

STEPHEN
KING

MISERY



A SIGNET BOOK

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MISERY



A SIGNET BOOK

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Your Number One Fan ...

MISERY

Paul Sheldon. He's a bestselling novelist who has finally met his biggest fan. Her name is Ann Wilkes and she is more than a rabid reader—she is Paul's nurse, tending his shattered body after an automobile accident. But she is also his captor, keeping him prisoner in her isolated house.

Now Annie wants Paul to write his greatest work—just for her. She has a lot of ways to spur him on. One is a needle. Another is an ax. And if they don't work, she can get really nasty.

“Solid character delineation and terrifying insight. In addition to being able to scare the reader breathless, King says a tremendous amount about writing itself. We delight in his virtuosity.”

-Washington Post

AMERICA LOVES

THE BACHMAN BOOKS

“Fascinating.”

—*Philadelphia Inquirer*

CARRIE

“Horrrifying.”

—*Chicago Tribune*

CHRISTINE

“Riveting.”

—*Playboy*

CUJO

“Gut-wrenching.”

—*Newport News Daily Press*

THE DARK HALF

“Scary.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

THE DARK TOWER: THE GUNSLINGER

“Brilliant.”

—*Booklist*

THE DARK TOWER II: THE DRAWING OF THE THREE

“Superb.”

—*Chicago Herald-Wheaton*

THE DARK TOWER III: THE WASTE LANDS

“Gripping.”

—*Chicago Sun-Times*

THE DEAD ZONE

“Frightening.”

—*Cosmopolitan*

DIFFERENT SEASONS

“Hypnotic.”

—*New York Times Book Review*

DOLORES CLAIBORNE

“Unforgettable.”

—*San Francisco Chronicle*

THE EYES OF THE DRAGON

“Masterful.”

—*Cincinnati Post*

FIRESTARTER

“Terrifying.”

—*Miami Herald*

STEPHEN KING

FOUR PAST MIDNIGHT

“Chilling.”

—*Milwaukee Journal*

GERALD’S GAME

“Terrific.”

—*USA Today*

IT

“Mesmerizing.”

—*Washington Post Book World*

MISERY

“Wonderful.”

—*Houston Chronicle*

NEEDFUL THINGS

“Demonic.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

NIGHT SHIFT

“Macabre.”

—*Dallas Times-Herald*

PET SEMATARY

“Unrelenting.”

—*Pittsburgh Press*

’SALEM’S LOT

“Tremendous.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

THE SHINING

“Spellbinding.”

—*Pittsburgh Press*

SKELETON CREW

“Diabolical.”

—*Associated Press*

THE STAND

“Great.”

—*New York Times Book Review*

THINNER

“Extraordinary.”

—*Booklist*

THE TOMMYKNOCKERS

“Marvelous.”

—*Boston Globe*

WORKS BY STEPHEN KING

NOVELS

Carrie

'Salem's Lot

The Shining

The Stand

The Dead Zone

Firestarter

Cujo

THE DARK TOWER I:

The Gunslinger

Christine

Pet Sematary

Cycle of the Werewolf

The Talisman

(with Peter Straub)

It

The Eyes of the Dragon

Misery

The Tommyknockers

THE DARK TOWER II:

The Drawing

of the Three

THE DARK TOWER III:

The Waste Lands

The Dark Half

Needful Things

Gerald's Game

Dolores Claiborne

Insomnia

Rose Madder

Desperation

The Green Mile

THE DARK TOWER IV:

Wizard and Glass

Bag of Bones

The Girl Who Loved Tom

Gordon

Dreamcatcher

Black House

(with Peter Straub)

From a Buick 8

THE DARK TOWER V:

Wolves of the Calla

THE DARK TOWER VI:

Song of Susannah

THE DARK TOWER VII:

The Dark Tower

AS RICHARD BACHMAN

Rage

The Long Walk

Roadwork

The Running Man

Thinner

The Regulators

COLLECTIONS

Night Shift

Different Seasons

Skeleton Crew

Four Past Midnight

Nightmares and

Dreamscapes

Hearts in Atlantis

Everything's Eventual

NONFICTION

Danse Macabre

On Writing

SCREENPLAYS

Creepshow

Cat's Eye

Silver Bullet

Maximum Overdrive

Pet Sematary

Golden Years

Sleepwalkers

The Stand

The Shining

Rose Red

Storm of the Century

STEPHEN
KING

MISERY



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SIGNET

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**This is for Stephanie and Jim Leonard,
who know why.
Boy, do they.**

goddess

Africa

I'd like to gratefully acknowledge the help of three medical people who helped me with the factual material in this book. They are:

Russ Dorr, P.A.

Florence Dorr, R.N.

Janet Ordway, M.D. 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.

ANNIE

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

—FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

umber whunnnn

yerrrrnnn umber whunnnn

fayunnnn

These sounds: even in the haze.

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 nonpain, and that these had a cyclical 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 current situation was. This thought was of 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 the 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* I 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.

fayunnnn

red everrrrr^ythinggg

umberrrrr whunnnn

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 couldn't pull another breath, and that was all right, that was good, that was 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.

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 dark 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 his 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 gigantic 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.

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 Ann Wilkes. And I am—"

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

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

Darkness. Then the pain and the haze. Then the awareness that, although the pain was constant, it was sometimes buried by an uneasy compromise which he supposed was relief. The first real memory of stopping, and being raped back into life by the woman's stinking breath.

Next real memory: her fingers pushing something into his mouth at regular intervals, something like Contac capsules, only since there was no water they only sat in his mouth and when they melted there was an incredibly bitter taste that was a little like the taste of aspirin. It would have been good to spit that bitter taste out, but he knew better than to do it. Because it was that bitter taste which brought the high tide in over the piling

(PILINGS it's PILINGS there are Two okay there are two fine now just hush just you know hush shhhhhh)

and made it seem gone for awhile.

These things all came at widely spaced intervals, but then, as the pain itself began not to recede but to erode (as that Revere Beach piling must itself have eroded, he thought, because nothing is forever—although the child he had been would have scoffed at such heresy), outside things began to impinge more rapidly until the objective world, with all its freight of memory, experience, and prejudice, had pretty much re-established itself. He was Paul Sheldon, who wrote novels of two kinds, good ones and best-sellers. He had been married and divorced twice. He smoked too much (or had before all this whatever “all this” was). Something very bad had happened to him but he was still alive. That dark gray cloud began to dissipate faster and faster. It would be yet awhile before his number-one fan brought him the old clacking Royal with the grinning gapped mouth and the Ducky Daddles voice, but Paul understood long before then that he was in a hell of a jam.

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