

In 1977, Stephen King's *The Shining* gave us a new kind of horror novel—one that played out in the mind of a psychically gifted young boy, Danny Torrance, and his alcoholic father, in the corridors of a snowbound hotel.

Now, Dan Torrance has grown up.
So have his demons. . . .

“Almost 40 years later, I’ve changed, the world has changed, the planet has changed—and Stephen King is still scaring the hell out of me. . . . I could hardly find the courage to turn the page.”

—Alan Cheuse, NPR

STEPHEN KING DOCTOR SLEEP

The acclaimed sequel to *The Shining*

“King’s inventiveness and skill show no sign of slacking: *Doctor Sleep* has all the virtues of his best work. . . . King is right at the center of the American literary taproot that goes all the way down . . . to Hawthorne, to Poe, to Melville, to the Henry James of *The Turn of the Screw*, and then to later exemplars like Ray Bradbury. What will King do next? Perhaps Abra will grow up, and become a writer, and use her ‘shining’ talents to divine the minds and souls of others. For that, of course, is yet another interpretation of King’s eerie, luminescent metaphor.”

—Margaret Atwood,
The New York Times Book Review

“King at his best . . . thoroughly terrifying. It’s impossible to close the cover on *Doctor Sleep* and not immediately yearn for a sequel to this sequel.”

—*New York Daily News*

“A gripping, taut read.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

“King found there was indeed a reason to revisit Daniel Torrance in adulthood. . . . The temptation toward the bottle that destroyed his father—and the Overlook Hotel—remains at all times, adding remarkable tension. . . .”

—*Toledo Free Press*

“Chilling scenes. . . . *Doctor Sleep* has its own trajectory and cast of characters, and they come fully alive. As with so many of King’s characters over the years, we root for them, love them, hate them, fear them, and remember them. . . . It’s not simple horror King is after, but thematic resonance: the manacles of the past, the fear of death, the brutality of alcoholism, and the remorse that lingers from bad choices. King offers hope that good can outweigh evil, with some work, commitment, and a little (*lots and lots of*) blood and guts.”

—*The Cleveland Plain Dealer*

“*Doctor Sleep* has its own vivid frightscape . . . the red mist secreted by the dying is terrifying to imagine. And the steam of those who shine is one of Mr. King’s best surreal inventions.”

—Janet Maslin, *The New York Times*

“*Doctor Sleep* doesn’t disappoint.”

—*The Wall Street Journal*

“Like Poe, King works at the blurry boundary between supernatural horrors and psychological ones. King is excellent on addiction and its attendant dysfunctions: deception, self-justification, disregard of others, new-leaf fantasies and their near-instant collapse, the next fix as the North Star. . . . As for *Doctor Sleep*: It refers to Dan Torrance, hospice worker—who, in his sober, shining kindness, comforts his elderly patients as they’re dying. Stephen King has given us a work of horror that promises, of all things, a good night’s sleep.”

—*New York* magazine

Praise for
STEPHEN KING

“A master storyteller.”

—*Los Angeles Times*

“The most wonderfully gruesome man on the planet.”

—*USA Today*

“Stephen King knows exactly what scares you most. . . .”

—*Esquire*

“An undisputed master of suspense and terror.”

—*The Washington Post*

“King probably knows more about scary goings-on in confined, isolated places than anybody since Edgar Allan Poe.”

—*Entertainment Weekly*

“Peerless imagination.”

—*The Observer*

“America’s greatest living novelist.”

—Lee Child

STEPHEN
KING

DOCTOR SLEEP

A NOVEL

SCRIBNER

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When I was playing my primitive brand of rhythm guitar with a group called the Rock Bottom Remainders, Warren Zevon used to gig with us. Warren loved gray t-shirts and movies like *Kingdom of the Spiders*. He insisted I sing lead on his signature tune, “Werewolves of London,” during the encore portion of our shows. I said I was not worthy. He insisted that I was. “Key of G,” Warren told me, “and howl like you mean it. Most important of all, *play like Keith*.”

I’ll never be able to play like Keith Richards, but I always did my best, and with Warren beside me, matching me note for note and laughing his fool head off, I always had a blast.

Warren, this howl is for you, wherever you are. I miss you, buddy.

We stood at the turning point. Half-measures
availed us nothing.

—The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous

If we were to live, we had to be free of anger.
[It is] the dubious luxury of normal men and
women.

—The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous

PREFATORY MATTERS

FEAR stands for fuck everything and run.
—Old AA saying

LOCKBOX

1

On the second day of December in a year when a Georgia peanut farmer was doing business in the White House, one of Colorado's great resort hotels burned to the ground. The Overlook was declared a total loss. After an investigation, the fire marshal of Jicarilla County ruled the cause had been a defective boiler. The hotel was closed for the winter when the accident occurred, and only four people were present. Three survived. The hotel's off-season caretaker, John Torrance, was killed during an unsuccessful (and heroic) effort to dump the boiler's steam pressure, which had mounted to disastrously high levels due to an inoperative relief valve.

Two of the survivors were the caretaker's wife and young son. The third was the Overlook's chef, Richard Hallorann, who had left his seasonal job in Florida and come to check on the Torrances because of what he called "a powerful hunch" that the family was in trouble. Both surviving adults were quite badly injured in the explosion. Only the child was unhurt.

Physically, at least.

Wendy Torrance and her son received a settlement from the corporation that owned the Overlook. It wasn't huge, but enough to get them by for the three years she was unable to work because of back injuries. A lawyer she consulted told her that if she were willing to hold out and play tough, she might get a great deal more, because the corporation was anxious to avoid a court case. But she, like the corporation, wanted only to put that disastrous winter in Colorado behind her. She would convalesce, she said, and she did, although back injuries plagued her until the end of her life. Shattered vertebrae and broken ribs heal, but they never cease crying out.

Winifred and Daniel Torrance lived in the mid-South for awhile, then drifted down to Tampa. Sometimes Dick Hallorann (he of the powerful hunches) came up from Key West to visit with them. To visit with young Danny especially. They shared a bond.

One early morning in March of 1981, Wendy called Dick and asked if he could come. Danny, she said, had awakened her in the night and told her not to go in the bathroom.

After that, he refused to talk at all.

He woke up needing to pee. Outside, a strong wind was blowing. It was warm—in Florida it almost always was—but he did not like that sound, and supposed he never would. It reminded him of the Overlook, where the defective boiler had been the very least of the dangers.

He and his mother lived in a cramped second-floor tenement apartment. Danny left the little room next to his mother's and crossed the hall. The wind gusted and a dying palm tree beside the building clattered its leaves. The sound was skeletal. They always left the bathroom door open when no one was using the shower or the toilet, because the lock was broken. Tonight the door was closed. Not because his mother was in there, however. Thanks to facial injuries she'd suffered at the Overlook, she now snored—a soft *queep-queep* sound—and he could hear it coming from her bedroom.

Well, she closed it by accident, that's all.

He knew better, even then (he was possessed of powerful hunches and intuitions himself), but sometimes you had to know. Sometimes you had to *see*. This was something he had found out at the Overlook, in a room on the second floor.

Reaching with an arm that seemed too long, too stretchy, too *boneless*, he turned the knob and opened the door.

The woman from Room 217 was there, as he had known she would be. She was sitting naked on the toilet with her legs spread and her pallid thighs bulging. Her greenish breasts hung down like deflated balloons. The patch of hair below her stomach was gray. Her eyes were also gray, like steel mirrors. She saw him, and her lips stretched back in a grin.

Close your eyes, Dick Hallorann had told him once upon a time. If you see something bad, close your eyes and tell yourself it's not there and when you open them again, it will be gone.

But it hadn't worked in Room 217 when he was five, and it wouldn't work now. He knew it. He could *smell* her. She was decaying.

The woman—he knew her name, it was Mrs. Massey—lumbered to her purple feet, holding out her hands to him. The flesh on her arms hung down, almost dripping. She was smiling the way you do when you see an old friend. Or, perhaps, something good to eat.

With an expression that could have been mistaken for calmness, Danny closed the door softly and stepped back. He watched as the knob turned right . . . left . . . right again . . . then stilled.

He was eight now, and capable of at least some rational thought even in his horror. Partly because, in a deep part of his mind, he had been expecting this. Although he had always thought it would be Horace Derwent who would eventually show up. Or perhaps the bartender, the one his father had called Lloyd. He supposed he should have known it would be Mrs. Massey, though, even before it finally happened. Because of all the undead things in the Overlook, she had been the worst.

The rational part of his mind told him she was just a fragment of unremembered bad dream that had followed him out of sleep and across the hall to the bathroom. That part insisted that if he opened the door again, there would be nothing there. Surely there wouldn't be, now that he was awake. But another part of him, a part that *shone*, knew better. The Overlook wasn't done with him. At least one of its vengeful spirits had followed him all the way to Florida. Once he had come upon that woman sprawled in a bathtub. She had gotten out and tried to choke him with her fishy (but terribly strong) fingers. If he opened the bathroom door now, she would finish the job.

He compromised by putting his ear against the

door. At first there was nothing. Then he heard a faint sound.

Dead fingernails scratching on wood.

Danny walked into the kitchen on not-there legs, stood on a chair, and peed into the sink. Then he woke his mother and told her not to go into the bathroom because there was a bad thing there. Once that was done, he went back to bed and sank deep beneath the covers. He wanted to stay there forever, only getting up to pee in the sink. Now that he had warned his mother, he had no interest in talking to her.

His mother knew about the no-talking thing. It had happened after Danny had ventured into Room 217 at the Overlook.

“Will you talk to Dick?”

Lying in his bed, looking up at her, he nodded. His mother called, even though it was four in the morning.

Late the next day, Dick came. He brought something with him. A present.

4

After Wendy called Dick—she made sure Danny heard her doing it—Danny went back to sleep. Although he was now eight and in the third grade, he was sucking his thumb. It hurt her to see him do that. She went to the bathroom door and stood looking at it. She was afraid—Danny had made her afraid—but she had to go, and she had no intention of using the sink as he had. The image of how she would look teetering on the edge of the counter with her butt hanging over the porcelain (even if there was no one there to see) made her wrinkle her nose.

In one hand she had the hammer from her little box of widow's tools. As she turned the knob and pushed the bathroom door open, she raised it. The bathroom was empty, of course, but the ring of the toilet seat was down. She never left it that way before going to bed, because she knew if Danny wandered in, only ten percent awake, he was apt to forget to put it up and piss all over it. Also, there was a smell. A bad one. As if a rat had died in the walls.

She took a step in, then two. She saw movement and whirled, hammer upraised, to hit whoever
(*whatever*)

was hiding behind the door. But it was only her shadow. Scared of her own shadow, people sometimes sneered, but who had a better right than Wendy Torrance? After the things she had seen and been through, she knew that shadows could be dangerous. They could have teeth.

No one was in the bathroom, but there was a discolored smear on the toilet seat and another on the shower curtain. Excrement was her first thought, but shit wasn't yellowish-purple. She looked more closely and saw bits of flesh and decayed skin. There was more on the bathmat, in the shape of footprints. She thought them too small—too *dainty*—to be a man's.

"Oh God," she whispered.

She ended up using the sink after all.

Wendy nagged her son out of bed at noon. She managed to get a little soup and half a peanut butter sandwich into him, but then he went back to bed. He

still wouldn't speak. Hallorann arrived shortly after five in the afternoon, behind the wheel of his now ancient (but perfectly maintained and blindingly polished) red Cadillac. Wendy had been standing at the window, waiting and watching as she had once waited and watched for her husband, hoping Jack would come home in a good mood. And sober.

She rushed down the stairs and opened the door just as Dick was about to ring the bell marked TORRANCE 2A. He held out his arms and she rushed into them at once, wishing she could be enfolded there for at least an hour. Maybe two.

He let go and held her at arm's length by her shoulders. "You're lookin fine, Wendy. How's the little man? He talkin again?"

"No, but he'll talk to you. Even if he won't do it out loud to start with, you can—" Instead of finishing, she made a finger-gun and pointed it at his forehead.

"Not necessarily," Dick said. His smile revealed a bright new pair of false teeth. The Overlook had taken most of the last set on the night the boiler blew. Jack Torrance swung the mallet that took Dick's dentures and Wendy's ability to walk without a hitch in her stride, but they both understood it had really been the Overlook. "He's very powerful, Wendy. If he wants to block me out, he will. I know from my own experience. Besides, it'd be better if we talk with our mouths. Better for him. Now tell me everything that happened."

After she did that, Wendy took him into the bathroom. She had left the stains for him to see, like a beat cop preserving the scene of a crime for the forensic team. And there *had* been a crime. One against her boy.

Dick looked for a long time, not touching, then nodded. "Let's see if Danny's up and in the doins."

He wasn't, but Wendy's heart was lightened by the look of gladness that came into her son's face when he saw who was sitting beside him on the bed and shaking his shoulder.

(hey Danny I brought you a present)

(it's not my birthday)

Wendy watched them, knowing they were speaking but not knowing what it was about.

Dick said, "Get on up, honey. We're gonna take a walk on the beach."

(Dick she came back Mrs. Massey from Room 217 came back)

Dick gave his shoulder another shake. "Talk out loud, Dan. You're scarin your ma."

Danny said, "What's my present?"

Dick smiled. "That's better. I like to hear you, and Wendy does, too."

"Yes." It was all she dared say. Otherwise they'd hear the tremble in her voice and be concerned. She didn't want that.

"While we're gone, you might want to give the bathroom a cleaning," Dick said to her. "Have you got kitchen gloves?"

She nodded.

"Good. Wear them."

6

The beach was two miles away. The parking lot was surrounded by tawdry beachfront attractions—funnel cake concessions, hotdog stands, souvenir shops—but this was the tag end of the season, and

none were doing much business. They had the beach itself almost entirely to themselves. On the ride from the apartment, Danny had held his present—an oblong package, quite heavy, wrapped in silver paper—on his lap.

“You can open it after we talk a bit,” Dick said.

They walked just above the waves, where the sand was hard and gleaming. Danny walked slowly, because Dick was pretty old. Someday he’d die. Maybe even soon.

“I’m good to go another few years,” Dick said. “Don’t you worry about that. Now tell me about last night. Don’t leave anything out.”

It didn’t take long. The hard part would have been finding words to explain the terror he now felt, and how it was mingled with a suffocating sense of certainty: now that she’d found him, she’d never leave. But because it was Dick, he didn’t need words, although he found some.

“She’ll come back. I know she will. She’ll come back and come back until she gets me.”

“Do you remember when we met?”

Although surprised at the change of direction, Danny nodded. It had been Hallorann who gave him and his parents the guided tour on their first day at the Overlook. Very long ago, that seemed.

“And do you remember the first time I spoke up inside your head?”

“I sure do.”

“What did I say?”

“You asked me if I wanted to go to Florida with you.”

“That’s right. And how did it make you feel, to know you wasn’t alone anymore? That you wasn’t the only one?”

"It was great," Danny said. "It was so great."

"Yeah," Hallorann said. "Yeah, course it was."

They walked in silence for a bit. Little birds—peeps, Danny's mother called them—ran in and out of the waves.

"Did it ever strike you funny, how I showed up when you needed me?" He looked down at Danny and smiled. "No. It didn't. Why would it? You was just a child, but you're a little older now. A *lot* older in some ways. Listen to me, Danny. The world has a way of keeping things in balance. I believe that. There's a saying: When the pupil is ready, the teacher will appear. I was your teacher."

"You were a lot more than that," Danny said. He took Dick's hand. "You were my friend. You saved us."

Dick ignored this . . . or seemed to. "My grammar also had the shining—do you remember me telling you that?"

"Yeah. You said you and her could have long conversations without even opening your mouths."

"That's right. She taught me. And it was her *great*-grammar that taught her, way back in the slave days. Someday, Danny, it will be your turn to be the teacher. The pupil will come."

"If Mrs. Massey doesn't get me first," Danny said morosely.

They came to a bench. Dick sat down. "I don't dare go any further; I might not make it back. Sit beside me. I want to tell you a story."

"I don't want stories," Danny said. "She'll come back, don't you get it? She'll come *back* and come *back* and come *back*."

"Shut your mouth and open your ears. Take some instruction." Then Dick grinned, displaying

his gleaming new dentures. "I think you'll get the point. You're far from stupid, honey."

7

Dick's mother's mother—the one with the shining—lived in Clearwater. She was the White Gramma. Not because she was Caucasian, of course, but because she was *good*. His father's father lived in Dunbrie, Mississippi, a rural community not far from Oxford. His wife had died long before Dick was born. For a man of color in that place and time, he was wealthy. He owned a funeral parlor. Dick and his parents visited four times a year, and young Dick Hallorann hated those visits. He was terrified of Andy Hallorann, and called him—only in his own mind, to speak it aloud would have earned him a smack across the chops—the Black Grampa.

"You know about kiddie-fiddlers?" Dick asked Danny. "Guys who want children for sex?"

"Sort of," Danny said cautiously. Certainly he knew not to talk to strangers, and never to get into a car with one. Because they might do stuff to you.

"Well, old Andy was more than a kiddie-fiddler. He was a damn sadist, as well."

"What's that?"

"Someone who enjoys giving pain."

Danny nodded in immediate understanding. "Like Frankie Listrone at school. He gives kids Indian burns and Dutch rubs. If he can't make you cry, he stops. If he can, he *never* stops."

"That's bad, but this was worse."

Dick lapsed into what would have looked like silence to a passerby, but the story went forward in

a series of pictures and connecting phrases. Danny saw the Black Grampa, a tall man in a suit as black as he was, who wore a special kind of

(*fedora*)

hat on his head. He saw how there were always little buds of spittle at the corners of his mouth, and how his eyes were red-rimmed, like he was tired or had just gotten over crying. He saw how he would take Dick—younger than Danny was now, probably the same age he'd been that winter at the Overlook—on his lap. If they weren't alone, he might only tickle. If they were, he'd put his hand between Dick's legs and squeeze his balls until Dick thought he'd faint with the pain.

"Do you like that?" Grampa Andy would pant in his ear. He smelled of cigarettes and White Horse scotch. "Coss you do, every boy likes that. But even if you don't, you dassn't tell. If you do, I'll hurt you. I'll burn you."

"Holy shit," Danny said. "That's gross."

"There were other things, too," Dick said, "but I'll just tell you one. Grampy hired a woman to help out around the house after his wife died. She cleaned and cooked. At dinnertime, she'd slat out everything on the table at once, from salad to dessert, because that's the way ole Black Grampa liked it. Dessert was always cake or puddin. It was put down on a little plate or in a little dish next to your dinnerplate so you could look at it and want it while you plowed through the other muck. Grampa's hard and fast rule was you could *look* at dessert but you couldn't *eat* dessert unless you finished every bite of fried meat and boiled greens and mashed potatoes. You even had to clean up the gravy, which was lumpy and didn't have much taste. If it wasn't all gone, Black

Grampa'd hand me a hunk of bread and say 'Sop er up with that, Dickie-Bird, make that plate shine like the dog licked it.' That's what he called me, Dickie-Bird.

"Sometimes I couldn't finish no matter what, and then I didn't get the cake or the puddin. He'd take it and eat it himself. And sometimes when I *could* finish all my dinner, I'd find he'd smashed a cigarette butt into my piece of cake or my vanilla puddin. He could do that because he always sat next to me. He'd make like it was a big joke. 'Whoops, missed the ashtray,' he'd say. My ma and pa never put a stop to it, although they must have known that even if it was a joke, it wasn't a fair one to play on a child. They just made out like it was a joke, too."

"That's really bad," Danny said. "Your folks should have stood up for you. My mom does. My daddy would, too."

"They were scairt of him. And they were right to be scairt. Andy Hallorann was a bad, bad motorcycle. He'd say, 'Go on, Dickie, eat around it, that won't poison ya.' If I took a bite, he'd have Nonnie—that was his housekeeper's name—bring me a fresh dessert. If I wouldn't, it just sat there. It got so I could never finish my meal, because my stomach would get all upset."

"You should have moved your cake or puddin to the other side of your plate," Danny said.

"I tried that, sure, I wasn't born foolish. He'd just move it back, saying dessert went on the right." Dick paused, looking out at the water, where a long white boat was trundling slowly across the dividing line between the sky and the Gulf of Mexico. "Sometimes when he got me alone he bit me. And once, when I said I'd tell my pa if he didn't leave me alone,

he put a cigarette out on my bare foot. He said, "Tell him that, too, and see what good it does you. Your daddy knows my ways already and he'll never say a word, because he yella and because he wants the money I got in the bank when I die, which I ain't fixing to do soon."

Danny listened in wide-eyed fascination. He had always thought the story of Bluebeard was the scariest of all time, the scariest there ever could be, but this one was worse. Because it was true.

"Sometimes he said that he knew a bad man named Charlie Manx, and if I didn't do what he wanted, he'd call Charlie Manx on the long-distance and he'd come in his fancy car and take me away to a place for bad children. Then Grampa would put his hand between my legs and commence squeezing. 'So you ain't gonna say a thing, Dickie-Bird. If you do, ole Charlie will come and keep you with the other children he done stole until you die. And when you do, you'll go to hell and your body will burn forever. Because you peached. It don't matter if anybody believes you or not, peaching is peaching.'

"For a long time I believed the old bastard. I didn't even tell my White Gramma, the one with the shining, because I was afraid she'd think it was my fault. If I'd been older I would've known better, but I was just a kid." He paused. "There was something else, too. Do you know what it was, Danny?"

Danny looked into Dick's face for a long time, probing the thoughts and images behind his forehead. At last he said, "You wanted your father to get the money. But he never did."

"No. Black Grampa left it all to a home for Negro orphans in Alabama, and I bet I know why, too. But that's neither here nor there."

“And your good grammar never knew? She never guessed?”

“She knew there was *something*, but I kep it blocked away, and she left me alone about it. Just told me that when I was ready to talk, she was ready to listen. Danny, when Andy Hallorann died—it was a stroke—I was the happiest boy on earth. My ma said I didn’t have to go to the funeral, that I could stay with Gramma Rose—my White Gramma—if I wanted to, but I wanted to go. You bet I did. I wanted to make sure old Black Grampa was really dead.

“It rained that day. Everybody stood around the grave under black umbrellas. I watched his coffin—the biggest and best one in his shop, I have no doubt—go into the ground, and I thought about all the times he’d twisted my balls and all the cigarette butts in my cake and the one he put out on my foot and how he ruled the dinner table like the crazy old king in that Shakespeare play. But most of all I thought about Charlie Manx—who Grampa had no doubt made up out of whole cloth—and how Black Grampa could never call Charlie Manx on the long-distance to come in the night and take me away in his fancy car to live with the other stolen boys and girls.

“I peeped over the edge of the grave—‘Let the boy see,’ my pa said when my ma tried to pull me back—and I scoped the coffin down in that wet hole and I thought, ‘Down there you’re six feet closer to hell, Black Grampa, and pretty soon you’ll be all the way, and I hope the devil gives you a thousand with a hand that’s on fire.’”

Dick reached into his pants pocket and brought out a pack of Marlboros with a book of matches tucked under the cellophane. He put a cigarette in

his mouth and then had to chase it with the match because his hand was trembling and his lips were trembling, too. Danny was astounded to see tears standing in Dick's eyes.

Now knowing where this story was headed, Danny asked: "When did he come back?"

Dick dragged deep on his cigarette and exhaled smoke through a smile. "You didn't need to peek inside my head to get that, did you?"

"Nope."

"Six months later. I came home from school one day and he was laying naked on my bed with his half-rotted prick all rared up. He said, 'You come on and sit on this, Dickie-Bird. You give me a thousand and I'll give you *two* thousand.' I screamed but there was no one there to hear it. My ma and pa, they was both working, my ma in a restaurant and my dad at a printing press. I ran out and slammed the door. And I heard Black Grampa get up . . . *thump* . . . and cross the room . . . *thump-thump-thump* . . . and what I heard next . . ."

"Fingernails," Danny said in a voice that was hardly there. "Scratching on the door."

"That's right. I didn't go in again until that night, when my ma and pa were both home. He was gone, but there were . . . leavings."

"Sure. Like in our bathroom. Because he was going bad."

"That's right. I changed the bed myself, which I could do because my ma showed me how two years before. She said I was too old to need a housekeeper anymore, that housekeepers were for little white boys and girls like the ones she took care of before she got her hostessing job at Berkin's Steak House. About a week later, I see ole Black Grampa in the

park, a-settin in a swing. He had his suit on, but it was all covered with gray stuff—the mold that was growing on it down in his coffin, I think.”

“Yeah,” Danny said. He spoke in a glassy whisper. It was all he could manage.

“His fly was open, though, with his works stickin out. I’m sorry to tell you all this, Danny, you’re too young to hear about such things, but you need to know.”

“Did you go to the White Gramma then?”

“Had to. Because I knew what you know: he’d just keep comin back. Not like . . . Danny, have you ever seen dead people? *Regular* dead people, I mean.” He laughed because that sounded funny. It did to Danny, too. “Ghosts.”

“A few times. Once there were three of them standing around a railroad crossing. Two boys and a girl. Teenagers. I think . . . maybe they got killed there.”

Dick nodded. “Mostly they stick close to where they crossed over until they finally get used to bein dead and move on. Some of the folks you saw in the Overlook were like that.”

“I know.” The relief in being able to talk about these things—to someone who *knew*—was indescribable. “And this one time there was a woman at a restaurant. The kind, you know, where they have tables outside?”

Dick nodded again.

“I couldn’t see through that one, but no one else saw her, and when a waitress pushed in the chair she was sitting in, the ghost lady disappeared. Do you see them sometimes?”

“Not for years, but you’re stronger in the shining than I was. It goes back some as you get older—”

“Good,” Danny said fervently.

“—but you’ll have plenty left even when you’re grown up, I think, because you started with so much. Regular ghosts aren’t like the woman you saw in Room 217 and again in your bathroom. That’s right, isn’t it?”

“Yes,” Danny said. “Mrs. Massey’s *real*. She leaves pieces of herself. You saw them. So did Mom . . . and she doesn’t shine.”

“Let’s walk back,” Dick said. “It’s time you saw what I brought you.”

8

The return to the parking lot was even slower, because Dick was winded. “Cigarettes,” he said. “Don’t ever start, Danny.”

“Mom smokes. She doesn’t think I know, but I do. Dick, what did your White Gramma do? She must have done something, because your Black Grampa never got you.”

“She gave me a present, same like I’m gonna give you. That’s what a teacher does when the pupil is ready. Learning itself is a present, you know. The best one anybody can give or get.

“She wouldn’t call Grampa Andy by his name, she just called him”—Dick grinned—“the *preevert*. I said what you said, that he wasn’t a ghost, he was real. And she said yes, that was true, because I was *making* him real. With the shining. She said that some spirits—angry spirits, mostly—won’t go on from this world, because they know what’s waiting for them is even worse. Most eventually starve away to nothing, but some of them find food. ‘That’s what the shining is to

them, Dick,' she told me. 'Food. You're feeding that preevert. You don't mean to, but you are. He's like a mosquito who'll keep circling and then landing for more blood. Can't do nothing about that. What you *can* do is turn what he came for against him.'

They were back at the Cadillac. Dick unlocked the doors, then slid behind the steering wheel with a sigh of relief. "Once upon a time I could've walked ten miles and run another five. Nowadays, a little walk down the beach and my back feels like a hoss kicked it. Go on, Danny. Open your present."

Danny stripped off the silver paper and discovered a box made of green-painted metal. On the front, below the latch, was a little keypad.

"Hey, neat!"

"Yeah? You like it? Good. I got it at the Western Auto. Pure American steel. The one White Gramma Rose gave me had a padlock, with a little key I wore around my neck, but that was long ago. This is the nineteen eighties, the modern age. See the number pad? What you do is put in five numbers you're sure you won't forget, then push the little button that says SET. Then, anytime you want to open the box, you punch your code."

Danny was delighted. "Thanks, Dick! I'll keep my special things in it!" These would include his best baseball cards, his Cub Scouts Compass Badge, his lucky green rock, and a picture of him and his father, taken on the front lawn of the apartment building where they'd lived in Boulder, before the Overlook. Before things turned bad.

"That's fine, Danny, I want you to do that, but I want you to do something else."

"What?"

"I want you to know this box, inside and out."

Don't just look at it; touch it. Feel it all over. Then stick your nose inside and see if there's a smell. It needs to be your closest friend, at least for awhile."

"Why?"

"Because you're going to put another one just like it in your mind. One that's even more special. And the next time that Massey bitch comes around, you'll be ready for her. I'll tell you how, just like ole White Gramma told me."

Danny didn't talk much on the ride back to the apartment. He had a lot to think about. He held his present—a lockbox made of strong metal—on his lap.

9

Mrs. Massey returned a week later. She was in the bathroom again, this time in the tub. Danny wasn't surprised. A tub was where she had died, after all. This time he didn't run. This time he went inside and closed the door. She beckoned him forward, smiling. Danny came, also smiling. In the other room, he could hear the television. His mother was watching *Three's Company*.

"Hello, Mrs. Massey," Danny said. "I brought you something."

At the last moment she understood and began to scream.

10

Moments later, his mom was knocking at the bathroom door. "Danny? Are you all right?"

"Fine, Mom." The tub was empty. There was some goo in it, but Danny thought he could clean that up. A little water would send it right down the drain. "Do you have to go? I'll be out pretty soon."

"No. I just . . . I thought I heard you call."

Danny grabbed his toothbrush and opened the door. "I'm a hundred percent cool. See?" He gave her a big smile. It wasn't hard, now that Mrs. Massey was gone.

The troubled look left her face. "Good. Make sure you brush the back ones. That's where the food goes to hide."

"I will, Mom."

From inside his head, far inside, where the twin of his special lockbox was stored on a special shelf, Danny could hear muffled screaming. He didn't mind. He thought it would stop soon enough, and he was right.

11

Two years later, on the day before the Thanksgiving break, halfway up a deserted stairwell in Alafia Elementary, Horace Derwent appeared to Danny Torrance. There was confetti on the shoulders of his suit. A little black mask hung from one decaying hand. He reeked of the grave. "Great party, isn't it?" he asked.

Danny turned and walked away, very quickly.

When school was over, he called Dick long-distance at the restaurant where Dick worked in Key West. "Another one of the Overlook People found me. How many boxes can I have, Dick? In my head, I mean."

Dick chuckled. "As many as you need, honey. That's the beauty of the shining. You think my Black Grampa's the only one *I* ever had to lock away?"

"Do they die in there?"

This time there was no chuckle. This time there was a coldness in Dick's voice the boy had never heard before. "Do you care?"

Danny didn't.

When the onetime owner of the Overlook showed up again shortly after New Year's—this time in Danny's bedroom closet—Danny was ready. He went into the closet and closed the door. Shortly afterward, a second mental lockbox went up on the high mental shelf beside the one that held Mrs. Massey. There was more pounding, and some inventive cursing that Danny saved for his own later use. Pretty soon it stopped. There was silence from the Derwent lockbox as well as the Massey lockbox. Whether or not they were alive (in their undead fashion) no longer mattered.

What mattered was they were never getting out. He was safe.

That was what he thought then. Of course, he also thought he would never take a drink, not after seeing what it had done to his father.

Sometimes we just get it wrong.

RATTLESNAKE

1

Her name was Andrea Steiner, and she liked movies but she didn't like men. This wasn't surprising, since her father had raped her for the first time when she was eight. He had gone on raping her for that same number of years. Then she had put a stop to it, first popping his balls, one after the other, with one of her mother's knitting needles, and then putting that same needle, red and dripping, in her rapist-sire's left eyesocket. The balls had been easy, because he was sleeping, but the pain had been enough to wake him in spite of her special talent. She was a big girl, though, and he was drunk. She had been able to hold him down with her body just long enough to administer the coup de grâce.

Now she had years eight times four, she was a wanderer on the face of America, and an ex-actor had replaced the peanut farmer in the White House. The new fellow had an actor's unlikely black hair and an actor's charming, untrustworthy smile. Andi had seen one of his movies on TV. In it, the man who would be president played a guy who lost his legs

when a train ran over them. She liked the idea of a man without legs; a man without legs couldn't chase you down and rape you.

Movies, they were the thing. Movies took you away. You could count on popcorn and happy endings. You got a man to go with you, that way it was a date and he paid. This movie was a good one, with fighting and kissing and loud music. It was called *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Her current date had his hand under her skirt, high up on her bare thigh, but that was all right; a hand wasn't a prick. She had met him in a bar. She met most of the men she went on dates with in bars. He bought her a drink, but a free drink wasn't a date; it was just a pickup.

What's this about? he'd asked her, running the tip of his finger over her upper left arm. She was wearing a sleeveless blouse, so the tattoo showed. She liked the tattoo to show when she was out looking for a date. She wanted men to see it. They thought it was kinky. She had gotten it in San Diego the year after she killed her father.

It's a snake, she said. A rattler. Don't you see the fangs?

Of course he did. They were *big* fangs, out of all proportion to the head. A drop of poison hung from one.

He was a businessman type in an expensive suit, with lots of combed-back presidential hair and the afternoon off from whatever paper-pushing crap he did for work. His hair was mostly white instead of black and he looked about sixty. Close to twice her age. But that didn't matter to men. He wouldn't have cared if she was sixteen instead of thirty-two. Or eight. She remembered something her father had said once: *If they're old enough to pee, they're old enough for me.*

Of course I see them, the man who was now sitting beside her had said, but what does it mean?

Maybe you'll find out, Andi replied. She touched her upper lip with her tongue. I have another tattoo. Somewhere else.

Can I see it?

Maybe. Do you like movies?

He had frowned. What do you mean?

You want to date me, don't you?

He knew what that meant—or what it was supposed to mean. There were other girls in this place, and when they spoke of dates, they meant one thing. But it was not what Andi meant.

Sure. You're cute.

Then take me on a date. A real date. Raiders of the Lost Ark is playing at the Rialto.

I was thinking more of that little hotel two blocks down, darlin. A room with a wetbar and a balcony, how does that sound?

She had put her lips close to his ear and let her breasts press against his arm. *Maybe later. Take me to the movies first. Pay my way and buy me popcorn. The dark makes me amorous.*

And here they were, with Harrison Ford on the screen, big as a skyscraper and snapping a bullwhip in the desert dust. The old guy with the presidential hair had his hand under her skirt but she had a tub of popcorn placed firmly on her lap, making sure he could get most of the way down the third base line but not quite to home plate. He was trying to go higher, which was annoying because she wanted to see the end of the movie and find out what was in the Lost Ark. So . . .

At 2 p.m. on a weekday, the movie theater was almost deserted, but three people sat two rows back from Andi Steiner and her date. Two men, one quite old and one appearing on the edge of middle age (but appearances could be deceiving), flanked a woman of startling beauty. Her cheekbones were high, her eyes were gray, her complexion creamy. Her masses of black hair were tied back with a broad velvet ribbon. Usually she wore a hat—an old and battered tophat—but she had left it in her motorhome this day. You didn't wear a tall topper in a movie theater. Her name was Rose O'Hara, but the nomadic family she traveled with called her Rose the Hat.

The man edging into middle age was Barry Smith. Although one hundred percent Caucasian, he was known in this same family as Barry the Chink, because of his slightly upturned eyes.

"Now watch this," he said. "It's interesting."

"The *movie's* interesting," the old man—Grampa Flick—grunted. But that was just his usual contrariness. He was also watching the couple two rows down.

"It better be interesting," Rose said, "because the woman's not all that steamy. A little, but—"

"There she goes, there she goes," Barry said as Andi leaned over and put her lips to her date's ear. Barry was grinning, the box of gummy bears in his hand forgotten. "I've watched her do it three times and I still get a kick out of it."

Mr. Businessman's ear was filled with a thatch of wiry white hairs and clotted with wax the color of shit, but Andi didn't let that stop her; she wanted to blow this town and her finances were at a dangerously low ebb. "Aren't you tired?" she whispered in the disgusting ear. "Don't you want to go to sleep?"

The man's head immediately dropped onto his chest and he began to snore. Andi reached under her skirt, plucked up the relaxing hand, and placed it on the armrest. Then she reached into Mr. Businessman's expensive-looking suitcoat and began to rummage. His wallet was in the inside left pocket. That was good. She wouldn't have to make him get up off his fat ass. Once they were asleep, moving them could be tricky.

She opened the wallet, tossed the credit cards on the floor, and looked for a few moments at the pictures—Mr. Businessman with a bunch of other overweight Mr. Businessmen on the golf course; Mr. Businessman with his wife; a much younger Mr. Businessman standing in front of a Christmas tree with his son and two daughters. The daughters were wearing Santa hats and matching dresses. He probably hadn't been raping them, but it was not out of the question. Men would rape when they could get away with it, this she had learned. At her father's knee, so to speak.

There was over two hundred dollars in the bill compartment. She had been hoping for even more—the bar where she had met him catered to a better class of whore than those out by the airport—but it wasn't bad for a Thursday matinee, and there were always men who wanted to take a good-looking girl

to the movies, where a little heavy petting would only be the appetizer. Or so they hoped.

4

“Okay,” Rose murmured, and started to get up. “I’m convinced. Let’s give it a shot.”

But Barry put a hand on her arm, restraining her. “No, wait. Watch. This is the best part.”

5

Andi leaned close to the disgusting ear again and whispered, “Sleep deeper. As deep as you can. The pain you feel will only be a dream.” She opened her purse and took out a pearl-handled knife. It was small, but the blade was razor-sharp. “What will the pain be?”

“Only a dream,” Mr. Businessman muttered into the knot of his tie.

“That’s right, sweetie.” She put an arm around him and quickly slashed double Vs into his right cheek—a cheek so fat it would soon be a jowl. She took a moment to admire her work in the chancy light of the projector’s colored dream-beam. Then the blood sheeted down. He would wake up with his face on fire, the right arm of his expensive suitcoat drenched, and in need of an emergency room.

And how will you explain it to your wife? You’ll think of something, I’m sure. But unless you have plastic surgery, you’ll see my marks every time you look in the mirror. And every time you go looking for a little strange in one of the bars, you’ll remember how you got bitten by

a rattlesnake. One in a blue skirt and a white sleeveless blouse.

She tucked the two fifties and five twenties into her purse, clicked it shut, and was about to get up when a hand fell on her shoulder and a woman murmured in her ear. "Hello, dear. You can see the rest of the movie another time. Right now you're coming with us."

Andi tried to turn, but hands seized her head. The terrible thing about them was that they were *inside*.

After that—until she found herself in Rose's EarthCruiser in a going-to-seed campground on the outskirts of this Midwestern city—all was darkness.

6

When she woke up, Rose gave her a cup of tea and talked to her for a long time. Andi heard everything, but most of her attention was taken up by the woman who had abducted her. She was a presence, and that was putting it mildly. Rose the Hat was six feet tall, with long legs in tapered white slacks and high breasts inside a t-shirt branded with the UNICEF logo and motto: *Whatever It Takes To Save a Child*. Her face was that of a calm queen, serene and untroubled. Her hair, now unbound, tumbled halfway down her back. The scuffed tophat cocked on her head was jarring, but otherwise she was the most beautiful woman Andi Steiner had ever seen.

"Do you understand what I've been telling you? I'm giving you an opportunity here, Andi, and you should not take it lightly. It's been twenty years or more since we've offered anyone what I'm offering you."

“And if I say no? What then? Do you kill me? And take this . . .” What had she called it? “This steam?”

Rose smiled. Her lips were rich and coral pink. Andi, who considered herself asexual, nonetheless wondered what that lipstick would taste like.

“You don’t have enough steam to bother with, dear, and what you *do* have would be far from yummy. It would taste the way the meat from a tough old cow tastes to a rube.”

“To a what?”

“Never mind, just listen. We won’t kill you. What we’ll do if you say no is to wipe out all memory of this little conversation. You will find yourself on the side of the road outside some nothing town—Topeka, maybe, or Fargo—with no money, no identification, and no memory of how you got there. The last thing you’ll remember is going into that movie theater with the man you robbed and mutilated.”

“He deserved to be mutilated!” Andi spat out.

Rose stood on her tiptoes and stretched, her fingers touching the roof of the RV. “That’s your business, honeydoll, I’m not your psychiatrist.” She wasn’t wearing a bra; Andi could see the shifting punctuation marks of her nipples against her shirt. “But here’s something to consider: we’ll take your talent as well as your money and your no doubt bogus identification. The next time you suggest that a man go to sleep in a darkened movie theater, he’ll turn to you and ask what the fuck you’re talking about.”

Andi felt a cold trickle of fear. “You can’t do that.” But she remembered the terribly strong hands that had reached inside her brain and felt quite sure this woman could. She might need a little help from her friends, the ones in the RVs and

motorhomes gathered around this one like piglets at a sow's teats, but oh yes—she could.

Rose ignored this. "How old are you, dear?"

"Twenty-eight." She had been shading her age since hitting the big three-oh.

Rose looked at her, smiling, saying nothing. Andi met those beautiful gray eyes for five seconds, then had to drop her gaze. But what her eyes fell upon when she did were those smooth breasts, unharnessed but with no sign of a sag. And when she looked up again, her eyes only got as far as the woman's lips. Those coral-pink lips.

"You're thirty-two," Rose said. "Oh, it only shows a little—because you've led a hard life. A life on the run. But you're still pretty. Stay with us, live with us, and ten years from now you really will be twenty-eight."

"That's impossible."

Rose smiled. "A hundred years from now, you'll look and feel thirty-five. Until you take steam, that is. Then you'll be twenty-eight again, only you'll feel ten years younger. And you'll take steam often. Live long, stay young, and eat well: those are the things I'm offering. How do they sound?"

"Too good to be true," Andi said. "Like those ads about how you can get life insurance for ten dollars."

She wasn't entirely wrong. Rose hadn't told any lies (at least not yet), but there were things she wasn't saying. Like how steam was sometimes in short supply. Like how not everyone lived through the Turning. Rose judged this one might, and Walnut, the True's jackleg doctor, had cautiously concurred, but nothing was sure.

"And you and your friends call yourself—?"

"They're not my friends, they're my family. We're

the True Knot.” Rose laced her fingers together and held them in front of Andi’s face. “And what’s tied can never be untied. You need to understand that.”

Andi, who already knew that a girl who has been raped can never be unraped, understood perfectly.

“Do I really have any other choice?”

Rose shrugged. “Only bad ones, dear. But it’s better if you want it. It will make the Turning easier.”

“Does it hurt? This Turning?”

Rose smiled and told the first outright lie. “Not at all.”

7

A summer night on the outskirts of a Midwestern city.

Somewhere people were watching Harrison Ford snap his bullwhip; somewhere the Actor President was no doubt smiling his untrustworthy smile; here, in this campground, Andi Steiner was lying on a discount-store lawn recliner, bathed in the headlights of Rose’s EarthCruiser and someone else’s Winnebago. Rose had explained to her that, while the True Knot owned several campgrounds, this wasn’t one of them. But their advance man was able to four-wall places like this, businesses tottering on the edge of insolvency. America was suffering a recession, but for the True, money was not a problem.

“Who is this advance man?” Andi had asked.

“Oh, he’s a very winning fellow,” Rose had said, smiling. “Able to charm the birdies down from the trees. You’ll meet him soon.”

“Is he your special guy?”

Rose had laughed at that and caressed Andi's cheek. The touch of her fingers caused a hot little worm of excitement in Andi's stomach. Crazy, but there it was. “You've got a twinkle, don't you? I think you'll be fine.”

Maybe, but as she lay here, Andi was no longer excited, only scared. News stories slipped through her mind, ones about bodies found in ditches, bodies found in wooded clearings, bodies found at the bottom of dry wells. Women and girls. Almost always women and girls. It wasn't Rose who scared her—not exactly—and there were other women here, but there were also men.

Rose knelt beside her. The glare of the headlights should have turned her face into a harsh and ugly landscape of blacks and whites, but the opposite was true: it only made her more beautiful. Once again she caressed Andi's cheek. “No fear,” she said. “No fear.”

She turned to one of the other women, a pallidly pretty creature Rose called Silent Sarey, and nodded. Sarey nodded back and went into Rose's monster RV. The others, meanwhile, began to form a circle around the lawn recliner. Andi didn't like that. There was something *sacrificial* about it.

“No fear. Soon you'll be one of us, Andi. One *with* us.”

Unless, Rose thought, you cycle out. In which case, we'll just burn your clothes in the incinerator behind the comfort stations and move on tomorrow. Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

But she hoped that wouldn't happen. She liked this one, and a sleeper talent would come in handy.

Sarey returned with a steel canister that looked like a thermos bottle. She handed it to Rose, who removed the red cap. Beneath was a nozzle and a valve. To Andi the canister looked like an unlabeled can of bug spray. She thought about bolting up from the recliner and running for it, then remembered the movie theater. The hands that had reached inside her head, holding her in place.

"Grampa Flick?" Rose asked. "Will you lead us?"

"Happy to." It was the old man from the theater. Tonight he was wearing baggy pink Bermuda shorts, white socks that climbed all the way up his scrawny shins to his knees, and Jesus sandals. To Andi he looked like Grandpa Walton after two years in a concentration camp. He raised his hands, and the rest raised theirs with him. Linked that way and silhouetted in the crisscrossing headlight beams, they looked like a chain of weird paper-dolls.

"We are the True Knot," he said. The voice coming from that sunken chest no longer trembled; it was the deep and resonant voice of a much younger and stronger man.

"*We are the True Knot,*" they responded. "*What is tied may never be untied.*"

"Here is a woman," Grampa Flick said. "Would she join us? Would she tie her life to our life and be one with us?"

"Say yes," Rose said.

"Y-Yes," Andi managed. Her heart was no longer beating; it was thrumming like a wire.

Rose turned the valve on her canister. There was a small, rueful sigh, and a puff of silver mist escaped. Instead of dissipating on the light evening breeze, it hung just above the canister until Rose leaned for-

ward, pursed those fascinating coral lips, and blew gently. The puff of mist—looking a bit like a comic-strip dialogue balloon without any words in it—drifted until it hovered above Andi's upturned face and wide eyes.

"We are the True Knot, and we endure," Grampa Flick proclaimed.

"Sabbatha hanti," the others responded.

The mist began to descend, very slowly.

"We are the chosen ones."

"Lodsam hanti," they responded.

"Breathe deep," Rose said, and kissed Andi softly on the cheek. "I'll see you on the other side."

Maybe.

"We are the fortunate ones."

"Cabanna risone hanti."

Then, all together: "We are the True Knot, and we . . ."

But Andi lost track of it there. The silvery stuff settled over her face and it was cold, cold. When she inhaled, it came to some sort of tenebrous life and began screaming inside her. A child made of mist—whether boy or girl she didn't know—was struggling to get away but someone was cutting. *Rose* was cutting, while the others stood close around her (in a knot), shining down a dozen flashlights, illuminating a slow-motion murder.

Andi tried to bolt up from the recliner, but she had no body to bolt with. Her body was gone. Where it had been was only pain in the shape of a human being. The pain of the child's dying, and of her own.

Embrace it. The thought was like a cool cloth pressed on the burning wound that was her body. *That's the only way through.*

I can't, I've been running from this pain my whole life.

Perhaps so, but you're all out of running room. Embrace it. Swallow it. Take steam or die.

8

The True stood with hands upraised, chanting the old words: *sabbatha hanti, lodsam hanti, cahanna risone hanti*. They watched as Andi Steiner's blouse flattened where her breasts had been, as her skirt puffed shut like a closing mouth. They watched as her face turned to milk-glass. Her eyes remained, though, floating like tiny balloons on gauzy strings of nerve.

But they're going to go, too, Walnut thought. *She's not strong enough. I thought maybe she was, but I was wrong. She may come back a time or two, but then she'll cycle out. Nothing left but her clothes.* He tried to recall his own Turning, and could only remember that the moon had been full and there had been a bonfire instead of headlights. A bonfire, the whicker of horses . . . and the pain. Could you actually remember pain? He didn't think so. You knew there was such a thing, and that you had suffered it, but that wasn't the same.

Andi's face swam back into existence like the face of a ghost above a medium's table. The front of her blouse plumped up in curves; her skirt swelled as her hips and thighs returned to the world. She shrieked in agony.

"We are the True Knot and we endure," they chanted in the crisscrossing beams of the RVs. *"Sabbatha hanti. We are the chosen ones, lodsam hanti. We are the fortunate ones, cahanna risone hanti."* They would

go on until it was over. One way or the other, it wouldn't take long.

Andi began to disappear again. Her flesh became cloudy glass through which the True could see her skeleton and the bone grin of her skull. A few silver fillings gleamed in that grin. Her disembodied eyes rolled wildly in sockets that were no longer there. She was still screaming, but now the sound was thin and echoing, as if it came from far down a distant hall.

9

Rose thought she'd give up, that was what they did when the pain became too much, but this was one tough babe. She came swirling back into existence, screaming all the way. Her newly arrived hands seized Rose's with mad strength and bore down. Rose leaned forward, hardly noticing the pain.

"I know what you want, honeydoll. Come back and you can have it." She lowered her mouth to Andi's, caressing Andi's upper lip with her tongue until the lip turned to mist. But the eyes stayed, fixed on Rose's.

"Sabbatha hanti," they chanted. *"Lodsam hanti. Cahananna risone hanti."*

Andi came back, growing a face around her staring, pain-filled eyes. Her body followed. For a moment Rose could see the bones of her arms, the bones in the fingers clutching hers, then they were once more dressed in flesh.

Rose kissed her again. Even in her pain Andi responded, and Rose breathed her own essence down the younger woman's throat.

I want this one. And what I want, I get.

Andi began to fade again, but Rose could feel her fighting it. Getting on top of it. Feeding herself with the screaming life-force she had breathed down her throat and into her lungs instead of trying to push it away.

Taking steam for the first time.

10

The newest member of the True Knot spent that night in Rose O'Hara's bed, and for the first time in her life found something in sex besides horror and pain. Her throat was raw from the screaming she'd done on the lawn recliner, but she screamed again as this new sensation—pleasure to match the pain of her Turning—took her body and once more seemed to render it transparent.

"Scream all you want," Rose said, looking up from between her thighs. "They've heard plenty of them. The good as well as the bad."

"Is sex like this for everybody?" If so, what she had missed! What her bastard father had stolen from her! And people thought *she* was a thief?

"It's like this for us, when we've taken steam," Rose said. "That's all you need to know."

She lowered her head and it began again.

11

Not long before midnight, Token Charlie and Baba the Russian were sitting on the lower step of Token

Charlie's Bounder, sharing a joint and looking up at the moon. From Rose's EarthCruiser came more screams.

Charlie and Baba turned to each other and grinned.

"Someone is likin it," Baba remarked.

"What's not to like?" Charlie said.

12

Andi woke in the day's first early light with her head pillowed on Rose's breasts. She felt entirely different; she felt no different at all. She lifted her head and saw Rose looking at her with those remarkable gray eyes.

"You saved me," Andi said. "You brought me back."

"I couldn't have done it alone. You wanted to come." *In more ways than one, honeydoll.*

"What we did after . . . we can't do it again, can we?"

Rose shook her head, smiling. "No. And that's okay. Some experiences absolutely cannot be topped. Besides, my man will be back today."

"What's his name?"

"He answers to Henry Rothman, but that's just for the rubes. His True name is Crow Daddy."

"Do you love him? You do, don't you?"

Rose smiled, drew Andi closer, kissed her. But she did not answer.

"Rose?"

"Yes?"

"Am I . . . am I still human?"

To this Rose gave the same answer Dick Hallorann had once given young Danny Torrance, and in the same cold tone of voice: “Do you care?”

Andi decided she didn’t. She decided she was home.

MAMA

1

There was a muddle of bad dreams—someone swinging a hammer and chasing him down endless halls, an elevator that ran by itself, hedges in the shapes of animals that came to life and closed in on him—and finally one clear thought: *I wish I were dead.*

Dan Torrance opened his eyes. Sunlight shot through them and into his aching head, threatening to set his brains on fire. The hangover to end all hangovers. His face was throbbing. His nostrils were clogged shut except for a tiny pinhole in the left one that allowed in a thread of air. Left one? No, it was the right. He could breathe through his mouth, but it was foul with the taste of whiskey and cigarettes. His stomach was a ball of lead, full of all the wrong things. *Morning-after junkbelly*, some old drinking buddy or other had called that woeful sensation.

Loud snoring from beside him. Dan turned his head that way, although his neck screamed in protest and another bolt of agony shot him through the temple. He opened his eyes again, but just a little; no more of that blazing sun, please. Not yet. He was lying on a bare mattress on a bare floor. A bare

woman lay sprawled on her back beside him. Dan looked down and saw that he was also alfresco.

Her name is . . . Dolores? No. Debbie? That's closer, but not quite—

Deenie. Her name was Deenie. He had met her in a bar called the Milky Way, and it had all been quite hilarious until . . .

He couldn't remember, and one look at his hands—both swollen, the knuckles of the right scuffed and scabbed—made him decide he didn't want to remember. And what did it matter? The basic scenario never changed. He got drunk, someone said the wrong thing, chaos and bar-carnage followed. There was a dangerous dog inside his head. Sober, he could keep it on a leash. When he drank, the leash disappeared. *Sooner or later I'll kill someone.* For all he knew, he had last night.

Hey Deenie, squeeze my weenie.

Had he actually said that? He was terribly afraid he had. Some of it was coming back to him now, and even some was too much. Playing eightball. Trying to put a little extra spin on the cue and scratching it right off the table, the little chalk-smudged sonofabitch bouncing and rolling all the way to the jukebox that was playing—what else?—country music. He seemed to remember Joe Diffie. Why had he scratched so outrageously? Because he was drunk, and because Deenie was standing behind him, Deenie had been squeezing his weenie just below the line of the table and he was showing off for her. All in good fun. But then the guy in the Case cap and the fancy silk cowboy shirt had laughed, and that was his mistake.

Chaos and bar-carnage.

Dan touched his mouth and felt plump sausages

where normal lips had been when he left that check-cashing joint yesterday afternoon with a little over five hundred bucks in his front pants pocket.

At least all my teeth seem to be—

His stomach gave a liquid lurch. He burped up a mouthful of sour gunk that tasted of whiskey and swallowed it back. It burned going down. He rolled off the mattress onto his knees, staggered to his feet, then swayed as the room began to do a gentle tango. He was hungover, his head was bursting, his gut was filled with whatever cheap food he'd put in it last night to tamp down the booze . . . but he was also still drunk.

He hooked his underpants off the floor and left the bedroom with them clutched in his hand, not quite limping but definitely favoring his left leg. He had a vague memory—one he hoped would never sharpen—of the Case cowboy throwing a chair. That was when he and Deenie-squeeze-my-weenie had left, not quite running but laughing like loons.

Another lurch from his unhappy gut. This time it was accompanied by a clench that felt like a hand in a slick rubber glove. That released all the puke triggers: the vinegar smell of hardcooked eggs in a big glass jar, the taste of barbecue-flavored pork rinds, the sight of french fries drowning in a ketchup nose-bleed. All the crap he'd crammed into his mouth last night between shots. He was going to spew, but the images just kept on coming, revolving on some nightmare gameshow prize wheel.

What have we got for our next contestant, Johnny? Well, Bob, it's a great big platter of GREASY SARDINES!

The bathroom was directly across a short stub of hall. The door was open, the toilet seat up. Dan

lunged, fell on his knees, and spewed a great flood of brownish-yellow stuff on top of a floating turd. He looked away, groped for the flush, found it, pushed it. Water cascaded, but there was no accompanying sound of draining water. He looked back and saw something alarming: the turd, probably his own, rising toward the pee-splashed rim of the toilet bowl on a sea of half-digested bar-snacks. Just before the toilet could overspill, making this morning's banal horrors complete, something cleared its throat in the pipe and the whole mess flushed away. Dan threw up again, then sat on his heels with his back against the bathroom wall and his throbbing head lowered, waiting for the tank to refill so he could flush a second time.

No more. I swear it. No more booze, no more bars, no more fights. Promising himself this for the hundredth time. Or the thousandth.

One thing was certain: he had to get out of this town or he might be in trouble. *Serious* trouble was not out of the question.

Johnny, what have we got for today's grand prize winner? Bob, it's TWO YEARS IN STATE FOR ASSAULT AND BATTERY!

And . . . the studio audience goes wild.

The toilet tank had quieted its noisy refill. He reached for the handle to flush away *The Morning After, Part Two*, then paused, regarding the black hole of his short-term memory. Did he know his name? Yes! Daniel Anthony Torrance. Did he know the name of the chick snoring on the mattress in the other room? Yes! Deenie. He didn't recall her last name, but it was likely she had never told him. Did he know the current president's name?

To Dan's horror, he didn't, not at first. The guy

had a funky Elvis haircut and played the sax—quite badly. But the name . . . ?

Do you even know where you are?

Cleveland? Charleston? It was one or the other.

As he flushed the toilet, the president's name arrived in his head with splendid clarity. And Dan wasn't in either Cleveland *or* Charleston. He was in Wilmington, North Carolina. He worked as an orderly at Grace of Mary Hospital. Or had. It was time to move on. If he got to some other place, some *good* place, he might be able to quit the drinking and start over.

He got up and looked in the mirror. The damage wasn't as bad as he'd feared. Nose swelled but not actually broken—at least he didn't think so. Crusts of dried blood above his puffy upper lip. There was a bruise on his right cheekbone (the Case cowboy must have been a lefty) with the bloody imprint of a ring sitting in the middle of it. Another bruise, a big one, was spreading in the cup of his left shoulder. That, he seemed to remember, had been from a pool cue.

He looked in the medicine cabinet. Amid tubes of makeup and cluttered bottles of over-the-counter medicine, he found three prescription bottles. The first was Diflucan, commonly prescribed for yeast infections. It made him glad he was circumcised. The second was Darvon Comp 65. He opened it, saw half a dozen capsules, and put three in his pocket for later reference. The last scrip was for Fioricet, and the bottle—thankfully—was almost full. He swallowed three with cold water. Bending over the basin made his headache worse than ever, but he thought he would soon get relief. Fioricet, intended for migraine and tension headaches, was a guaranteed hangover killer. Well . . . almost guaranteed.

He started to close the cabinet, then took another look. He moved some of the crap around. No birth control ring. Maybe it was in her purse. He hoped so, because he hadn't been carrying a rubber. If he'd fucked her—and although he couldn't remember for sure, he probably had—he'd ridden in bareback.

He put on his underwear and shuffled back to the bedroom, standing in the doorway for a moment and looking at the woman who had brought him home last night. Arms and legs splayed, everything showing. Last night she had looked like the goddess of the Western world in her thigh-high leather skirt and cork sandals, her cropped top and hoop earrings. This morning he saw the sagging white dough of a growing boozegut, and the second chin starting to appear under the first.

He saw something worse: she wasn't a woman, after all. Probably not jailbait (please God not jailbait), but surely no more than twenty and maybe still in her late teens. On one wall, chillingly childish, was a poster of KISS with Gene Simmons spewing fire. On another was a cute kitten with startled eyes, dangling from a tree branch. HANG IN THERE, BABY, this poster advised.

He needed to get out of here.

Their clothes were tangled together at the foot of the mattress. He separated his t-shirt from her panties, yanked it over his head, then stepped into his jeans. He froze with the zipper halfway up, realizing that his left front pocket was much flatter than it had been when he left the check-cashing joint the previous afternoon.

No. It can't be.

His head, which had begun to feel the teeniest bit better, started to throb again as his heartbeat

picked up speed, and when he shoved his hand into the pocket, it brought up nothing but a ten-dollar bill and two toothpicks, one of which poked under his index fingernail and into the sensitive meat beneath. He hardly noticed.

We didn't drink up five hundred dollars. No way we did. We'd be dead if we drank up that much.

His wallet was still at home in his hip pocket. He pulled it out, hoping against hope, but no joy. He must have transferred the ten he usually kept there to his front pocket at some point. The front pocket made it tougher for barroom dips, which now seemed like quite the joke.

He looked at the snoring, splayed girl-woman on the mattress and started for her, meaning to shake her awake and ask her what she'd done with his fucking money. *Choke* her awake, if that was what it took. But if she'd stolen from him, why had she brought him home? And hadn't there been something else? Some other adventure after they left the Milky Way? Now that his head was clearing, he had a memory—hazy, but probably valid—of them taking a cab to the train station.

I know a guy who hangs out there, honey.

Had she really said that, or was it only his imagination?

She said it, all right. I'm in Wilmington, Bill Clinton's the president, and we went to the train station. Where there was indeed a guy. The kind who likes to do his deals in the men's room, especially when the customer has a slightly rearranged face. When he asked who teed off on me, I told him—

"I told him he should mind his beeswax," Dan muttered.

When the two of them went in, Dan had been

meaning to buy a gram to keep his date happy, no more than that, and only if it wasn't half Manitol. Coke might be Deenie's thing but it wasn't his. Rich man's Anacin, he'd heard it called, and he was far from rich. But then someone had come out of one of the stalls. A business type with a briefcase banging his knee. And when Mr. Businessman went to wash his hands at one of the basins, Dan had seen flies crawling all over his face.

Deathflies. Mr. Businessman was a dead man walking and didn't know it.

So instead of going small, he was pretty sure he'd gone big. Maybe he'd changed his mind at the last moment, though. It was possible; he could remember so little.

I remember the flies, though.

Yes. He remembered those. Booze tamped down the shining, knocked it unconscious, but he wasn't sure the flies were even a part of the shining. They came when they would, drunk or sober.

He thought again: *I need to get out of here.*

He thought again: *I wish I were dead.*

2

Deenie made a soft snorting sound and turned away from the merciless morning light. Except for the mattress on the floor, the room was devoid of furniture; there wasn't even a thrift-shop bureau. The closet stood open, and Dan could see the majority of Deenie's meager wardrobe heaped in two plastic laundry baskets. The few items on hangers looked like barhopping clothes. He could see a red t-shirt with SEXY GIRL printed in spangles on the front,

and a denim skirt with a fashionably frayed hem. There were two pairs of sneakers, two pairs of flats, and one pair of strappy high-heel fuck-me shoes. No cork sandals, though. No sign of his own beat-up Reeboks, for that matter.

Dan couldn't remember them kicking off their shoes when they came in, but if they had, they'd be in the living room, which he *could* remember—vaguely. Her purse might be there, too. He might have given her whatever remained of his cash for safekeeping. It was unlikely but not impossible.

He walked his throbbing head down the short hall to what he assumed was the apartment's only other room. On the far side was a kitchenette, the amenities consisting of a hotplate and a bar refrigerator tucked under the counter. In the living area was a sofa hemorrhaging stuffing and propped up at one end with a couple of bricks. It faced a big TV with a crack running down the middle of the glass. The crack had been mended with a strip of packing tape that now dangled by one corner. A couple of flies were stuck to the tape, one still struggling feebly. Dan eyed it with morbid fascination, reflecting (not for the first time) that the hungover eye had a weird ability to find the ugliest things in any given landscape.

There was a coffee table in front of the sofa. On it was an ashtray filled with butts, a baggie filled with white powder, and a *People* magazine with more blow scattered across it. Beside it, completing the picture, was a dollar bill, still partly rolled up. He didn't know how much they had snorted, but judging by how much still remained, he could kiss his five hundred dollars goodbye.

Fuck. I don't even like coke. And how did I snort it, anyway? I can hardly breathe.

He hadn't. *She* had snorted it. He had rubbed it on his gums. It was all starting to come back to him. He would have preferred it stay away, but too late.

The deathflies in the restroom, crawling in and out of Mr. Businessman's mouth and over the wet surfaces of his eyes. Mr. Dealerman asking what Dan was looking at. Dan telling him it was nothing, it didn't matter, let's see what you've got. It turned out Mr. Dealerman had plenty. They usually did. Next came the ride back to her place in another taxi, Deenie already snorting from the back of her hand, too greedy—or too needy—to wait. The two of them trying to sing “Mr. Roboto.”

He spied her sandals and his Reeboks right inside the door, and here were more golden memories. She hadn't kicked the sandals off, only dropped them from her feet, because by then he'd had his hands planted firmly on her ass and she had her legs wrapped around his waist. Her neck smelled of perfume, her breath of barbecue-flavored pork rinds. They had been gobbling them by the handful before moving on to the pool table.

Dan put on his sneakers, then walked across to the kitchenette, thinking there might be instant coffee in the single cupboard. He didn't find coffee, but he did see her purse, lying on the floor. He thought he could remember her tossing it at the sofa and laughing when it missed. Half the crap had spilled out, including a red imitation leather wallet. He scooped everything back inside and took it over to the kitchenette. Although he knew damned well that his money was now living in the pocket of Mr. Dealerman's designer jeans, part of him insisted that there must be *some* left, if only because he needed some to be left. Ten dollars was enough

for three drinks or two six-packs, but it was going to take more than that today.

He fished out her wallet and opened it. There were some pictures—a couple of Deenie with some guy who looked too much like her not to be a relative, a couple of Deenie holding a baby, one of Deenie in a prom dress next to a bucktoothed kid in a gruesome blue tux. The bill compartment was bulging. This gave him hope until he pulled it open and saw a swatch of food stamps. There was also some currency: two twenties and three tens.

That's my money. What's left of it, anyway.

He knew better. He never would have given some shitfaced pickup his week's pay for safekeeping. It was hers.

Yes, but hadn't the coke been her idea? Wasn't she the reason he was broke as well as hungover this morning?

No. You're hungover because you're a drunk. You're broke because you saw the deathflies.

It might be true, but if she hadn't insisted they go to the train station and score, he never would have seen the deathflies.

She might need that seventy bucks for groceries.

Right. A jar of peanut butter and a jar of strawberry jam. Also a loaf of bread to spread it on. She had food stamps for the rest.

Or rent. She might need it for that.

If she needed rent money, she could peddle the TV. Maybe her dealer would take it, crack and all. Seventy dollars wouldn't go very far on a month's rent, anyway, he reasoned, even for a dump like this one.

That's not yours, doc. It was his mother's voice, the last one he needed to hear when he was savagely hung-over and in desperate need of a drink.