



She had tied splints firmly and cleanly on to both legs.

'Now, please. I need it now.' He felt ashamed to beg, but his need for the drug made him do it.

'No,' she said firmly. 'In an hour.' Then, as she was leaving the room, she turned back towards him and said: 'You owe me your life, Paul. I hope you remember that. I hope you'll keep it in mind.'

Then she left.

Chapter 3 'Call Me Annie'

The hour passed slowly. He could hear her watching television. She reappeared as soon as it was eight o'clock, with two tablets and a glass of water. Paul eagerly lifted himself up on to his elbows when she sat down on his bed.

'At last I got your new book, two days ago,' she told him. '*Misery's Child*. I love it. It's as good as all the others. Better, in fact. It's the best.'

'Thank you,' Paul said. He could feel the sweat on his forehead. 'Please . . . my legs . . . very painful . . .'

'I *knew* she would marry Ian,' she said, smiling dreamily, 'and I believe Ian and Geoffrey will become friends again. Do they? No, no, don't tell me. I want to find out for myself.'

'Please, Miss Wilkes. The pain . . .'

'Call me Annie. All my friends do.'

She gave him the glass, but kept the tablets in her hand. Then she brought them towards his mouth, which he immediately opened . . . and then she took her hand away again.

'I hope you don't mind,' she said, 'but I looked in your bag.'

'No, of course I don't mind. The medicine -'

The sweat on his forehead felt first cold and then hot. Was he going to scream? He thought perhaps he was.

'I see there's a typescript in the bag,' she went on. She idly rolled the tablets from one hand to the other. Paul followed them with his