIE.** You did? What did you think?

**BUSTER.** Sure came as a shock to me, Misery dying like that at the end. Didn't see that coming.

**ANNIE.** Misery's not dead.

**BUSTER.** How's that?

**ANNIE.** Misery's not dead, Sheriff. I just know it.

**BUSTER.** Well, I don't think there'll be any more books, Ms. Wilkes.

**ANNIE.** There already is. As his number one fan, I know he would never have left the Lodge unless he'd finished a new book. So when he turns up, or when you find his body, you'll find the next Misery.

**BUSTER.** I hope you're right about that.

**ANNIE.** I'm certain. And you should read the whole series. From the beginning.

**BUSTER.** Well maybe I'll do that. You stay out of trouble now.



## SIDE 6: Annie and Paul

**ANNIE.** Can't sleep all day, Punkin. Give us a smile?

**PAUL.** *(Giving her the finger.)* Here's one.

**ANNIE.** Such a cutie.

**PAUL.** *(And now the other finger.)* Here's another one.

**ANNIE.** No more jokes, Paul — it's time for you to get back to your writing—it's been more than a week and I've been patient.

**PAUL.** It's weird, but for some reason, a couple of crushed ankles haven't done that much for my creative juices. Now, as the French are so fond of saying, "get the fuck out of here:'

**ANNIE.** The sheriff just paid me a visit.

Oh, that got you, didn't it. Well, news flash, Mister Man. The FBI thinks you're dead. It's just you and me now, Paul.

You owe me your life. I know you'll keep that in mind. You need to start writing again.

**PAUL.** I figured out the ending. Want me to tell you what happens?

**ANNIE.** Be careful, Paul.

**PAUL.** I think you're really going to dig this. Misery and Ian get into a big fight, I'm sure you know the drill; "I never loved you, blah, blah, blah:' She storms out and takes Barkley with her ... you know, Barkley, her dog, her big Irish setter ... well, they go to a hotel. An inn. At the bar, over a few drinks, she tells Barkley how awful Ian is. One thing leads to another, they head upstairs and well, can you guess what happens? She fucks her dog!

**ANNIE.** You are less than charming today.

**PAUL.** What are you going to do about it? Kill me? I dare you.

**ANNIE.** I'll drive a sledgehammer into your man gland if you're not nicer.

**PAUL.** Be my guest.

*And he spreads his legs.*

**ANNIE.** That is so disgusting— I can make you write it.

**PAUL.** Can you?

*After a moment — the sound of knocking on the porch door.*

**ANNIE.** You say one fucking word.

*(Annie's hand goes over Paul's mouth as he lets out a muffled scream. She grabs Paul's arm. Annie takes the cap off a hypodermic needle. He struggles with her — hard — keeping her arm at bay, getting his hands around his neck to strangle her.*

*But she's the more desperate, jams the needle in.)*

I don't understand you.

*Paul continues to struggle until ... Paul's eyes close — whatever she injected him begins to take effect.*

When are we going to develop a sense of trust?

## SIDE 7: Annie and Buster

*(Outside, BUSTER approaches. He's all business, with a sense of urgency, and is about to knock on the door when ANNIE opens it. )*

**ANNIE.** Heard you drive up. All these visits and I've never invited you in, my manners. I can make you coffee, cocoa, whatever.

**BUSTER.** I'm the only one still thinks there was something strange about Paul Sheldon's death. The snow has thawed, and there's no body. He came to the Lodge to write, but there's no manuscript. Not to mention, whatever the FBI says, that car sure did look pried open.

Now, I was just in the General Store, nosing around, and Pete told me Annie Wilkes has become the biggest customer he ever had for typing paper. Can you explain that to me?

**ANNIE.** You must never tell anyone what I'm about to tell you.

**BUSTER.** Depends if you're breaking the law.

**ANNIE.** You be the judge. When you told me you'd found Paul Sheldon's car, that he was most likely out there, was probably going to freeze to death or worse, I got down on my knees. And I begged for it not to be true. And I prayed harder than ever in my life for Paul Sheldon. And while I was down on my knees, God answered me. God told me to get ready.

**BUSTER.** For what?

**ANNIE.** To try and be his replacement. No one gave more pleasure to as many people as Paul Sheldon did

God told me that since I was his number one fan in all the universe, I should make up new stories as if I was Paul Sheldon. I said to God, 'I don't think I can do that. I've never once in my life thought I could tell stories.' And God said to me, 'You must try.' *(she is so moved now)* So I've been trying. I went to town and I bought the same kind of paper that Paul Sheldon wrote on. And a clunky old typewriter that didn't even have an 'N' -- and every day, Buster, I have been working so hard. I know the kind of words he used. I know the kind of stories he told. But I have no talent! I spend day after day trying -- I've written two hundred pages and it's agony.

**BUSTER.** That many?

**ANNIE.** Want to read them? Maybe you could help me.

**BUSTER.** Never been much of a critic.

**ANNIE.** I could have made people so happy. Help me, Buster — when will God say ‘enough?’

**BUSTER.** Sounds like you’re a lot closer to Him than I am. *(He’s getting ready to leave)*  
And you sure are Paul Sheldon’s number one fan.

*(ANNIE walks back inside her house, closes the door, walks out of sight. Now BUSTER nods and exits slowly in the direction of his car.)*

**SIDE 8: Annie and Paul**

**ANNIE.** *(as she feeds him)* Open wide. Such a good boy.

**PAUL.** What?

**ANNIE.** Nothing, it's nothing, nothing at all.

**PAUL.** Sure sounds like something to me.

**ANNIE.** It's ridiculous, who am I to offer a criticism to someone like you?

**PAUL.** You won't be the first, go --

**ANNIE.** I know I'm only forty pages into the book...

...and it is brilliantly written but then everything you've ever written is brilliant --

**PAUL.** -- pretty brutal so far. Is it hard to follow? I know it jumps back and forth in time...

**ANNIE.** Well it is, a bit, but it's not that...

**PAUL.** Okay... I know the hero isn't clearly a good or bad guy, I was striving for a moral complexity...

**ANNIE.** It's the swearing, Paul. There. I said it.

**PAUL.** The profanity bothers you?

**ANNIE.** It has no nobility.

**PAUL.** Well, these are slum kids, I was a slum kid, everybody talks like that.

**ANNIE.** They do not! -- what do you think I do when I go to the feed store in town? Do you think I say, 'Now Tony, give me a bag of that effing pig feed.'

And at the bank do you think I tell Mrs. Bollinger 'Here's one big bastard of a check now get off your ass and cash the damn thing.'

There! There! See what you made me do? I didn't want to spill it!

**PAUL.** I'm sorry.

**ANNIE.** Sure you are!

Oh, Paul. I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. Sometimes my temper just gets the better of me. Can you ever forgive me? Please. Please say you can.

**PAUL.** Forgiven and forgotten.

**ANNIE.** I love you, Paul.

I love your mind. Your creativity. That's what I meant.  
*(she exits)*

**PAUL.** You might be in trouble here Paul.