

ANNIE. (*Shakes her head, visibly upset.*) I don't think God would let anything bad happen to Paul Sheldon.

BUSTER. Yeah, I don't know that he's been gone long enough to worry. I told his agent when she called, maybe he decided to make a stop on his way home. Or maybe he had enough of this damn winter, went to Florida instead. But she insists he would have been in touch.

ANNIE. I have to believe he's safe. Will you let me know if you hear anything, Sheriff?

BUSTER. Oh, I think everyone will hear about it if we find him. And please, call me Buster, everyone does.

ANNIE. All my fingers are crossed for you, Buster.

*Buster nods.*

*Annie closes the porch door—very softly.*

## Ten

*The following dawn. But things have changed—a lot! Paul is not in bed. He is sitting—sitting in a wheelchair. A table has been set up in the corner of the room.*

ANNIE. (*So excited.*) Like it so far?

PAUL. (*Manages a nod.*) I'll say—I've always wanted to visit the other side of the room.

ANNIE. Now don't poke fun—I promised you the biggest surprise of your life, remember?

PAUL. If I knew a wheelchair was my surprise I would have burned all my books.

ANNIE. That chair was expensive, even if it was secondhand. But that's only part of the surprise.

PAUL. Can I have my pills?

ANNIE. It's not time yet. Now you just sit tight while I set everything up.