

ANNIE. (*Deeply disappointed.*) Well, I gather as much because I don't see her name in the title. *Broken Places*.

PAUL. Last week that title was a metaphor. But yes, this is a different kind of book. It's not set in the 19th century, or the English countryside. It's not even a romance...

ANNIE. So what is it then?

PAUL. My agent would say it's an esoteric, pseudo-autobiographical character study that no one will want to read... But that's just her sense of humor.

ANNIE. I don't... Is that funny?

PAUL. (*Considering the question, then, wryly.*) Not really, no.

*Beat.*

But since you asked... it's not like anything I've ever written before. It's about the world I live in, New York. It's about a man who had everything and then crashed and burned and lost his way.

ANNIE. Well, I can't help but wish it was about Misery. But you wrote it. And so I want to read it. I want to read every word you write.

PAUL. That means a lot to me.

ANNIE. Though... if I had your gift, if I could breathe life into Misery Chastain, that's all I would write. I'd want to write as much of her life as I could.

PAUL. That's all I've been doing for twenty years! Don't get me wrong, I'm not complaining.

ANNIE. It sounds like you are, just a little.

PAUL. Don't misunderstand me. Misery is responsible for all of my success, and I'm grateful for that. But there's another writer in me—a serious writer, of serious books.

ANNIE. Misery is serious. All eight of your Misery books are serious.

PAUL. Yes, of course they are. I just hope my readers will like it as much as they like Misery.

ANNIE. Well, I'm sure we will.

*There is a nice beat between them.*

PAUL. Did you say there were eight Misery books?

ANNIE. Eight Misery books? Yes—*Misery*, *Misery's Quest*, *Misery's*