

Misery Study Guide

Misery by Stephen King

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Plot Summary

"Misery" by Stephen King is a work of fiction.

Paul Sheldon wakes up in extreme pain. The pain ebbs and flows but is constant underneath. Paul is drugged. There are memories of childhood days at Revere Beach. Paul wakes to someone giving him mouth to mouth. As Paul becomes conscious, he is aware of a horrendous smell.

Later, Paul wakes up in a bedroom. A woman is sitting next to the bed, reading. Paul learns that he is in a farmhouse in Sidewinder, Colorado. "My name is Annie Wilkes. And I am -" "I know," he said. "You're my number-one fan" (Part 1, chapter 2, page 6).

Annie Wilkes lives in a farmhouse in Sidewinder, Colorado. The location is rural and for most of the story it is winter with few references to the outside of the house. Paul immediately sees Annie for what she really is - a dirty, disheveled middle aged farmer.

Annie carries Paul back to her house, tends to his extensive injuries, and in effect, holds him hostage. Annie, a former nurse, has all of the tools necessary to care for a severely wounded patient like Paul. The result is that Paul does heal to a degree but also becomes hooked on Novril, a codeine-like drug.

The phrase, "I'm your number-one fan" will be used often throughout the book, as if to justify the things Annie does to Paul.

The majority of the story takes place inside the house. Paul's bedroom is where the writer spends almost all of his time. The room is sparsely furnished with a bed, nightstand and a desk. There is a mantel on the wall and one window which Paul uses to look out into the farm yard.

Paul has no idea what the house looks like from the outside. How far is the farmhouse from the town? Paul decides it may be 15 miles or 45 miles, there is no way to tell. The farm is a working farm and is home to two cows, six chickens, and a pig named Misery.

It is clear from the beginning that Annie is mentally unstable. Annie is completely obsessed with Misery Chastain, a fictional character. Annie's obsession eventually translates to Paul, Misery's creator. As the story goes on, it is clear that Annie suffers from extreme psychosis, volleying back and forth between depression, catatonia, and violent rage.

Annie is capable of almost anything, as she proves to Paul through her acts of cruelty. Annie's cruelty does not stop there however, as she openly participates in self-flagellation.

Annie Wilkes, like many of Paul Sheldon's fans, is completely obsessed with Misery Chastain, a fictional character. Misery offers Annie an escape into the 19th century, which was a softer gentler time when people did not behave like they do now. In



"Misery's Child" Paul kills off Misery, which is responsible for Annie's insane behavior and idea to force Paul to bring Misery back to life. Paul hates the Misery books and wants to move on to more serious and creditable books.

There are many passages throughout the book that come from "Misery's Return." At first, Paul tries to write just enough to appease Annie. Annie's rage at every one of Paul's indiscretions ends in some act of extreme cruelty, from a thumbectomy to hobbling, which is the act of cutting off a foot. As a result, Paul nearly dies more than once.

Throughout the story Paul learns a great deal about himself and his work as a writer. "Misery's Return" ends up being the best thing Paul has ever written.

After many months being held captive, Paul is able to trick Annie and gets away. Annie's skull is fractured due to their conflict, and she dies alone in her barn.

Paul sells Misery for many millions of dollars after he returns home to New York. Although the book is a success, Paul Sheldon will be reminded about the horrors at Annie's house every day for the rest of his life.



Part 1, Chapters 1-16

Part 1, Chapters 1-16 Summary

Chapter 1: The author hears the sound that haze makes.

Chapter 2: Paul Sheldon wakes up in extreme pain. The pain ebbs and flows but is constant underneath. Paul is drugged. There are memories of childhood days at Revere Beach. Paul wakes to someone giving him mouth to mouth. As Paul becomes conscious, he is aware of a horrendous smell.

Later, Paul wakes up in a bedroom. A woman is sitting next to the bed, reading. Paul learns that he is in a farmhouse in Sidewinder, Colorado. "My name is Annie Wilkes. And I am -" "I know," he said. "You're my number-one fan" (Part 1, chapter 2, page 6).

Chapter 3: Paul recalls receiving medication. The taste is bitter. The memory of Revere Beach appears in his consciousness again and Paul fades in and out between the beach scene and the present. Paul tries to focus on the present. Who is he? Paul remembers that he is a writer. There are two kinds of writers: those that write best sellers and those that are good. Paul is both. Paul is a smoker who has been married and divorced twice. Paul tries to figure out where he is and to answer the question of "what is this," meaning the situation he is in at the present moment.

Chapter 4: Paul dreams of Africa. There are African tribes and idols. The scene is straight out of "She" or "King Solomon's Mines," a collection of adventure pulp stories about African heroics. The woman he dreams of could be King Solomon's mistress- he isn't sure. Then reality returns and Paul sees Annie for what she really is - a dirty, disheveled middle aged farmer.

Paul thinks more about the drugs. There are side effects, such as constipation and respiratory issues, which are new yet logical considering his long-term smoking habit. Paul also begins to realize the gravity of the situation, from the excessive amount of pain killers to the state of Annie's mind.

"He discovered three things almost simultaneously, about ten days after having emerged from the dark cloud. The first was that Annie Wilkes had a great deal of Novril (she had, in fact, a great many drugs of all kinds). The second was that he was hooked on Novril. The third was that Annie Wilkes was dangerously crazy" (Part 1, chapter 4, page 8).

Chapter 5: Annie has taken Paul's wallet for safekeeping- or so she says. Annie talks about how she was not sure Paul was really Paul until she had gone through his wallet and found his PEN and Author's Guild cards. Annie leaves Paul to go to town for supplies. When Paul asks how far out of town they are, Annie will only say that it is "a ways." Annie slips in and out of a daydream like state Paul recognizes as catatonia.



Annie returns. She tells Paul about the dangerous drive home and that another storm is coming. Annie also tells Paul about her pig, Misery, who is named after Paul's most beloved character.

Chapter 6: Annie sits by Paul's bedside and talks. Paul's mind wanders and he dreams about finally being free of Misery, that character that made him a fortune but also stunted his work as a serious writer. His new novel, "Fast Cars," will change all of that. Paul is sure it is the best thing he has ever written and that it will most likely win the American Book Award.

Paul thinks about his usual tradition of staying in a specific room at a specific hotel in Boulder, Colorado, the place he has finished every book since 1974. Why had he decided to go up into the mountains instead of LA or back to New York? Would he have been able to avoid the crash if he had not been working on his second bottle of the celebratory Dom Perignon?

Annie talks about finding him in the wrecked Camaro in the middle of a blizzard. Although Paul looked familiar, Annie checked his wallet to be sure. Then she scooped him up and took him home. Annie says she knew Paul would make it through the accident since he was screaming. Annie knows that dying men almost never scream.

Chapter 7: Paul wonders if he has been eating because he does not remember. Annie says she has been feeding him with an IV. Annie also points out that she saved Paul's life and he owes her.

Paul hears noises from the television from the parlor, including snippets of popular shows such as MASH and WKRP in Cincinnati as well as the famous commercial for Ginsu knives.

Annie returns from town, thrilled that she was finally able to get a copy of "Misery's Child," Paul's latest book. Annie gleefully claims that she must make it last. Annie also says that she found "Fast Cars" in Paul's bag and knows it is not a Misery book. Annie slips and tells Paul that she loves him. Paul searches for a response.

"In desperation, because it was the only thing he could think of, he said: 'I know. You're my number one fan'" (Part 1, Chapter 8, page 18).

Chapter 9: Paul is stuck in Annie's house with no concept of time. It is winter. Paul is still being fed through an IV and receives doses of Novril. He knows that Annie is crazy.

Chapter 10: Annie talks to Paul about "Fast Cars" which she has started to read. Annie is confused by the switching back and forth of time lines. Paul explains that it is a writer's technique. Annie is not interested. Annie also freaks out over the use of profanity in the book. Annie claims that people do not talk that way. Paul tries to explain the use of language and how it reflects a person's upbringing and situation. Annie won't hear about it.



Annie has a psychotic episode during which she throws a soup bowl across the room. It shatters. Annie storms out. When Annie returns, she finds that Paul is in great pain and needs medication. Annie refuses and says she will not give him medication until he cleans up the mess from the soup bowl. After all, it was Paul's fault. Paul scrubs and scrubs and then Annie takes over, claiming that it has to be perfect. Annie gives Paul his medication and makes him drink the dirty water from the bucket to wash down the pills. Annie says that Paul should not make her mad again. Paul apologizes. Annie may return to reading the book later.

Chapter 11: Paul tries to bury his head in the sand and not think about how dire the situation is with Annie. Paul knows that he needs to think. Paul despairs that even though he is a serious writer, his fans only seem to want Misery. "Fast Cars" is Paul's masterpiece and Annie has the only copy. Paul thinks that if he was a nobody Annie would not have kidnapped him.

Paul has flashes of something he heard or saw about Annie taking the stand in a Denver court.

Chapter 12: Paul dreams that he is in a hospital and is filled with relief. He realizes it was an airplane hangar and there were many beds lined up, each patient with an IV attached to his arm. Annie comes in dressed in costume. Annie is three-quarters of the way through "Misery's Child."

Chapter 13: Annie finishes "Misery's Child" and goes into a completely psychotic episode. Paul has killed off Misery. Annie rants and raves that it cannot be true. Paul tries to explain that people died in childbirth a lot back then. Annie screams that no one just dies. Annie smashes a water pitcher off the wall and leaves.

Chapter 14: Annie is gone for 51 hours. Paul is deep in withdrawal and finally checks to see the condition of his legs. He knew that there were splints but he had no idea how extensive the damage was until he saw his legs. They were pulverized. Paul begins to wonder if Annie is dead.

Chapter 15: Annie returns and tells Paul that she needed to clear her head. Sometimes Annie has "muddy thinking," something that was also said in court. Annie prayed and received an answer. Before Paul can have his medication, he has a job to do.

Chapter 16: Annie wheels a barbecue grill into the bedroom. She has the manuscript of "Fast Cars" with her along with a box of matches.

Part 1, Chapters 1-16 Analysis

The story begins with Paul Sheldon, a famous author, experiencing a drug induced haze. Sheldon has been in a near fatal car accident in Colorado after driving in a blizzard. Paul has no concept of where he is or what happened, he only knows that he cannot stay awake. When Paul does awake, he is being given mouth to mouth by Annie Wilkes, the former nurse who saved him. Paul is instantly disgusted by Annie, from the



smell of her to her dowdy appearance. The author gives the impression that Paul would rather die than to receive mouth to mouth from Annie ever again.

It is clear that Annie had been talking to Paul while he was in and out of consciousness, as Paul knows that Annie is his number-one fan. That phrase will be used quite often in the text to show Annie's devotion, not only to Paul's work but to Paul himself.

The memories of Revere Beach express Paul's desire to be far removed from his current situation. It is also an unconscious desire to be rescued although Paul knows that it is unlikely if not impossible.

It does not take Paul long to realize that he needs the medication given to him by Annie, that the pain is far too great to withstand otherwise. It is also clear to Paul that he has become hooked on Novril. The author states that Novril is a fictional drug similar to Codeine.

Paul is often flooded with regrets and large doses of hindsight. He also wonders what possessed him to drive into the Rockies after leaving the hotel in Boulder. The reader will also learn that Paul's various superstitions may have added to his misfortune. Paul had many traditions, including the fact that he never made any copies of his manuscript, something he would come to regret with his entire being.

As the story goes along, Paul takes in more and more detail about Annie and her living situation. Paul underestimates Annie at first but quickly learns to stay in the woman's good graces. The only problem is that Paul has no idea what might set Annie off. One of the biggest explosions comes after Annie begins to read "Fast Cars." Annie hates everything about it and loses some respect for Paul. Annie also metes out harsh punishments for every perceived wrong Paul has done, from smashing his knee to making him drink the filthy water from the rinse bucket.

Paul surmises that if he had been Joe Blow from Kokomo, Annie would have called the ambulance or the police, not kidnapped him as she had Paul. Annie sees it as saving him.

The worst episode of rage from Annie comes when she finishes reading "Misery's Child." Annie is in full blown psychosis when she learns that Misery is dead. Misery is clearly a real person to Annie. Not only is Misery a heroine in Annie's eyes, she also represents who Annie wants to be. At other times, Misery represents what life could be outside Annie's self-imposed prison.



Part 1, Chapters 17-23

Part 1, Chapters 17-23 Summary

Chapter 17: Paul is horrified that Annie wants him to burn the manuscript for "Fast Cars" and flat out refuses. Paul refers to Annie as the devil. Annie makes it clear that unless Paul burns the manuscript, she will no longer bring drugs to him. Many different things can come from not having the drugs such as suffering and even a coma.

Chapter 18: Paul tells Annie that even if he burns the manuscript it will take a long time. Annie insists that Paul burn a few pages as a symbol of his free will. Paul keeps refusing but the thought of having no more drugs overpowers his will to save the book.

Chapter 19: Annie hands Paul random pages from the book to burn. He notices that Annie has used a black marker to obliterate all of the profanity in the book. As the pages burn they begin to float around the room, some partially burned, some still on fire. Annie puts out the flaming pieces. Paul wants Annie dead.

Chapter 20: Paul is asleep when Annie tries to wake him up to eat. When Paul does not respond, Annie pinches his ear hard. After eating, Annie helps Paul sit in a wheelchair for the first time.

Chapter 21: Paul is in excruciating pain from sitting up in the wheelchair and screams until Annie comes with the medication. Annie tells Paul that it is going to hurt every time he sits in the chair but it will lessen over time. Annie is in good spirits and tells Paul that she has two presents for him.

Chapter 22: Paul wonders if anyone has found the car. How far is the farmhouse from the town? Paul decides it may be 15 miles or 45 miles, there is no way to tell. Paul has a daydream about a cop coming to the farm house to question Annie. All of the people in the area have been questioned about the missing writer. Paul begins to wonder if someone really had come while he was asleep.

Paul cannot remember if there were guardrails on the road. If so, they would have been damaged in the accident and could tip off police. The car must be buried under the heavy snow. What could Paul have done to pull out of the skid before the crash? What if the cops do find it and come to ask questions?

Paul thinks about the fact that there was only one copy of "Fast Cars." Could Annie know that? She is not a writer and perhaps she would assume that the destroyed one was one of several copies.

Paul starts to become delirious from the pain and the medication. Once again, he dreams about African birds. Somewhere he sees Annie on the stand in the courtroom again. How might Annie kill him?



Paul begins to think that Annie had forgotten to tear the page off the calendar in his room, that it was most likely March now, not February. How long will it be until the snow melts? Paul thinks it could be 5-6 weeks before the snow melts and the car is found.

Chapter 23: Annie brings the presents to Paul. One is an old Royal typewriter with one of its keys missing. The other is a ream of paper. The typewriter is an interesting machine in Paul's eyes, a true antique. "It was an office model from an era when such things as electric typewriters, color TVs and touch-tone telephones were only science fiction. It was as black and as proper as a pair of high button shoes" (Part 1, chapter 23, page 53).

Worst of all, Paul is certain that the typewriter is grinning at him.

There is a lot of banter and flattery between Paul and Annie. Paul lies and says that he appreciates the gifts. Annie informs Paul that he will write a new book, "Misery's Return." After all, Paul owes her for saving his life.

Part 1, Chapters 17-23 Analysis

Paul goes back and forth between complete despair and the idea that there may be some small sliver of hope that he will be found and rescued. Annie is clearly crazy and dangerous and will do anything she needs to do in order for Paul to cooperate. Before burning "Fast Cars" Paul notices that Annie has blacked out all the profanity, somehow adding insult to injury. A small part of Paul hopes the house catches on fire.

There are many instances in which Paul is semi-coherent. King uses this mechanism to allow Paul to experience bizarre dreams filled with symbolism. The author also uses the altered state to interject bits of Annie's past, such as the courtroom appearance in Denver. Small pieces of information are released throughout the section.

Paul feels a glimmer of hope when he thinks about spring.

Annie's gift to Paul is both a blessing and a curse. Annie wants Paul to be excited about having a typewriter. Paul does not understand that at first and almost upsets Annie. The typewriter has its own personality, one that will surely torment Paul if its evil grin is any indication. Paul's heart sinks even farther when he learns that he will be forced to write "Misery's Return" as an act of penance and to repay Annie for saving his life.



Part 1, Chapters 24-36

Part 1, Chapters 24-36 Summary

Chapter 24: Paul is completely numb after he learns of Annie's plan. She insists that it is payment for all she has done. Once again, Annie points out that Paul owes her for saving his life. Paul asks if Annie will let him go when the book is finished. Annie acts surprised that Paul feels like a prisoner. Annie says she will let Paul go. Paul knows Annie is lying.

Paul asks to borrow Annie's copies of the Misery books because he does not have his concordance. Paul explains and Annie happily turns over her books. Annie leaves and Paul has an ongoing conversation with the Royal.

Chapter 25: Paul is shocked when Annie is able to lift him and put him into the wheelchair. Paul says he has a superstition and asks Annie to turn the typewriter around to face the wall. In truth, looking at the Royal creeps Paul out beyond belief.

Chapter 26: Paul dreams that Annie is a part of the court of some Arabian caliph, conjuring up genies. Later, Annie rides around on a magic carpet that strangely resembles the green and white Colorado license plate.

Chapter 27: Annie brings breakfast to Paul and wakes him to eat. Paul dreams that Annie is Scheherazade. The typewriter sits on the desk, waiting for Paul.

Chapter 28: Paul spends a lot of time staring outside into a winter scene. Paul eats and notices that Annie is being civil today. Annie is eager for Paul to begin writing "Misery's Return."

Chapter 29: Paul tests Annie and asks for different paper. Paul shows how the Corrasable Bond smears when the papers are shuffled around, something that is bound to happen a lot. Annie is angry, yells at Paul, and does not seem to care that her beloved manuscript could easily be ruined unless she complies.

"The climate inside her, he had come to discover was like springtime in the Midwest. She was a woman full of tornadoes waiting to happen, and if he had been a farmer observing a sky which looked the way Annie's face looked right now, he would have gone at once to collect his family and herd them to the storm cellar" (Part I, Chapter 29, page 64).

Annie is also angry that Paul refers to writing as a business. Annie rants while Paul tries to explain. She yells that no one has been on her side since her mother died 20 years ago. Annie agrees to go and get the paper but before she leave, she punches Paul's knee so hard that it feels like it has shattered. Annie tells him to go ahead and scream; no one will hear him.



The chapter ends with Paul saying: "Please, God, please - let me out of this or kill me... let me out of this or kill me" (Part 1, Chapter 29, page 69).

Chapter 30: In Paul's head there are sportscasters giving a play by play account of Paul's attempts to move around in the wheelchair. Paul must get out of the room to get drugs if nothing else. After extreme effort, Paul grays out, the sportscasters admiring his courage and tenacity. Paul reaches for an errant bobby pin and begins to work on picking the lock on the bedroom door. Paul recalls tips from a cop he had worked with while writing "Fast Cars." Paul drops the pin but catches it before it falls out of reach. The pin breaks just as the door opens.

Chapter 31: Paul had never considered that the wheelchair might not fit through the doorway. After a lot of struggling, Paul gets through the door and then grays out again.

Chapter 32: Paul thinks about Annie and her threat that the only way to get freedom is by using a shotgun.

Chapter 33: Paul is out in the hallway. He pauses to take a look around. Paul finds the bathroom and the medicine cabinet. The cabinet is out of reach. Even if Paul could open it, how could he get any medicine out without alerting Annie?

"No matter how much he strained, it was a good nine inches above the tips of his fingers but he reached anyway, unable to believe Fate or God or Whoever could be so cruel" (Part 1, Chapter 33, page 76).

Paul begins to cry. After a few moments, Paul continues to look around the bathroom. He finds cartons of drugs in a linen closet. There are many kinds of drugs, including Novril. How many packets can he take without getting caught? Paul takes packets containing a total of 30 pills and places the boxes on his lap for the return trip to the bedroom. What would happen if Annie came home right now? Would Annie see tracks on the floor from the wheelchair? Paul dreams about the phone but it is dead.

Getting back to the bedroom was easier than getting out, perhaps because of the Novril. Paul is barely inside the door when Annie comes home. Paul worries about scuff marks on the door.

Chapter 34: Paul struggles and makes it inside the door. The fear of not making it in time was the greatest terror Paul has ever experienced. Paul makes it in the nick of time. Annie comes upstairs to find Paul pale and drenched with sweat.

Chapter 35: Paul tells Annie that he has been suffering. He has to pee and needs Novril. Annie says that it is his own fault and makes him promise not to make her mad again.

Chapter 36: Paul shoves the packets in the back of his underwear for safekeeping. When Annie leaves to get the meds, Paul stuffs the boxes of Novril under the mattress. Annie gives Paul his usual dose of Novril and he sleeps for 14 hours.



Part 1, Chapters 24-36 Analysis

Paul is still in a state of disbelief over the extent of Annie's craziness. The thought of writing "Misery's Return" makes him sick but Paul has no choice but to agree for fear of what Annie might do next.

Paul realizes that Annie is serious about the Royal and knows that he has to pretend to be happy about it, missing n and all. Immediately Paul takes a dislike to the typewriter as it always seems to be smirking and taunting him. Paul begins an ongoing dialogue with the typewriter, none of it pleasant.

Paul is surprised that Annie has no interest in the process of writing a book. Even when Paul tries to explain about the paper, Annie can only see it as a sign of rejection. Paul's complaint mirrors everything wrong in Annie's life - every time she was shunned or pushed aside. Naturally, Paul must be punished for it. Once again Paul is stunned by Annie's strength as she smashes his knee.

The scene with the bobby pin is telling about Paul's state of mind. The lock picking technique was learned from an ex-cop that helped Paul during the process of writing "Fast Cars." It is the trick that saves Paul at this point - at least as far as the pain goes. The escape is hard won but worth the effort, just as "Fast Cars" was not easy to write but served as Paul's escape from Misery. Paul still holds on to the hope that "Fast Cars" can be saved, even if it is only through his memory.

King throws Paul a bone by letting him find the Novril and other drugs in the linen closet. Paul is completely addicted to the codeine-like drug and the monkey on his back is just as painful as his smashed knee.

Paul's terror makes it way through the Novril haze when Annie comes home. If Annie smashed his knee after requesting new paper, what would she do if she found him outside in the hall?



Part 2, Chapters 1-11

Part 2, Chapters 1-11 Summary

Part 2, "Misery," begins with chapter 1, which is also Paul's first attempt at "Misery's Return." The first few pages recap the end of "Misery's Child," during which Misery dies in childbirth. Paul changes the scenario to allow Misery to live.

Ian is upset but is warned not to upset Misery. There is a baby in the picture now, a son that is a couple of months old. Misery was able to survive the birth because the doctor arrived at the last minute. The section ends with Ian and Misery canoodling in the kitchen.

Chapter 2: Annie hates the new book because it is a "cheat." Annie recounts her childhood and how she and her older brother would go to chapter plays every Saturday. There was one episode of Rocket Man that infuriated Annie because it was a cheat, an impossible ending that did not ring true to the chapter play of the previous week. Annie screamed and shouted in the theater because it was not fair.

Annie explains that what is fair may not always be realistic. The technique, "deus ex machina," or the "old parachute under the seat," trick is cliché and no writer worth his salt would use it. Annie leaves the room with the order for Paul to fix the book.

Chapter 3: The missing Ns bother Paul as it is difficult to write. Paul talks to the Royal, which he names Ducky Daddles after a cartoon character. Paul hates the typewriter more with each passing day.

Paul realizes that Novril is codeine and that he is completely hooked. He needs to wean off the drug.

Paul knows that the beginning of "Misery's Return" is awful. The only problem is that Paul does not know how to fix it. What does Annie want?

"Part of him - the part that listened to even the best, fairest editorial suggestions with ill-grace - protested that the woman was crazy, there was no way to tell what she might or might not accept; anything he tried would only be a crapshoot" (Part 2, chapter 3, page 105).

The Royal continues to smirk.

Chapter 4: The snow rages on as Paul starts over. Paul keeps deus ex machina in mind and also refers back to the childhood game of "Can you?" Paul has more than 10 seconds to figure out what he will do but realizes that playing the game as a kid and being forced to participate as an adult are two very different things. How can Misery come back fair and square?



Paul reflects on the concept that trying to get an idea is not the same as getting an idea. The inspiration for "Fast Cars" is revisited.

Chapter 5: Paul begins with fits and starts. Eventually, the long silences become shorter and then an idea finally takes off. After a long while, Annie forces Paul to go to bed.

Chapter 6: Paul writes 9 pages of the new book, certain that the resolution to his problem seemed fair. Ian is overwrought with grief and no one wants to bother him. One of the workers approaches Geoffrey to say there are strange noises coming from the graveyard. Geoffrey dismisses it. After thinking about it for a while, Geoffrey begins to piece together comments made earlier that did not make sense. Geoffrey begins to fear that Misery may have been buried alive.

Geoffrey goes to Mrs. Ramage. Mrs. Ramage confirms a story of a woman being buried alive not long ago. Geoffrey and Mrs. Ramage rush to the cemetery where they save Misery from certain death.

Chapter 7: Paul anxiously waits for Annie's assessment. Annie declares that the resolution is fair, even if it is gruesome. Annie does not come near Paul during this conversation, as if Paul radiates some mystical heat or power that frightens her. Paul asks Annie to fill in the missing Ns. On her way out, Annie mentions that one reason for a coma-like state could be that Misery was stung by a bee. Paul says he will consider it even though he dismisses the idea.

Chapter 8: Annie comes in carrying handcuffs and a dust rag. Annie quickly handcuffs Paul, stuffs the rag into his mouth. There is a man in the driveway - a tax man that has come to inform Annie of a tax increase and that her taxes are in arrears. If she does not pay by March 25, they will put a lien on her property. Annie goes ballistic.

Chapter 9: Annie says everyone is out to get her. Surprisingly, Annie does not take her anger out on Paul. Paul explains what a lien is and how it might affect Annie. Annie realizes that the taxes had to be paid that day by the close of business. Paul insists that Annie take the money out of his wallet, add to it, and pay the taxes. Paul convinces Annie that it is the least he can do considering everything she has done for him.

Chapter 10: Paul is crying and convinces Annie that it is from gratitude, that no one could really understand how grateful he is for being saved. Annie kisses Paul lightly. Paul tries not to gag.

Chapter 11: Annie goes to the tax office. Paul knows now that it is not difficult to get out of the room. Paul has been exercising with the Royal and his strength is returning little by little. Paul focuses on removing the scuff marks from the door and wonders if Annie has already seen them. Paul thinks more about the large African bird, its escape and how it is killed.



Part 2, Chapters 1-11 Analysis

Paul knows that the first attempt at "Misery's Return" is a cheat. If Paul had tried to fool Annie, the plan clearly failed. Paul begins in earnest this time and begins to get into the spirit of writing about Misery. It is easy to fall back into Misery's 19th century world.

Paul's crapshoot pays off and Annie loves the first few pages. Paul is in his element now and Annie recognizes it.

Paul is careful about how he dismisses the bee sting idea since it is implausible. The more Paul thinks about the idea, the more it makes sense.

The episode with the tax man is not surprising. Paul begins to realize that Annie has a basis for her paranoia. The people in town really are out to get her. Paul makes a smart move by offering to pay the majority of the taxes. Although Annie is easily angered, Paul plays on her emotions, which works like a charm.

Paul realizes that in his haste to get the Novril, he neglected the scuff marks on the door. Nothing got by Annie and he worried that she knew about his escape.

Paul continues to think about the large African bird, an obvious metaphor for him and the situation. Paul's mind is protecting itself as much as possible and must project the scenario onto another being, in this case, the bird.



Part 2, Chapters 12-23

Part 2, Chapters 12-23 Summary

Chapter 12: "During the next three weeks, Paul Sheldon felt surrounded by a queer electric peacefulness" (Part 2, Chapter 2, page 150).

Paul's intense focus allows him to do something he had never done before - write extremely fast. Paul used to average four pages per day, saying that it was his maximum. Now Paul was averaging 12 pages per day. Paul attributes it to his new, clean lifestyle.

The daily schedule is discussed. Annie and Paul watch TV together at 5:00 every day. Paul realizes that he wants to write "Misery's Return" for real. Paul decides to use the bee angle. Annie is in awe.

Chapter 13: April brings good weather. Paul fantasizes about his car being found. The nice weather means that Paul is able to sit out on the porch. Paul finishes chapters 9 and 10. Something happens to Annie. Annie seems to have snapped and her psychosis leads to self-flagellation. Paul is scared.

Chapter 14: It is said that great writing comes from strong emotions recalled during a period of tranquility. Paul manages to get into the wheelchair by himself. Paul hates Ns.

Chapter 15: Annie will not come back into Paul's room. When Annie does come, she brings a rat in a trap. The rat's back is broken. Annie squeezes it until it is dead and then throws it against the wall.

The only thing that matters to Annie is Misery. Annie offers to end it all for both of them. Paul says he wants to finish the book. Annie says she needs to go away to her Laughing Place to get her head straight. After Annie leaves, Paul laughs maniacally, showing great mental strain.

Chapter 16: Paul wonders why he does not escape. Paul goes through various rooms in the house and is awed by the disgusting state of the house. A scrapbook titled "Memory Lane" lies on the coffee table.

The only door without a lock seems to be the cellar door. All of the other locks are of the highest quality and cannot be picked. Paul considers starting a house fire.

Chapter 17: Paul continues through the house into the pantry. He refers to it as a survivalist's bomb shelter although it makes sense considering that it would be common to be snowed in for days or even weeks during the harsh Colorado winters. Paul steals some of the food.



Chapter 18: Paul returns to the scrapbook and opens it almost against his will. The book is filled with tales of horror. Annie's first kill took place at age 11, when five people died in a house fire. Some of them were the brats Annie had complained about. The next kill, when Annie was 14, was her father, who mysteriously fell down the stairs. At age 21, Annie killed her roommate and their cat. So far, no one has linked the crimes.

Annie gets a job in a hospital. One by one, patients begin to die. First the old and infirm. Soon it was people who were not on death's door. Each died of a short or long illness. Paul notes, long illness, long illness, short illness, long illness, and so on.

Annie changes hospitals, becomes head nurse in maternity. Babies start to die. Annie is dubbed the Dragon Lady during court proceedings; manages to get away with it. More babies die. The last clipping in the book is the one announcing that Paul is missing.

Chapter 19: Paul is not going to be able to escape; Superman and the Lone Ranger are busy.

Chapter 20: Storm rages on and the animals suffer without attention. Paul brainstorms and discards various ideas. Paul hides a knife under the mattress.

Chapter 21: Paul dreams about the Bourka Bee-Goddess. Annie wakes Paul and gives him a pre-op shot. Paul's car has been disposed of and may not be found for years. Annie confesses to killing the Pomeroy kid.

Annie says she knows about Paul's ventures into other parts of the house. How many times? Annie becomes increasingly paranoid. Annie shows Paul the broken bobby pin found inside the door. She had also seen the scuff marks. Paul laughs hysterically from the drugs.

Chapter 22: Annie continues to ask how many times Paul has left the room? She does not believe him and decides that it was seven times. Annie also found the knife.

Annie tells Paul about hobbling and then proceeds to cut off his foot. Paul screams as Annie cauterizes the wound with a blow torch. Annie tells Paul that it is his own fault. Paul passes out.

Chapter 23: Paul is in the clouds again. He wants to die. Paul will find a way to kill the Bee-Goddess.

Part 2, Chapters 12-23 Analysis

Paul begins to give into and accept his past, flaws and all. Paul needs to write the new book now and is prepared to give it his all. It may be the best thing he has ever written. It may finally shut the critics up and gain him some credibility as a "serious writer."



Annie often reminds Paul about the stakes involved and does odd things to prove it, such as bringing in the rat and killing it in front of Paul's eyes. Annie had to kill it because it was pitiful. Annie is very good at rationalization.

Annie uses a lot of guilt and fear to try and control Paul. The death of the trooper is all his fault, of course. Paul wishes that he had been the one to die. Even Annie knows that she has gone off the deep end. Annie's answer is to go to her "Laughing Place" and pray.

Paul makes another trip outside the bedroom. Annie's psychosis has shown itself in many ways but the most noticeable way is the state of her house. It is filthy and littered with food containers and trash. Paul is happy to find the stash in the pantry - at least he knows he will not starve to death.

Something draws Paul to the Memory Lane scrapbook. Paul has a good idea of what Annie has done in the past and that she was surely kicked out of the nursing profession because of her actions. Even Paul is not prepared for the horror that lay inside the book. The child killings are somehow the worst, especially the ones that took place in the maternity and nursery ward. Paul is shocked that Annie was able to get away with it. For Paul to see his clipping at the back of the book was equivalent to reading his own obituary.

Although Annie claims the trip to the Laughing Place helped, there is little change. Annie has to attempt to regain complete control over Paul by hobbling him. Annie also rationalizes that Paul should be grateful because she did not let him die. It does not matter that she is the one who nearly caused his death. There has to be a way to kill Annie.



Part 3, Chapters 1-10

Part 3, Chapters 1-10 Summary

Chapter 1 begins with Ian seeing the swarms of bees that cover Misery's body.

Chapter 2: The Royal typewriter throws the letter t, making it even harder for Paul to write. At one time Paul would have asked for another typewriter but not now. Paul notices that it is the first day of summer.

Chapter 3: Ian struggles to break free from Geoffrey to go to Misery. Hezekiah manages to stop Ian and explains what they need to do. As long as the drums beat, Misery is safe.

Chapter 4: The Royal throws the letter e. It is no longer possible to type. Paul recalls a movie in which the character is told he just has to "go through it."

Chapter 5: Of all that has happened, Misery is the theme, the common thread. Misery is the only thing keeping Paul alive. Once again Paul realizes that he is Scheherazade.

Chapter 6: Paul wakes and learns that he had been in a semi-coma. The only thing that was able to bring him out was the book - the Bourka bees and the drums. Paul wonders who he is writing the story for and who is he telling the story to. Paul realizes that he is writing only for himself as a way to escape.

Chapter 7: Annie does not want Paul to return to work yet. There are over 300 pages of the new book so far. Annie fills in the ns while Paul rests. Paul explains the "gotta" and why he has to go back to work.

Chapter 8: He is Scheherazade and therefore he must work. There are short bursts of intense pain. Paul realizes that in many ways, writing is autoerotic. Paul thinks about the fact that his foot and his left thumb are gone.

Chapter 9: Annie brings ice cream sundaes to Paul's room. Annie wants to know the rest of the story. Paul explains why he cannot tell. Paul also recalls another obsessed fan.

Chapter 10: Paul reflects on the day of the thumbectomy. Annie used a line like "it hurts me more than it hurts you." Annie also celebrates Paul's birthday, even though it is not his birthday.

The thumbectomy was a month ago. A state trooper arrives.



Part 3, Chapters 1-10 Analysis

Paul realizes that although he once shunned Misery, he now depends upon her to save his life, much as Scheherazade had done by telling one thousand and one stories. Paul must do everything in his power to keep the work going, despite the pain and Annie's craziness.

Paul explains the intensity involved in a writer's life and how it takes over everything else. The height of Annie's craziness continues to be exposed. It is surprising that the thumbectomy is mentioned almost in passing, as if it is nothing important.



Part 3, Chapters 11-28

Part 3, Chapters 11-28 Summary

Chapter 11: Paul is obsessed with keeping track of the days. Annie comments that Paul has been working well during his "convalescent period." Paul is determined to finish.

Chapter 12: Paul tells himself repeatedly that he will not scream. Terror explodes in him and even when he tries to scream, he cannot. Finally, Paul screams out to the troopers, the only words Paul can think of are along the lines of Africa! and Help me!

Chapter 13: The trooper, who had been talking to Annie about Paul, looks up to see where the noise had come from. Almost instantly the trooper recognizes Paul. Annie grabs the cross from Bessie's grave and stabs the trooper repeatedly. The cop collapses.

Chapter 14: Just as Paul is ready to give up hope, he sees that the cop is still alive. Paul shouts a warning but before the cop can pull the trigger on his gun, Annie runs over his hand with a riding lawn mower. Annie then runs over the man's head.

Chapter 15: Paul waits for Annie's vengeance. Paul tells her that she may as well kill him, that he cannot withstand losing another appendage. Annie says she will deal with Paul later. There is a new lock on the bedroom door which shatters any hope of escaping again.

Annie cleans up the mess in the yard. Naturally, Paul should feel bad because it is his fault the young trooper is dead.

Chapter 16: Annie returns and points out that she has the cop's bag and his gun. Annie comes inside and takes Paul into the cellar so she can go away over night to ditch the car and the cop's remains. Annie carries Paul down to the cellar for safekeeping while she goes away.

Chapter 17: Once again Annie reminds him how she saved his life. Paul shoots back that she also cut off his foot. Annie says that if anyone comes, Paul can just go ahead and yell his head off, that she will kill the cops, Paul and then herself. Paul thinks it is not such a bad deal, except for the killing the cops part.

Chapter 18: Paul wants to know what will happen if Annie does not come back, if she dies. Annie says she is leaving a note on the fence to explain her alibi. Annie discusses the lies she will tell the cops when they come. Paul had better write faster.

Chapter 19: Paul attempts once again to explain writing. Paul compares it to Greyhound, saying that getting there is half the fun.



Chapter 20: Annie leaves food, Pepsi, Novril and a hypodermic for Paul. Paul is terrified to be in the cellar in the dark, completely helpless and in the presence of the rats. Annie goes out.

Chapter 21: Paul cannot stop thinking about the trooper and his horrible death. In some ways, Paul does feel like it is his fault.

Chapter 22: Paul dozes in and out. The pain becomes too great to bear so Paul uses the hypodermic.

Chapter 23: The morphine-based drug does not knock Paul out but it does help the pain. Paul stares at the barbecue pot and begins to get an idea.

Chapter 24: Paul wakes to find a rat sitting on his plate nibbling cheese. Paul screams and the rat flees. Once again, Paul looks at the barbecue pot. Soon Paul realizes that he will be able to rationalize all, that this happened to cause him to write "Misery's Return" and that he really did not need his foot anyway. What would happen if Annie made him burn "Misery's Return?"

Paul spots a can of lighter fluid on a shelf.

Chapter 25: Annie comes back, tired and disheveled. Annie carries Paul upstairs. Paul is grateful that Annie did not find the lighter fluid.

Chapter 26: Paul is pale and sweaty. He asks Annie for a shot. While she is out of the room, Paul hides the lighter fluid under the mattress. Paul tells Annie the book is almost done and that it will be very hot stuff.

Chapter 27: Annie sleeps like the dead. Paul takes the opportunity to hide the lighter fluid behind a loose baseboard. Paul writes for four hours.

Chapter 28: Geoffrey tries to get help for Misery from the Bourka Chief.

Part 3, Chapters 11-28 Analysis

When the state trooper comes, Paul tells himself that he will not scream. He cannot scream. Even when he tries, the terror is so great that he becomes paralyzed. When Paul finally yells, it is about Africa. More and more, Africa has become Paul's own Laughing Place, the only place that remains safe and can protect him from Annie.

The cop is shocked to see Paul, enough that his attention is taken from Annie. It is a fatal mistake. Annie is not satisfied with killing. The death has to be the most gruesome death possible, as if she would have even more to blame on Paul.

All of Annie's psychosis begins to wear on Paul. Paul feels guilty about the trooper's death. It is true that Annie is the one that killed the young officer but Paul caused it to happen.

Annie likes to share her plans with Paul, as if she wants to brag and also get his approval. It is important for Annie to have approval as she does not get it elsewhere. Annie's sanity is more precarious than ever. The trip to the cellar almost does Paul in and there is real fear of the rats and of dying down there.



Part 3, Chapters 29-47

Part 3, Chapters 29-47 Summary

Chapter 29: Two state police arrive at the farmhouse. Annie runs into the room to tell Paul to stay out of sight. Paul has already backed away from the window. While Annie talks to the cops and delivers her prepared story, Paul weighs his odds. There is an 80% chance that the cops could take Annie out first. Paul compares the two cops to David and Goliath, considering their size, although they are clearly on the same side this time. Paul battles back and forth and eventually decides not to call out. Paul does not want Annie to go to jail. Paul wants to kill her.

Chapter 30: Annie's radio filled Paul in on the details about the slain trooper. The young man, Duane Kushner, had been searching for Paul. There had been no link made between the two cases. The cops tell Annie that Paul's car had been found. Annie's lie seems to be relatively successful. The cops even look around a little but find nothing unusual. The cops leave but everyone knows they will be back.

Chapter 31: Annie wants to know why Paul did not call out to the police. Paul says he must finish the book; that he has to finish it for her.

Chapter 32: A couple of days pass and Paul dives back into the book. The Royal sits on the shelf now and conversations between it and Paul are halted for a while. A news van and many gawkers come to the farm house. Annie is enraged and blocks the driveway. Kids yell out to the Dragon Lady and Annie knows that she no longer has any secrets at all.

Annie tries to explain to Paul that the only thing those people want to see is abuse. Annie begins hitting and clawing at herself, drawing blood.

Chapter 33: The local police come to talk to Annie. Annie wants to know how much longer Paul needs to finish the book. Time is growing short.

Chapter 34: Paul becomes completely immersed in the work and he is only writing for himself. The book is good and Paul is excited. Paul dreams of Annie's father falling down the steps. Paul cannot warn him.

Chapter 35: People continue to come to the farmhouse but so far, they are just the gawkers. Annie blocks off the driveway to deter them. Paul's hand is swollen beyond belief. He promises Annie the book will be done tomorrow.

Chapter 36: The antibiotics are helping Paul's urinary tract infection and he feels better. The hand has gotten worse.



Chapter 37: Annie declares that it is a very special day, the day "Misery's Return" will be finished. She offers pain killers to Paul but he refuses, saying he has to be clear-headed for "the push."

Chapter 38: Annie brings in caviar. She hates it but Paul gobbles it up. Annie says she bought some Dom Perignon as well. Paul asks for one last cigarette. Annie relents.

Chapter 39: Paul returns to the Royal and finishes the book. Misery lives.

"And then, because he could not do otherwise, Paul Sheldon rolled the last page out of the typewriter and scrawled the most loved and hated phrase in the writer's vocabulary with a pen: The End" (Part 3, chapter 39, page 287).

Chapter 40: As much as it pains Paul, he will have to fill in the missing letters. Paul prepares for the end.

Chapter 41: Paul calls for Annie. Annie comes in all excited and nervous. Paul tells Annie that he is finished. Annie goes to get the champagne. Paul has not smoked the cigarette - he only needed the match. Paul struggles with getting the match to light.

Chapter 42: Paul tells Annie that she was right. "Misery's Return" is the best book yet. Paul sets the pages on fire. Annie goes completely insane, trying to put out the fire. Paul throws the Royal and hits Annie square in the back. Paul tackles Annie and starts shoving pieces of hot, charred paper down her throat. Annie's flesh is burning.

Annie manages to get up but then hits her head on the mantel and collapses.

Chapter 43: Annie falls on the fire and puts it out. Paul crawls toward the wheelchair.

Chapter 44: Paul wonders if Annie is really dead. After all, isn't it impossible to kill the Bourka Goddess? Annie grabs Paul's leg but her hand slips off. Annie tries to choke Paul but he gets away. Annie collapses. Could she be dead this time?

Chapter 45: Paul manages to get out into the hallway. He shuts and locks the bedroom door. Annie's fingers reach out from under the door, trying to grab Paul. Paul gets away and goes into the bathroom to get medication. Paul sleeps.

Chapter 46: Is Annie dead? Paul imagines Annie is everywhere - in every corner, hiding in every shadow. Paul gets downstairs. David and Goliath return. Paul alerts them and the men are shocked to see Paul.

Chapter 47: David, aka Wicks, tells his wife about the ghastly scene.

Chapter 48: The cops find out what happened and they go after Annie. Paul warns them to be careful. The cops return and say that Annie is not in the room. Paul faints.



Part 3, Chapters 29-47 Analysis

Annie knows that it will not be long until the police return with a warrant. There are many people around and that only serves to agitate the already unstable Annie. When the two state troopers come, David and Goliath, Paul is torn about what to do. Annie has told him not to yell. Paul starts to think he is crazy not to yell, considering that he has an 80% chance of being rescued. Paul begins to wonder if he is losing his mind as well. Paul realizes that jail will never be good enough for the Dragon Lady. Annie must die and Paul must be the one to do it.

Paul manages to remain fairly calm and normal while carrying out his plan. Distractions help to keep Annie's focus elsewhere, at least in part.

Paul truly believes that "Misery's Return" is his best book to date. Paul easily fakes Annie out by burning blank pages. Saving the real manuscript is the only reason Paul does not burn down the house.

Paul's plan works almost flawlessly. Annie is not completely surprised given her distrust of humanity yet is stunned that Paul would burn the manuscript. Although Annie's eyes are sharp, she does not notice that the burning pages are blank. Annie fits the role of the Bourka Goddess well and it seems that she will not or cannot die. The reader may find it odd that Paul takes drugs and sleeps considering that Annie may still be alive.

The troopers always knew something was not right at Annie's house but could not be prepared for what they found when they stepped up onto the porch. Paul was nearly skeletal and certainly traumatized, acting like a frightened animal. The news that Annie is gone from the room is simply too much for Paul to bear.



Part 4, chapters 1-11

Part 4, chapters 1-11 Summary

Part 4, Goddess, is an epilogue.

Chapter 1: Paul thinks about the haze.

Chapter 2: Paul reminds himself to rinse.

Chapter 3: This is how the rest of the story rinses out: It is nine months after Paul was rescued from Annie's house. Paul has not written; he spends all of his free time drinking booze. Paul is walking with two metal poles. Doctors say he will walk again but will have a limp.

"Misery's Return" explodes onto the scene with an initial run of one million copies. Paul's agent says that the next book could easily begin selling at \$10 million, that there would be a fierce auction.

Paul returns home to find Annie in his apartment. There is a struggle and Paul is killed.

Chapter 4: The author lists the definitions of three writer's terms: Scenario, Writer, and Make Believe.

Chapter 5: Paul asks himself the same old question of Paulie: "Can you?"

Chapter 6: Paul believes he can. Paul can go on because Annie is dead. She was only alive in the writer's scenario.

Chapter 7: The real ending is told. Everything about the book sales and Paul's agent is true. Annie was found dead by the police in the barn. Annie had her hand on a chainsaw. The fractured skull is what killed her in the end.

Chapter 8: Paul must rinse.

Chapter 9: Paul sits in front of the word processor. He is angry. Paul begins to type, almost bludgeoning the keys.

Chapter 10: Paulie, can you?

Chapter 11: Paul begins to write in earnest. There is a new story making its way onto the screen.

Chapter 12: Paul realizes that he can write again. He gets lost in the work and is not aware that he is weeping.

As the penguin said, "Now my tale is told" (Part 4, Chapter 12, page 310).



Part 4, chapters 1-11 Analysis

Part 4 shows that Paul will suffer for a very long time from nightmares and the terror placed on him by Annie. Even though Annie is in the grave, Paul still feels her presence and fears that she will come back.

The news about the book sale is incredible; no one does an initial run of one million copies.

The use of make-believe surely scares the reader into thinking Annie is alive, when in fact it was all in Paul's head. Forging through to the next story and the next phase of his life is Paul's ultimate revenge.



Characters

Paul Sheldon

Paul Sheldon is a 42 year old writer from New York. Sheldon is slender with blond hair and blue eyes. Sheldon is highly successful in his career but not in his personal life as can be gleaned from two marriages and two divorces plus many one night stands.

The book opens with Paul finishing his newest novel "Fast Cars." Paul celebrates in a Boulder, Colorado hotel room. It is the same room that Paul has used to finish each book since his first success in 1974. The new book is a comeback of sorts for Paul, who wants nothing more than to be a "serious writer" as opposed to a "popular writer," which is one step above "hack." In Paul's eyes, "Fast Cars" is brilliant.

Paul is drinking his second bottle of Dom Perignon when he encounters a blizzard in the Rockies. No matter what Paul tries to do, his 1974 Camaro goes off the road and flips over several times. Paul is trapped.

Being rescued by Annie Wilkes will be the worst thing that has ever happened to Paul Sheldon. Paul must endure unspeakable horrors at the hands of the psychotic Annie, a certifiably crazy woman who is obsessed with Paul and his famous fictional character, Misery.

The experience breaks Paul but also gives him new life when he is forced to write "Misery's Return." The book is the best thing he has ever written and it would not have happened if he had gone through life without meeting Annie.

In the end, Paul survives and the new book is a success. Paul must overcome his fears and come through the other side a better writer.

Annie Wilkes

Annie Wilkes, one of the two main characters in the book, is a woman in her forties. Annie is a former registered nurse who was ousted from the medical community due to suspicions of murder. Annie was credited with killing thirty people, from the old and infirm to healthy infants.

Annie is described as a solid woman, so solid that one might think she does not have veins. Paul Sheldon's first memorable encounter from Annie was receiving mouth to mouth after the car accident. Paul nearly vomits from the stench. Annie rescues Paul from certain death and takes him home to the farmhouse where she lives alone.

It is clear from the beginning that Annie is mentally unstable. Annie is completely obsessed with Misery Chastain, a fictional character. Annie's obsession eventually translates to Paul, Misery's creator. As the story goes on, it is clear that Annie suffers



from extreme psychosis, volleying back and forth between depression, catatonia, and violent rage.

Annie is capable of almost anything as she proves to Paul through her acts of cruelty. Annie's cruelty does not stop there however, as she openly participates in self-flagellation.

Even after Annie dies Paul is terrorized by the woman, constantly being reminded of the horror Annie had caused him during those long months in captivity.

Misery Chastain

This is the lead character in Paul Sheldon's best selling series. Misery is a much loved 19th century heroine who must return from the dead to please Annie Wilkes.

Bryce

This character is Paul Sheldon's agent.

Duane Kushner

This character is the first state trooper to arrive and to be killed at the farmhouse.

Wilson

This character owns the drugstore in Sidewinder.

David and Goliath

These characters are seen as potential saviors by Paul. In the end, they rescue Paul from Annie's house.

Crysilda Wilkes

This character is Annie's sainted mother.

Ralph Dugan

This character is Annie's ex-husband.

Andrew Pomeroy

This character was a drifter and hippie killed by Annie in Sidewinder.



Objects/Places

Annie's House

Annie Wilkes lives in a farmhouse in Sidewinder, Colorado. The location is rural and for most of the story it is winter with few references to the outside of the house. Paul immediately sees Annie for what she really is: a dirty, disheveled middle aged farmer.

Paul has no idea what the house looks like from the outside. How far is the farmhouse from the town? Paul decides it may be 15 miles or 45 miles, there is no way to tell. The farm is a working farm and is home to two cows, six chickens, and a pig named Misery.

The majority of the story takes place inside the house. Paul's bedroom is where the writer spends almost all of his time. The room is sparsely furnished with a bed, nightstand and a desk. There is a mantel on the wall and one window which Paul uses to look out into the farm yard.

Every room in Annie's house is immaculate, obsessively so, until she goes into full blown depression and psychosis.

The house has two stories. There are at least three bedrooms and two bathrooms. Also described are the parlor, kitchen, pantry, and the cellar. All doors, save for the cellar door, have heavy, state of the art locks on them. Until part way through the story, Paul's room had an old lock but it was replaced after Annie figured out that Paul had escaped into other parts of the house.

The out buildings Paul can see are pristine in appearance and freshly painted.

Misery's Return

Annie Wilkes, like many of Paul Sheldon's fans, is completely obsessed with Misery Chastain, a fictional character. Misery offers Annie an escape into the 19th century which was a softer gentler time when people did not behave like they do now. In "Misery's Child" Paul kills off Misery, which is responsible for Annie's insane behavior and idea to force Paul to bring Misery back to life. Paul hates the Misery books and wants to move on to more serious and creditable books.

There are many passages throughout the book that come from "Misery's Return." At first, Paul tries to write just enough to appease Annie.

It begins with Paul attempting a cheat at saving Misery's life: Ian is upset but is warned not to upset Misery. There is a baby in the picture now, a son that is a couple of months old. Misery was able to survive the birth because the doctor arrived at the last minute. The section ends with Ian and Misery canoodling in the kitchen.



After Annie rages Paul begins to write in earnest. Some of the passages include the discovery that Misery has been buried alive:

Ian is overwrought with grief and no one wants to bother him. One of the workers approaches Geoffrey to say there are strange noises coming from the graveyard. Geoffrey dismisses it. After thinking about it for a while, Geoffrey begins to piece together comments made earlier that did not make sense. Geoffrey begins to fear that Misery may have been buried alive.

Geoffrey goes to Mrs. Ramage. Mrs. Ramage confirms a story of a woman being buried alive not long ago. Geoffrey and Mrs. Ramage rush to the cemetery where they save Misery from certain death.

The reader gets the gist of the end of the book and the denouement when Ian sees the swarms of bees that cover Misery's body. Naturally, Ian and Geoffrey get help and Misery is saved.

Paul sells Misery for many millions of dollars after he returns home to New York.

Wilkes Farm

The Wilkes farm, owned and operated by Annie Wilkes, is the place where Paul Sheldon is held captive for many months. The farm is a working farm, located outside Sidewinder, Colorado. The animals kept on the farm include 2 cows, 6 chickens, and a pig named Misery.

Sidewinder, Colorado

Sidewinder, Colorado is a rural town located in the Rocky Mountains. Paul Sheldon has a car accident there and is taken to the Sidewinder home of Annie Wilkes.

Paul's Bedroom

Paul's bedroom is where the writer spends almost all of his time. The room is sparsely furnished with a bed, nightstand and a desk. There is a mantel on the wall and one window which Paul uses to look out into the farm yard.

Boulder, Colorado

Boulder is where the story begins, with Paul Sheldon putting the finishing touches on his new book. Boulder is also the town where Annie had worked as a head nurse in a maternity unit.



Manhattan

Manhattan is home to Paul Sheldon, before and after the incident with Annie.

England

England is the main setting for the Misery series of books.

Africa

Africa plays a large part in Paul's mind. Paul often sees Africa as a sort of utopia and even sets the second half of "Misery's Return" in Bourka.

Denver

Denver is the site of Annie's murder trial.



Themes

Fanaticism

Annie Wilkes is a mentally unstable woman who lives for a fictional character named Misery Chastain. Annie's life is one of hard work on a farm and basically a fugitive from her own past. Misery offers Annie an escape into the 19th century which was a softer gentler time when people did not behave like they do now.

Annie becomes equally obsessed with Paul and the idea of having him write "Misery's Return" for her. Annie cannot abide by "Fast Cars" or anything else that might take Paul away from revisiting his loathsome heroine. Paul fears Annie's vengeance when she begins to read the latest Misery novel. Annie's already precarious mental state may completely splinter.

The worst episode of rage from Annie comes when she finishes reading "Misery's Child." Annie is in full blown psychosis when she learns that Misery is dead. Misery is clearly a real person to Annie. Not only is Misery a heroine in Annie's eyes, she also represents who Annie wants to be. At other times, Misery represents what life could be outside Annie's self-imposed prison.

Only acting as Scheherazade seems to save Paul from death, although there is time that the writer would have preferred it. Through the process Paul regains his love for Misery. Annie's fanaticism also seems to be what keeps her alive even after all she had been through toward the end.

Fanaticism is also addressed in Paul's mind as he recalls the fan that spent a great deal of time and money converting a room in her house to Misery's room. The woman was so obsessed that it scared Paul.

Rural Living:

Creating characters in out of the way locales is one of King's strengths. At any given location in the country, there are quirky people who may come off as peculiar or just plain weird or scary. In "Misery," King introduces the readers to former nurse Annie Wilkes. The woman is strange and the reactions she receives from the townspeople are even stranger. The people in town fear Annie for her past indiscretions and the fact that she managed to get away with it. Everyone knows Annie is psychotic and homicidal. The people deal with her when necessary but otherwise stay very far away.

One reason King uses rural locales is to isolate the character from civilization. In the case of Paul Sheldon, Annie's plan never would have worked if there were neighbors close by.



It is surprising that Annie does not kill the tax man as he seems to represent everyone in the town that is out to get her.

One of the most important aspects of using a rural location is that people will always remember what happened and in Annie's case, will be persecuted for it. Even after events have long since passed, people who live in the same area for many years never forget.

In Annie's case, living in a rural area is beneficial for various reasons. For one, she was able to kill the Pomeroy kid and send him down the river. With the help of the Colorado winter, Annie was able to hide the fact that there had been an accident. When the weather began to clear, Annie used her knowledge of the landscape to send Paul's car down the same wash as the Pomeroy kid.

Terror

King is well known for being able to create unbelievably terrifying situations. The situations are often outlandish but there is just enough possibility in the scenarios to make the reader believe that such terrible things can happen.

Paul Sheldon was afraid of Annie and felt the terror come over him. As the story went on, Paul was terrified most of the time, particularly when Annie was in a rage or enveloped in psychosis. The terror also has a legitimate basis through Annie's mental illness and the symptoms that are tied in with the story.

There are times when Paul thinks he can take no more. King allows for a short respite before the terror starts again. Those respites usually take place during sleeping hours when there are no dreams or when Annie is away.

Paul also fears being hooked on the Novril but knows that there are terrors much worse than drug addiction.

When it seems like there is nothing Annie can do to Paul, King creates another scenario. Annie seems to be above terror for the most part, funneling emotions into rage.

Even after Annie dies, Paul is faced with the terror and the horror of all he went through at the hands of Annie Wilkes.

Style

Point of View

"Misery" by Stephen King is written in the third person omniscient point of view. The use of third person omniscient is critical when there are many layers to a story. The reader must be aware of all aspects of the story and the only real way to accomplish that is by having an omniscient presence narrate the story. In "Misery" the point of view works perfectly due to the complex storyline. The story follows several characters from Annie Wilkes to Paul Sheldon to the characters in the Misery series.

Third person omniscient is a valuable tool to use when talking about Annie Wilkes. Annie's erratic personality and psychosis could not be easily explained by Paul Sheldon as he sees only one side of the issue. The flashbacks into past experiences of each character are also valuable.

Additionally, the reader must be well informed of the characters in Sheldon's other books, from "Fast Cars" to the entire Misery series. There are portions of "Misery's Return" in the text which may not have existed in the same way if told through first person.

The end of the book focuses on a new character, inspired by a kid on the street. The kid is walking down the street with a shopping cart. Inside the cart is a skunk in a cage. Paul Sheldon must capture that scene to lead his readers into the new world of the blossoming character.

Setting

The main setting in "Misery" by Stephen King is rural Colorado. The majority of the story takes place in a small town named Sidewinder. The story truly begins when Paul Sheldon, a 42-year-old writer, wrecks his vintage Camaro during a blizzard. Sheldon is saved by former nurse Annie Wilkes. The woman is strange and the reactions she receives from the townspeople are even stranger. The people in town fear Annie for her past indiscretions and the fact that she managed to get away with it. Everyone knows Annie is psychotic and homicidal. The people deal with her when necessary but otherwise stay very far away.

One reason King uses rural locales is to isolate the character from civilization. In the case of Paul Sheldon, Annie's plan never would have worked if there were neighbors close by.

It is surprising that Annie does not kill the tax man as he seems to represent everyone in the town that is out to get her.



One of the most important aspects of using a rural location is that people will always remember what happened and in Annie's case, will be persecuted for it. Even after events have long since passed, people who live in the same area for many years never forget.

In Annie's case, living in a rural area is beneficial for various reasons. For one, she was able to kill the Pomeroy kid and send him down the river. With the help of the Colorado winter, Annie was able to hide the fact that there had been an accident. When the weather began to clear, Annie used her knowledge of the landscape to send Paul's car down the same wash as the Pomeroy kid.

Language and Meaning

The language used in *Misery* is typically conversational in regards to the dialogue. The book is set in the 1980s and therefore uses some of the popular language and slang from that time period. The use of slang is used sparingly and is not enough to make the text difficult to follow or understand. The main issue with language in the book is Annie's extreme aversion to profanity. Annie forbids any type of profanity. Instead, Annie uses interesting words and phrases such as "cockadoodie" and "oogy." Annie becomes furious when Paul swears. If Annie feels the need to yell at Paul, she generally avoids profanity by calling him "Mister Smart Guy." There are parts in the book, however, where Annie becomes furious and can swear alongside the saltiest sailor.

There are some uses of professional jargon. As a writer, Paul attempts to explain some of the processes involved in the writing business. Paul must explain about paper, the Webster pot, and perhaps most importantly, *deus ex machina*.

The explanations of the murders, particularly in the hospitals, are written for the general public through the newspapers and require no lengthy explanation of medical terms. The same can be said of the court appearances and trials involving Annie.

Structure

"*Misery*" by Stephen King is a work of fiction comprised of 310 pages. There are four sections in the text. They include Part One, Annie; Part Two, *Misery*; Part Three, *Misery*; and Part Four, Goddess.

Part One, Annie, is comprised of 88 pages and is broken down into 36 chapters. The shortest chapter is one page in length; the longest chapter is eight pages in length. The average length of the chapters is two pages.

Part Two, *Misery*, is comprised of 113 pages and is broken down into 23 chapters. The shortest chapter is one page in length; the longest chapter is 23 pages in length. The average length of the chapters is five pages.

Part Three, Paul, is comprised of 88 pages and is broken down into 48 chapters. The shortest chapter is one page in length; the longest chapter is eight pages in length. The average length of the chapters is five pages.

Part Four: Goddess, is comprised of five pages and is broken down into 11 chapters. The shortest chapter is one page in length; the longest chapter is one page in length. The average length of the chapters is one page.

The average length of the four parts is 78 pages.

Although the smallest chapter in each section is one page long, many chapters consist of a single word or a single sentence.



Quotes

"In desperation, because it was the only thing he could think of, he said: 'I know. You're my number one fan.'"

Part 1, Chapter 8, page 18

"'I suppose you want your cockadoodie medication,' she said."

Part 1, Chapter 10, page 21

"She doesn't like the new book because she's too stupid to understand what it's up to."

Part 1, Chapter 11, page 25

"Once upon a time, Annie was calling. Once upon a time it came to pass."

Part 1, Chapter 26, page 60

"Please, God, please - let me out of this or kill me... let me out of this or kill me."

Part 1, Chapter 29, page 69

"No matter how much he strained, it was a good nine inches above the tips of his fingers but he reached anyway, unable to believe Fate or God or Whoever could be so cruel."

Part 1, Chapter 33, page 76

"She frowned at him. 'I know that, Mr. Smart Guy. Gosh, sometimes I think you must believe I'm awful stupid!'"

Part 2, chapter 2, page 99

"There had been no trouble between them since the blow-up over the typewriter paper."

Part 2, chapter 3, page 104

"Part of him - the part that listened to even the best, fairest editorial suggestions with ill-grace - protested that the woman was crazy, there was no way to tell what she might or might not accept; anything he tried would only be a crapshoot."

Part 2, chapter 3, page 105

"The man who wrote these pages was in a rather gruesome frame of mind, my dear, Paul thought."

Part 2, chapter 7, page 137



"She picked up his foot. Its toes were still spasming. She carried it across the room. By the time she got to the door they had stopped moving."

Part 2, chapter 22, page 206

"He dozed off these days as an old man dozes off, abruptly and sometimes at inappropriate times, and he slept as old men sleep - which is to say, only separated from the waking world by the thinnest of skins."

Part 3, chapter 10, page 233

"Then he thought of what would happen to him - what could happen to him - if only he hurt her, and put the ashtray where had been with the shaking thumbless hand."

Part 3, chapter 16, page 246

"Dark fell and no police came."

Part 3, chapter 19, page 256

"And then, because he could not do otherwise, Paul Sheldon rolled the last page out of the typewriter and scrawled the most loved and hated phrase in the writer's vocabulary with a pen: The end."

Part 3, chapter 39, page 287



Topics for Discussion

Do you think Annie only saved Paul from the wreck because of his celebrity? What might Annie have done if the accident victim had been a stranger?

Do you think Annie had the idea to keep Paul as her pet from the very beginning or do you think the plan developed over time?

How do you think Annie got away with all of the murders? Is there a chance she could have been tried again?

Examine Paul's efforts to become a serious writer versus a popular writer. Why is being popular a negative thing? How could Paul change his image?

Annie exhibits a great deal of paranoia throughout the book. At one point, Paul begins to see that there may be some valid reasons. Do you think Annie's paranoia was at all justified? Explain.

Annie is fond of blaming Paul for her actions. Could Paul be responsible for anything Annie does? Is Kushner's death Paul's fault?

Do you think Paul will ever be able to forget about the horror at the farmhouse? Will he ever stop seeing Annie around every corner?

What do you think happened with Paul's next book? Do you think it sold for \$10 million or more?