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**Misery, by Stephen King - Annie Wilkes:****Length:** 815 words (2.3 double-spaced pages)**Rating:** Red (FREE)

Misery, by Stephen King - Annie Wilkes

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What does it take to frighten an author of best-selling [horror](#) novels? In Misery, Stephen King embodies a writer's fears about himself as a writer and about the continuation of his creativity in a richly elaborated and horrifi-cally psychotic woman, Annie Wilkes. In the novel, Annie represents a mother figure, a goddess, and a "constant reader". In reality, however, An-nie merely represents a creative part of King's mind.

Annie Wilkes is a proud mother of two children--a historical-romance novelist, Paul Sheldon, and his extremely popular heroine [Misery](#) Chastain. Annie must nurse and educate Paul. Gottschalk elaborates, "Annie views Paul in a madly maternal way. Early in her custody of Paul, she brings him pills for his excruciating pain, but he must suck them off her fingers in a grotesque parody of a nursing child" (125). If she leaves him untended too long, Paul wets his bed, and she must change his sheets and clothes. When he is tired or frustrated, he weeps like a small child. Annie ensures his childlike dependence on her and an "'expression of maternal love" (King 159) with his addiction to pain killing-drugs. Annie's disciplinary actions contribute to her mother figure, also. Gottschalk writes, "When he has been bad, she disciplines him but in motherly fashion often comforts him while doing so" (127). Annie punishes Sheldon's attempts to get free by ampu-tating his foot and thumb with an ax, "exercising editorial authority over his body" (King 264). Annie acts as a virginal and protective mother of the vir-gin Misery, "Annie prevents Paul from letting Misery Chastain die in child-birth. She must live and a novel must be born" (Gottschalk 126). Annie nurtures Misery's return as well, "Nothing will interfere with [Misery's] safety or the birth of the book she is nurturing" (Gottschalk 127). There are no doubts as to the significance of Annie's maternal image in the novel.

Behind Annie's destructiveness lies a goddess figure--a goddess in charge of Paul's, as well as Misery's, life. Paul is at the mercy of Annie. He makes it through the days, but only in a complete fear of being murdered by Annie. Gottschalk illustrates Annie's powerful grip over Paul, "Annie 'raped' Paul back into life, and she will hunt him down if he tries to escape" (127). King compares Annie's powerful