

MISERY

‘Yes!’ Annie’s face shone like a searchlight. Her powerful hands were clasped between her breasts. ‘It will be a book just for me, Paul! My payment for nursing you back to health! The one and only copy of the newest *Misery* book! I’ll have something no one else in the world has, no matter how much they might want it! *Think* of it!’

‘Annie, Misery is dead.’ But already, incredibly, he was thinking, *I could bring her back.*

PRAISE FOR MISERY

‘The greatest popular novelist of our day, comparable to Dickens’
– *Guardian*

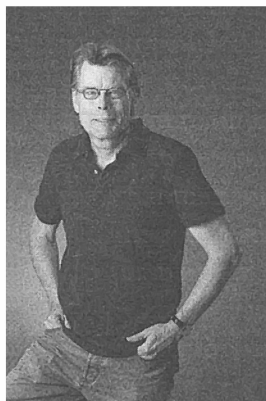
‘It’s being on this familiar territory that makes his fiction so addictive. It’s so good you just want more’ – *Evening Standard*

‘The true narrative artist is a rare creature. Storytelling – the ability to make the listener or the reader need to know, demand to know, what happens next – is a gift . . . Stephen King, like Charles Dickens before him, has this gift in spades’ – *The Times*

‘[An] incomparable ability to find the epic in the ordinary’ –
Michael Chabon

‘King has that rare skill of making you believe it could happen’
– *Sydney Morning Herald*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



STEPHEN KING Photograph © Dick Dickinson

There is a reason why Stephen King is one of the bestselling writers in the world, *ever*. Described by Frances Fyfield in the *Daily Express* as ‘one of those natural storytellers’ and by the *Daily Telegraph* as ‘genuinely masterful’, Stephen King writes stories that draw you in and are *impossible to put down*.

King is the author of more than fifty books, all of them world-wide bestsellers, including the thrilling suspense titles *Gerald's Game*, *Rose Madder*, *The Girl Who Loved Tom Gordon* and the highly acclaimed *Full Dark, No Stars*. Many of his books and novellas have been turned into celebrated films, including *Misery*, *The Green Mile*, *Stand By Me* and *The Shawshank Redemption*.

He was the recipient of the 2003 National Book Foundation Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters. He lives with his wife, novelist Tabitha King, in Maine.

HAVE YOU READ . . . ?

DOLORES CLAIBORNE

Suspected of killing her wealthy employer, Dolores Claiborne has a confession to make to the police. But it's not the one they are expecting to hear . . .

GERALD'S GAME

Trapped in a lakeside cabin after a dangerous sex-game goes wrong, Jessie is mindful of the voice in her head: 'Women alone in the dark are like open doors . . . and if they cry out for help, who knows what dread things may answer?'

ROSE MADDER

After fourteen years, Rosie Daniels flees from her abusive husband. But Norman Daniels, a police officer, uses his law-enforcement connections to track his wayward wife.

THE GIRL WHO LOVED TOM GORDON

Lost in the woods, nine-year-old Trisha McFarland only has her portable radio for comfort. A huge fan of Tom Gordon, a Boston Red Sox relief pitcher, she fantasises her hero will save her. But there's something dangerous in the woods – waiting, watching . . .

FULL DARK, NO STARS

Is it possible to fully know anyone? Even those we love the most? What does it take to tip someone over the edge to commit a crime?

'Fine stories to take with us into the night' – Neil Gaiman, *Guardian*

By Stephen King and published by Hodder & Stoughton

NOVELS:

Carrie
'Salem's Lot
The Shining
The Stand
The Dead Zone
Firestarter
Cujo
Cycle of the Werewolf
Christine
The Talisman (with Peter Straub)
Pet Sematary
IT
The Eyes of the Dragon
Misery
The Tommyknockers
The Dark Half
Needful Things
Gerald's Game
Dolores Claiborne
Insomnia
Rose Madder
Desperation
Bag of Bones
The Girl Who Loved Tom Gordon
Dreamcatcher
From a Buick 8
Cell
Lisey's Story
Duma Key
Under the Dome
Blockade Billy

The Dark Tower I: The Gunslinger
The Dark Tower II: The Drawing of the Three
The Dark Tower III: The Waste Lands
The Dark Tower IV: Wizard and Glass
The Dark Tower V: Wolves of the Calla
The Dark Tower VI: Song of Susannah
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Stephen King Goes to the Movies
Full Dark, No Stars

NON-FICTION

Danse Macabre
On Writing (A Memoir of the Craft)

STEPHEN
KING

MISERY


HODDER

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A Hodder Paperback

17

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This is for Stephanie and Jim Leonard,
who know why.

Boy, *do* they.

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goddess

Africa

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Florence Dorr, RN

Janet Ordway, MD and Doctor of Psychiatry

As always, they helped with the things you don't notice. If you see a glaring error, it's mine.

There is, of course, no such drug as Novril, but there are several codeine-based drugs similar to it, and, unfortunately, hospital pharmacies and medical practice dispensaries are sometimes lax in keeping such drugs under tight lock and close inventory.

The places and characters in this book are fictional.

S.K.

PART ONE

ANNIE

‘When you look into the abyss, the abyss also
looks into you.’

– Friedrich Nietzsche

1

umber whunnnn

yerrnnn umber whunnnn

fayunnnn

These sounds: even in the haze.

2

But sometimes the sounds – like the pain – faded, and then there was only the haze. He remembered darkness: solid darkness had come before the haze. Did that mean he was making progress? Let there be light (even of the hazy variety), and the light was good, and so on and so on? Had those sounds existed in the darkness? He didn't know the answers to any of these questions. Did it make sense to ask them? He didn't know the answer to that one, either.

The pain was somewhere below the sounds. The pain was east of the sun and south of his ears. That was all he *did* know.

For some length of time that seemed very long (and so *was*, since the pain and the stormy haze were the only two things which existed) those sounds were the only outer reality. He had no idea who he was or where he was and cared to know neither. He wished he was dead, but through the pain-soaked haze that filled his mind like a summer storm-cloud, he did not know he wished it.

As time passed, he became aware that there were periods of no pain, and that these had a cyclic quality. And for the first time since emerging from the total blackness which had prologued the haze, he had a thought which existed apart from whatever his

STEPHEN KING

current situation was. This thought was of a broken-off piling which had jutted from the sand at Revere Beach. His mother and father had taken him to Revere Beach often when he was a kid, and he had always insisted that they spread their blanket where he could keep an eye on that piling, which looked to him like the single jutting fang of a buried monster. He liked to sit and watch the water come up until it covered the piling. Then, hours later, after the sandwiches and potato salad had been eaten, after the last few drops of Kool-Aid had been coaxed from his father's big Thermos, just before his mother said it was time to pack up and start home, the top of the rotted piling would begin to show again – just a peek and flash between the incoming waves at first, then more and more. By the time their trash was stashed in the big drum with KEEP YOUR BEACH CLEAN stencilled on the side, Paulie's beach-toys picked up

(that's my name Paulie I'm Paulie and tonight ma'll put Johnson's Baby Oil on my sunburn he thought inside the thunderhead where he now lived)

and the blanket folded again, the piling had almost wholly reappeared, its blackish, slime-smoothed sides surrounded by sudsy scuds of foam. It was the tide, his father had tried to explain, but he had always known it was the piling. The tide came and went; the piling stayed. It was just that sometimes you couldn't see it. Without the piling, there *was* no tide.

This memory circled and circled, maddening, like a sluggish fly. He groped for whatever it might mean, but for a long time the sounds interrupted.

fayunnnnn

red everrrrrythinggg

umberrrrr whunnnnn

Sometimes the sounds stopped. Sometimes *he* stopped.

His first really clear memory of this *now*, the *now* outside the storm-haze, was of stopping, of being suddenly aware he just

MISERY

couldn't pull another breath, and that was all right, that was good, that was in fact just peachy-keen; he could take a certain level of pain but enough was enough and he was glad to be getting out of the game.

Then there was a mouth clamped over his, a mouth which was unmistakably a woman's mouth in spite of its hard spitless lips, and the wind from this woman's mouth blew into his own mouth and down his throat, puffing his lungs, and when the lips were pulled back he smelled his warder for the first time, smelled her on the outrush of the breath she had forced into him the way a man might force a part of himself into an unwilling woman, a dreadful mixed stench of vanilla cookies and chocolate ice-cream and chicken gravy and peanut-butter fudge.

He heard a voice screaming, 'Breathe, goddammit! *Breathe*, Paul!'

The lips clamped down again. The breath blew down his throat again. Blew down it like the dank suck of wind which follows a fast subway train, pulling sheets of newspaper and candy-wrappers after it, and the lips were withdrawn, and he thought *For Christ's sake don't let any of it out through your nose* but he couldn't help it and oh that *stink*, that *stink* that *fucking STINK*.

'*Breathe, goddam you!*' the unseen voice shrieked, and he thought *I will, anything, please just don't do that anymore, don't infect me anymore*, and he *tried*, but before he could really get started her lips were clamped over his again, lips as dry and dead as strips of salted leather, and she raped him full of her air again.

When she took her lips away this time he did not *let* her breath out but *pushed* it and whooped in a gigantic breath of his own. Shoved it out. Waited for his unseen chest to go up again on its own, as it had been doing his whole life without any help from him. When it didn't, he gave another giant whooping gasp, and then he was breathing again on his own, and doing it as fast as he could to flush the smell and taste of her out of him.

STEPHEN KING

Normal air had never tasted so fine.

He began to fade back into the haze again, but before the dimming world was gone entirely, he heard the woman's voice mutter: 'Whew! That was a close one!'

Not close enough, he thought, and fell asleep.

He dreamed of the piling, so real he felt he could almost reach out and slide his palm over its green-black fissured curve.

When he came back to his former state of semiconsciousness, he was able to make the connection between the piling and his current situation – it seemed to float into his hand. The pain wasn't tidal. That was the lesson of the dream which was really a memory. The pain only *appeared* to come and go. The pain was like the piling, sometimes covered and sometimes visible, but always there. When the pain wasn't harrying him through the deep stone grayness of his cloud, he was dumbly grateful, but he was no longer fooled – it was still there, waiting to return. And there was not just *one* piling but *two*; the pain was the pilings, and part of him knew for a long time before most of his mind had knowledge of knowing that the shattered pilings were his own shattered legs.

But it was still a long time before he was finally able to break the dried scum of saliva that had glued his lips together and croak out 'Where am I?' to the woman who sat by his bed with a book in her hands. The name of the man who had written the book was Paul Sheldon. He recognized it as his own with no surprise.

'Sidewinder, Colorado,' she said when he was finally able to ask the question. 'My name is Annie Wilkes. And I am –'

'I know,' he said. 'You're my number-one fan.'

'Yes,' she said, smiling. 'That's just what I am.'