



A NOVEL

STEPHEN
KING

DOCTOR SLEEP

A NOVEL

SCRIBNER

New York London Toronto Sydney New Delhi

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.

2

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.

3

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.

5

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 grandma 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*-grandma 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 grandma 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.

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.