

*The sounds of a utensil clinking against a bowl. Then light-*

*Noon, a couple days later. Annie sits on the bed, feeding Paul tomato soup.*

**ANNIE.** *(As she feeds him.)* Open wide. *(He does-)* Such a good boy.

*She gets another spoonful of the soup ready-and suddenly she looks at him-almost shy.*

**PAUL.** What?

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

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

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

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

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

*She feeds him- Paul swallows, gestures for her to go on.*

*...and it is brilliantly written but then everything you ever write is brilliant-*

**PAUL.** Pretty brutal so far.

*She is hesitating to speak.*

*Is it hard to follow? I know it jumps back and forth in time...*

**ANNIE.** Well, yeah, that's hard, but it's not that...

**PAUL.** I know the language is complicated...

**ANNIE.** *(Interrupting abruptly.)* It's the swearing, Paul.

*A beat.*

*There. I said it.*

**PAUL.** The profanity bothers you?

**ANNIE.** Every other word is the F-word. It has no nobility!

**PAUL.** Annie, this is real life, it's 1987, everybody talks like that.

*Annie holds tight to the soup spoon, trying so hard not to spill.*

**ANNIE.** What do you think I do when I go to the feed store in town? What do you think I say? "Now give me a bag of that effing pig feed and some of that bitchly cow corn?" "Hell yes, ma'am, coming right the eff up?"

*Paul is surprised at this, but also a little amused. Annie is doing her best not to spill the soup.*

And at the bank do you think I say, "Here's one effin' bastard of a check, now get off your effin' ass and cash the effin' thing!"

*Annie stands and loses control of the bowl, and soup spills on to the floor.*

*(Shouting.)* Ah! There! There! See what you made me do?

**PAUL.** I'm sorry.

**ANNIE.** Sure you are!

*The kitchen timer goes off.*

So I suppose you want your cockadoodie medicine. Well, you're going to have to wait until I clean this mess up.

*Annie exits. Paul sits in silence, a little shaken, not sure what to make of what just happened. Annie returns a moment later with a cloth and starts to clean up her spill.*

*Pause, as she cleans. Then-*

My mother would have washed my mouth out with soap and water for using that kind of language.

*Beat.*

You don't need to use swear words in the Misery books, because they didn't use swear words at all back then. They weren't even invented in the 1860s. That was a better time. You ought to stick to the Misery stories, Paul. I say that sincerely, as someone who cares about you, as your number one fan.

*She finishes cleaning.*

You won't make me mad again, will you?

**PAUL.** No. I don't want you mad. I sort of depend on you, you know.

**ANNIE.** Yes, you do, don't you?

*There is a beat. She hands him his pills. Then she fills his glass with soapy water from the bucket, She hands him the glass.*

*Paul looks at her in disbelief.*

**PAUL.** Seriously? You swore, not me.

**ANNIE.** Take your medicine.

**PAUL.** Annie...

*Beat.*

*After a moment, with hesitation, he puts the pill in his mouth, and takes a small sip of soapy water.*

*Annie, satisfied, exits.*

*Paul shudders.*