

PAUL. You're right. I'll tell you what—I won't publish it—I'll just keep it for myself. No one will even know it exists.

*Long silence now. Annie seems like she's about to agree with him.*

ANNIE. As long as it does exist, your mind won't ever be free. You'll never write the books you're meant to write. I think you should light the match now.

PAUL. Annie, please listen. I know you hated the profanity, and I'm not saying you're wrong, but you've got to understand something. This book was hard to write. I quit so many times, but I kept coming back—I needed to write it. Every ambition I have as a writer is in those pages.

*Pause.*

It took me three years to write this book.

*He stares at her.*

Three years. A thousand days. If you care about me, how can you want me to destroy a thousand days?

ANNIE. It's not a very good book, Paul.

*This hits Paul.*

And I know good when I see it. You are good. All you need is a little help. This is the only way. God's never wrong.

*Paul is silent this time. No way he can do it.*

PAUL. No...

ANNIE. Paul...

PAUL. No!

ANNIE. Please let me help you, dear.

*And now she flicks some drops of lighter fluid on his bed.*

We're only put on this earth to help people, nothing else matters.

*Now more lighter fluid flicks out.*

You're so brilliant Paul, I think you'd be able to see that. *(Smiles.)* I think you do see it.

*And now she flicks a few more.*

*And a few more.*