

The set turns. Annie opens the door to find Buster there, all business.

BUSTER. May I come in?

ANNIE. You must think I've got no manners. Please-

Buster enters with her to the kitchen.

I made some coffee- let me get you some.

BUSTER. There's something I forgot to ask you. When I was talking to Pete at the general store he also mentioned you've become the biggest customer he ever had for typing paper. I'm hoping you can explain that to me.

Annie looks away from Buster for a moment. Then she starts to speak, very quietly. And so sad.

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

BUSTER. Depends if you're breaking the law.

ANNIE. *(Fighting back tears.)* When you told me that Paul Sheldon was missing, that he was most likely out there frozen to death or worse, I got down on my knees and I prayed. *(Shaking her head.)* And while I was down on my knees, God answered me.

Buster is caught up in her story-this is not what he'd been expecting.

God told me to get ready.

BUSTER. For what?

ANNIE. To try and be Paul Sheldon's replacement. He said he has given so much pleasure to so many people and there's a shortage of pleasure on this planet these days, in case you hadn't noticed.

Annie is fighting back tears but she manages to get her words out.

God told me that, "Since you are his number one fan in all the universe, you should make up new stories as if you were Paul Sheldon." (*Harder to speak.*) I said to God, "I don't think I can do that. I've never once in my life thought I could tell stories!" And God said to me, "You must try."

She is so moved now.

So I've been trying. I went to town and I bought the same kind of paper that Paul Sheldon wrote on. And a clunky old typewriter that didn't even have an "n"- and every day, Buster, I have been working so hard. I know the kind of words he used. I know the kind of stories he told. (*Heartbreaking.*) But I have no talent!

Buster says nothing just studies her.

I spend day after day trying- I've written two hundred pages and it's agony.

BUSTER. That many?

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

BUSTER. (*Slow shake of his head.*) Never been much of a critic. But you sure are Paul Sheldon's number one fan. Maybe I could pay you a visit again sometime?

ANNIE. I'd be delighted.

She shows Buster out.

And now at last, Paul is awake. He sees the water pitcher. Grabs the water pitcher. Bangs it loudly against the window. From outside, Buster's voice is heard.

BUSTER. *(Shouting.)* Ms. Wilkes? *(Louder.)* Annie-answer me. Are you all right?

PAUL. *(Doing his best to shout.)* In here. In here. IN HERE!

Buster throws the door open and is stunned to see the man lying in bed.

BUSTER. Oh my God- it's you- Paul Sheldon- you're alive-

- but too late.

There is a sudden incredibly loud explosion- and Buster, blood-covered and very dead, falls to the floor.

Then, Annie is in the doorway, holding a very large shotgun. Annie moves a step into the room. She is clearly expert with her shotgun.