ON NEON LIT

A new order of crime fiction begins with the publication of this edition of Paul Auster's City of Glass. The series is called Neon Lit: Noir Illustrated, and it features some of the finest works of modern and post-modern crime fiction adapted to comic book formats by some of the most skilled comix script writers and illustrators in the world.

The books and the artists have been chosen for the series by Bay Area author and editor Bob Callahan, author of Who Shot JFK; and Art Spiegelman, the Pulitzer-prize winning author of Maus. Callahan is responsible for the book-to-book editorial work; Spiegelman serves as primary advisor as for overall look, feel and design.

The language and attitudes found in these books derive historically from the great hard-boiled crime novels of the 1920's. The stark sense of black and white shadow derives from the Noir films of a generation later. Both traditions merge, and are renewed, in these intelligent and handsome new picture paperbacks.

Additional books currently under way in this series include Barry Gifford's Perdita Durango, a sequel to the author's Wild at Heart, which was made into a film by David Lynch; and William Lindsey Gresham's classic carnival novel, Nightmare Alley. Callahan and artist Scott Gillis are working on the adaptation of Perdita Durango. Novelist Tom DeHaven and artist Mark Zingarelli are at work on Nightmare Alley.

— Bob Callahan
You see, I am inventing a new language.

WRONG NUMBER

The music of historic change is now heard in some of the most exciting works of contemporary crime fiction. These days, sophisticated writers turn to the comparative simplicities of crime fiction to help spell out the essential unease of our age. In this regard — and as our own leading example — Paul Auster's City of Glass appears to us today as an unfinished, perhaps ultimately unfinishable diagram for some bold, new and experimental symphony. In a book such as City of Glass, we leave forever the honorable worlds of a Dashiell Hammett or a Raymond Chandler, and enter into a far darker, more complex domain.

In Dashiell Hammett's world, decent, tough-minded individuals called private detectives still succeed in restoring the social order, by redressing the crime of sin. In Auster's era — our own era — crime is inherent: it can't be reversed. And the social order will not be restored, for it never existed in the first place. In the new city, both the criminal and the detective have been assigned a fate before the book even begins, a fate in which no easy sense of a lost Eden can possibly be regained. Everything here is shadows. This is a world in which only a neon literature might actually obtain.

The sound of shattered glass, and the sight of jagged edges, is at the very center of word and picture driven crime fiction. The old logics simply no longer calculate. "Commit a crime," Real Clue Comics told us, as early as in 1948, "and the world is made of glass." In Paul Auster's city, we are driven back beyond even Hammett and Chandler to the still earlier genius of a Sir Conan Doyle. Compare, for example the role of
deductive reasoning in both Auster and Doyle. With Doyle, deduction is everything. With Auster, the clarity of pure reason becomes a vast, still musically interesting highway which, if pursued too rigorously, can only lead straight into the loony bin.

Turn, if you will, to one of the crowning moments in this book — the moment when Auster’s sleuth, Daniel Quinn, finally confronts his own Moriarty, Peter Stillman’s unknown and ultimately unknowable Father. The men meet in a park-bench setting on Riverside Drive in the city of New York. As in Doyle, both men are hunch-makers, note-takers, code-breakers, reason’s scientists — but, in this city at least, such artful habits of mind won’t do either man any damn good. The darkness is there to engulf them. Everywhere, the shadows extend.

The question therefore is not whether Paul Auster is a crime writer, anymore than it is whether Daniel Quinn is a real crime detective. Both the author and the character have, in fact, fallen into this world at random, and both will choose the patterns of crime detection to transcend the darkness which both know intuitively stands at the heart of the post-modern condition. Quinn’s journey will fail. For showing us this world in its exactness, and in its limitations, Auster, quite clearly, may claim a win.

In the end, this new neon literature is the literature of individual human obsessiveness. It assumes silently that when no convincing social order can be established, the individual personality itself will start to unhinge. Its ancestors are thus not Hammet, Chandler, or Doyle; but Poe, Dostoyevsky, and perhaps James M. Cain. This new literature makes the point, rather decisively, that, in such a violent and irrational world, it is not surprising when the deeds of serial killers are taken as hideously precise omens of the true nature of our age.

And here, finally, is where we make our own shift into this landscape. In the hands of Paul Karasik, who first found the right rhythms, and David Mazzucchelli, who has brought these rhythms to form, we move past the speed of sound to the actual speed of light in order to capture the switches which occur throughout the fall in, and out, of human intellectual abstraction. A final lamp light lit against the darkness? A shadow, after all, is still a sign.

The tension between the absolute geometries of the minds of Stillman and Quinn, and the absolute randomness of the world which will rise up and swallow them, cannot be rendered any more exactly than it has been in this singular act of picture fiction, the first Neon Lit edition of Paul Auster’s City of Glass.

— Bob Callahan
...THE TELEPHONE RINGING THREE TIMES IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT...

...AND THE VOICE ON THE OTHER END...

...ASKING FOR SOMEONE HE WAS NOT.

...THAT NOTHING WAS REAL...

EXCEPT CHANCE.

MUCH LATER, HE WOULD CONCLUDE...

THE QUESTION IS THE STORY ITSELF...

...AND WHETHER OR NOT IT MEANS SOMETHING IS NOT FOR THE STORY TO TELL.

 WHETHER IT MIGHT HAVE TURNED OUT DIFFERENTLY OR WAS PREDETERMINED IS NOT THE QUESTION.

AS FOR QUINN, HE WAS THIRTY-FIVE AND BOTH HIS WIFE AND SON WERE DEAD.

AS A YOUNG MAN, HE HAD WRITTEN POETRY, PLAYS AND ESSAYS.

WILLIAM WILSON UNDERCOVER

A MAX WORK MYSTERY

QUINN NO LONGER EXISTED FOR ANYONE BUT HIMSELF.

WILLIAM WILSON HAS WRITTEN MANY POPULAR MYSTERIES.

NO ONE KNEW HIS SECRET.

HE TOLD HIS FRIENDS THAT HE HAD INHERITED A TRUST FUND FROM HIS WIFE.

HE NOW WROTE MYSTERY NOVELS UNDER THE NAME OF WILLIAM WILSON.

BUT THE FACT WAS THAT HIS WIFE HAD NEVER HAD ANY MONEY.

AND THE FACT WAS THAT HE NO LONGER HAD ANY FRIENDS.
MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE, WHAT QUINN LIKED TO DO WAS WALK, NEW YORK WAS A LABYRINTH OF ENDLESS STEPS...

...AND NO MATTER HOW FAR HE WALKED, IT ALWAYS LEFT HIM WITH THE FEELING OF BEING LOST.

IT HAD BEEN MORE THAN FIVE YEARS NOW.

HE DID NOT THINK ABOUT IT VERY MUCH ANYMORE.

EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE, HE WOULD SUDDENLY FEEL WHAT IT HAD BEEN LIKE...

EACH TIME HE TOOK A WALK, HE FELT HE WAS LEAVING HIMSELF BEHIND.

BY GIVING HIMSELF UP TO THE STREETS, HE REDUCED HIMSELF TO A SEEING EYE, HE WAS ABLE TO ESCAPE THINKING.

ALL PLACES BECAME EQUAL, AND ON HIS BEST WALKS, HE WAS ABLE TO FEEL THAT HE WAS NOWHERE.

...TO HOLD THE THREE-YEAR-OLD BOY IN HIS ARMS.

IT WAS AN IMPRINT OF THE PAST LEFT IN HIS BODY.

BUT THESE MOMENTS CAME LESS OFTEN NOW.

THIS WAS ALL HE EVER ASKED OF THINGS; TO BE NOWHERE.

NEW YORK WAS THE NOWHERE, HE HAD BUILT AROUND HIMSELF...

...AND HE HAD NO INTENTION OF EVER LEAVING IT AGAIN.

HE HAD CONTINUED TO WRITE BECAUSE IT WAS THE ONLY THING HE FELT HE COULD DO.

RRRIN-

YES?

THERE WAS A LONG PAUSE.
Paul Auster: of the Auster Detective Agency.

You don't understand. This is a matter of utmost urgency.

There is no Paul Auster here.

Hello?

Hello?

Who is this?

Is this Paul Auster? I would like to speak to Paul Auster.

There's no one here by that name.

Clik

Quinn had long ago stopped thinking of himself as real.

If he lived now in the world at all, it was through the imaginary person of Max Work, the private-eye narrator of William Wilson's novels.

What Quinn liked about mysteries was their economy.

There is no sentence, no word that is not significant.

And even if it is not, it has the potential to be so.

Everything becomes essence: the center of the book shifts, is everywhere...

...and no circumference can be drawn until the end.
Over the years, work had become very close to Quinn.

Whereas William Wilson remained an abstract figure, work had increasingly come to life.

In the triad of selves, Wilson served as a kind of ventriloquist.

The following night Quinn was caught off-guard.

Quinn himself was the dummy...

...and work was the voice that gave purpose to the enterprise.

Little by little, work had become a presence in Quinn's life...

...his comrade in solitude.

Ring

Ring

Ring

Ring

Ring
HE WAITED THE NEXT NIGHT.
AND THE NIGHT AFTER THAT AS WELL.
JUST AS HE WAS ABOUT TO ABANDON HIS SCHEME THE PHONE RANG AGAIN.

IT WAS MAY 19TH, HIS DEAD PARENTS' ANNIVERSARY...

THE NIGHT HE HAD BEEN CONCEIVED.

HE ASSUMED IT WAS SOMEONE ELSE.

HELLO?

...RING...

AT 2:30 HE FINALLY GAVE UP AND WENT TO SLEEP.

HELLO? WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?

YES. YES, IT IS NEEDED NOW, WITHOUT DELAY.

TO SPEAK, RIGHT NOW, TO THE ONE WHO CALLS HIMSELF JUSTER.

SPEAKING. THIS IS JUSTER SPEAKING.

WHAT IS NEEDED?

I NEED HELP, THERE IS GREAT DANGER. THEY SAY YOU ARE THE BEST ONE TO DO THESE THINGS.

I MEAN DEATH.

IT DEPENDS ON WHAT THINGS YOU MEAN.

I MEAN DEATH AND MURDER.

SOMEONE IS GOING TO KILL YOU?

I DON'T GO AROUND KILLING PEOPLE.

NO. I MEAN THE REVERSE.

SOMEBODY, WILL YOU KILL ME?

AND YOU WANT ME TO PROTECT YOU?

YOU DON'T KNOW WHO IT IS?

TOMORROW? YES, EARLY. DON'T FORGET MR. JUSTER.

DON'T WORRY. I'LL BE THERE.

CAN'T TELL YOU.

DON'T FORGET.
THE NEXT MORNING, QUINN WOKE UP EARLIER THAN HE HAD IN SEVERAL WEEKS.

I SEEM TO BE GOING OUT.

BUT IF I AM GOING OUT...

WHERE EXACTLY AM I GOING?

MR. AUSTER?

THAT'S RIGHT, PAUL AUSTER.

I'M VIRGINIA STILLMAN, PETER'S WIFE.

HE'S BEEN FRANTIC, I'VE NEVER SEEN HIM LIKE THIS BEFORE. HE JUST CULCO WAI...
NO QUESTIONS, PLEASE.
YES, NO. I AM PETER STILLMAN.

I SAY THIS OF MY OWN FREE WILL. THAT IS NOT MY REAL NAME.

NO. OF COURSE, MY MIND IS NOT ALL IT SHOULD BE. NO.

BUT NOTHING CAN BE DONE ABOUT THAT.

THIS IS CALLED SPEAKING. THE WORDS COME OUT FOR A MOMENT AND DIE.

STRANGE, IS IT NOT? I MYSELF HAVE NO OPINION.

IF I CAN GIVE YOU THE WORDS YOU NEED IT WILL BE A GREAT VICTORY.

THANK YOU.

LONG AGO THERE WAS MOTHER AND FATHER. THEY SAY MOTHER DIED.
I say what they say because I know nothing.

There was this dark. Very dark. As dark as very dark. They say: that was the room.

Not even a window. Poor Peter Stillman. And the boom, boom, boom, boom. The caca piles. The pipes... Excuse me. Anymore.


Excuse me. I am the only one who understands these words.

They say someone found me. I do not remember when the light came in.

There was much food in the hush dark room. We ate with his hands. Excuse me. I mean Peter did.

I am Peter Stillman. That is not my real name. Thank you.

My real name is Mr. Sad. What is your name? Mr. Juster? Perhaps you are the real Mr. Sad, and I am no one.

I wore dark glasses. I was twelve. I lived in a hospital.

Peter was a baby. They had to teach him everything. How to walk. How to eat. How to make caca and pipi in the toilet.

Even when I bit them, they didn't do the boom, boom, boom.

What did Peter do in that room? No one can say. Some say nothing.

As for me, I think that Peter could not think. Did he blink? Did he drink? Did he stink?

Ha ha ha. Excuse me. Sometimes I am so funny.

But it was hard to teach Peter words, his mouth did not work right.

And of course, he was not all there in the head. Ba ba ba, he said, and da da da.

It took more years. Now they say to Peter: go now, there's nothing more we can do. Peter Stillman, you are a human being. Thank you so very much.
Wimble click crumble-chaw below. I make up words like this all the time.

You are wondering, the father who did all those things to little Peter.

They took him to a dark place. They locked him up and left him there. I haven't excuse me. Sometimes I am so funny.

He will come.

The father will come, and he will try to kill me. Thank you. But Peter lives now. Yes.

I am mostly a poet these days.

Thirteen years, they said, a long time. But I know nothing of time.

I am new every day. I am born when I wake up in the morning, I grow old during the day, and I die at night.

For thirteen years the father was away. His name is Peter Stillman too. Strange, is it not? That two people can have the same name?

I am a rich man. I do not have to worry. You bet your bottom dollar.

The father was rich, and little Peter got all his money.

The father was perhaps not really bad. He had a big head. There was too much room in there.

We are both Peter Stillman. But Peter Stillman is not my real name. So perhaps I am not Peter Stillman after all.

Thirteen years, I say. Or they say. I know nothing of time.

Tomorrow is the end of thirteen years. That is bad.

He wanted to know if God had a language. Don't ask me what this means.

The father thought a baby might speak it if the baby saw no people. What baby?

Peter knew some words. The father thought maybe Peter would forget them after a while.
That is why there was so much boom boom boom. Every time Peter would say a word his father would boom him.

Peter learned to keep the words inside him. The words made noise in his head and kept him company.

That is why his mouth does not work right.

I know that all is not right in my head. And it is true, yes, and I say this of my own free will.

That sometimes I just scream and scream.

Peter can talk like people now. But he still has other words inside his head. They are God's language.

That is why Peter lives so close to God. That is why he is a famous poet.

Everything is good for me now.

For no good reason.

Best of all, now, there is the air.

Yes, and little by little I have learned to live inside it.

Wherever I ask, my wife gets a girl for me. They come up here and I fuck them.

Poor Virginia, she does not like to fuck. Perhaps she fucks another.

Maybe if you are nice to her she will let you fuck her. It would make me happy. For your sake: thank you.

For now I am Peter Stillman. That is not my real name.

I cannot say who I will be tomorrow.

Each day is new, and each day I am born again.
I see hope everywhere, even in the dark, and when I die I will perhaps become God.

Life can last just so long, you understand. Everything else is in the room, with darkness, with God's language, with screams. Here I am of the air, a beautiful thing for the light to shine on; perhaps you will remember that. I am Peter Stillman, that is not my real name. Thank you very much.
I could have spared you that, but I thought it best for you to see with your own eyes.

I understand.

It's probably beside the point. The important thing is that I'm willing to help.

You're right. Of course, you're right.

Most of what Peter says is very confusing.

You mustn't always assume he tells the truth.

On the other hand, it would be wrong to think he lies.

That's exactly what I mean.

You mean I should believe some of the things he said and not others.
Your sexual habits or lack of them don't concern me. Mrs. Stillman.

In my line of work I'm used to hearing people's secrets...

...and to keeping my mouth shut.

Stillman's career was prospering. He re-wrote his dissertation into a book.

Peter was two, a perfectly normal child. A nurse was hired to care for him.

He resigned to devote himself full-time to his son.

Then Peter's mother died.

Then he dropped out of sight.

After six months Stillman fired her.

I think he began to believe some of the far-fetched religious ideas he had written about.

It made him crazy, absolutely insane.

Peter stayed on in the same apartment, but hardly ever went out.

He locked Peter in a room, covered the windows...

...and kept him there for nine years.

An entire childhood spent in darkness, with no human contact except an occasional beating.

He studied religion and philosophy at Harvard, by all accounts brilliantly.

He wrote his thesis on 16th and 17th century theological interpretations of the New World.

Then he took a job at Columbia.

Not long after that he married. Peter was born a few years later.

Imagine it, Mr. Auster. Nine years.
"I THINK STILLMAN FINALLY REALIZED HIS WORK HAD BEEN A FAILURE AND DECIDED TO BURN HIS PAPERS."

"BUT THE FIRE GOT OUT OF CONTROL."

"LUCKILY, PETER'S ROOM WAS AT THE OTHER END OF A LONG HALL."

"I WORKED WITH HIM EVERY DAY. I WAS HIS SPEECH THERAPIST."

"I DON'T MEAN TO PITY BUT HOW EXACTLY DID THAT LEAD TO MARRIAGE?"

"TO PUT IT SIMPLY, IT WAS THE BEST WAY TO GET PETER OUT OF THE HOSPITAL."

"AND I'LL BE DAMNED IF I'LL LET ANYONE HURT HIM AGAIN."

"THERE WAS A FIRE."

"WASN'T THAT AN ENORMOUS SELF-SACRIFICE?"

"NOT REALLY."

"I WAS MARRIED ONCE BEFORE—DISASTROUSLY."

"AT LEAST WITH PETER THERE'S A PURPOSE TO MY LIFE."

"AND THEN?"

"QUIET PLEASE!"

"PETER WENT TO A HOSPITAL WHERE HE STAYED UNTIL TWO YEARS AGO."

"STILLMAN IS BEING RELEASED TOMORROW. HE'LL BE ARRIVING AT GRAND CENTRAL."

"AND YOU FEEL HE MIGHT COME AFTER PETER?"

"TWO YEARS AGO HE SENT PETER AN INSANE LETTER."

"HE CALLED HIM A DEVIL BOY, AND SAID THERE WOULD BE A DAY OF RECKONING."
DO YOU STILL HAVE THE LETTER?

NO, I GAVE IT TO THE POLICE.

NOW THEY FEEL STILLMAN IS READY TO BE DISCHARGED.

I WANT YOU TO WATCH HIM CAREFULLY, FIND OUT WHAT HE'S UP TO.

KEEP HIM AWAY FROM PETER.

I CAN'T PREVENT STILLMAN FROM COMING HERE, BUT I CAN WARN YOU AND BE HERE IF HE COMES.

WHICH TRAIN WILL HE BE ON?

AS LONG AS THERE'S SOME PROTECTION.

THE 6:41 FROM Poughkeepsie.

WHO REFERRED YOU TO ME?

AN ADVANCE WOULD ENSURE US A PRIVILEGED INVESTIGATOR-CLIENT RELATIONSHIP.

THEN EVERYTHING BETWEEN US WOULD BE IN STRICTEST CONFIDENCE.

THAT WAS TO PROVE PETER WASN'T TELLING THE TRUTH.

I JUST WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW WHAT I'M CAPABLE OF.

THANK YOU, MR. ADJUSTER. I REALLY DO THINK YOU'RE THE ANSWER.

MRS. SAAVEDRA'S HUSBAND, HE USED TO BE A POLICEMAN.
Quinn had heard of cases like Peter Stillman before.

He had once written a review of a book about the wild boy of Aveyron.

Especially those who had suffered, been mistreated, died before they could grow up.

If Stillman was coming back to avenge himself on the boy whose life he had destroyed.

Throughout the ages there were tales of children growing up in isolation.

Quinn wanted to be there to stop him.

It had been years since Quinn had allowed himself to think of these stories.

The subject of children was too painful to him.

At least he could prevent another boy from dying.

He thought of the little coffin that held his son’s body being lowered into the ground.

It did not help that his son’s name had also been Peter.
Quinn wondered if Peter saw the same things he did...

...or whether the world was a different place for him.

And if a tree was not a tree, he wondered what it really was.

Did you see the game tonight, man?

I missed it. Anything good to report?

Then a little grounder goes right through Kingman's legs, two men score.

Bye bye New York.

Dave Kingman is a third.

What do you think?

You and I could go over to Shea tomorrow and get hired as the two top starters.

Maybe I make you manager. You could tell 'em where to get off.

You bet your bottom dollar.

Look, what do the Mets really have? Mookie's good but he's raw.
QUINN USED A TYPE-WRITER ONLY FOR FINAL DRAFTS.

HE WAS ALWAYS ON THE LOOKOUT FOR GOOD NOTEBOOKS.

WITH THE STILLMAN CASE, HE FELT A NEW NOTEBOOK WAS IN ORDER.

IN THAT WAY, PERHAPS, THINGS MIGHT NOT GET OUT OF CONTROL.

THIS NOTEBOOK WAS SPECIAL — AS IF ITS UNIQUE DESTINY WAS TO HOLD THE WORDS THAT CAME FROM HIS PEN.

HE HAD NEVER DONE THIS BEFORE, BUT IT SOMEHOW SEEMED APPROPRIATE TO BE NAKED AT THIS MOMENT.

IT WAS THE FIRST TIME IN MORE THAN FIVE YEARS THAT HE HAD PUT HIS OWN NAME IN ONE OF HIS NOTEBOOKS.
Quinn spent the next morning at the Columbia Library with Stillman's book.

It began with a new examination of the Fall, relying heavily on Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

Stillman dwelled on the paradox of the word "cleft," which means both "to join together..."

...and "to break apart!"

Adam's task in the garden had been to invent language.

In that state of innocence, his words had revealed the essences of things.

In *Paradise Lost*, each key word has two meanings—one before the Fall, free of moral connotations, and one after, informed by a knowledge of evil.

"Sinister"

"Serpentine"

"Delicious"

Stillman claimed it was only after the Fall that human life as we know it came into being.

For, if there was no evil in the Garden, neither was there any good.

As Milton wrote: "It was out of the rind of one apple tasted that good and evil leapt forth into the world, like two twins cleaving together."

After the Fall, this was no longer true.

Language had been severed from God.

The story, therefore, records not only the fall of man, but the fall of language.

Names became detached from things.
THE TOWER OF BABEL EPISODE IS AN EXPANDED VERSION OF WHAT HAPPENED IN THE GARDEN.

THE TOWER WAS BUILT 340 YEARS AFTER THE FLOOD BY A UNITED MANKIND, OF ONE LANGUAGE, OF ONE SPEECH: "LEST WE BE SCATTERED ABROAD UPON THE FACE OF THE WHOLE EARTH."
Suddenly, Stillman began discussing the life of Henry Darke, who was born in London in 1649...

...and served as secretary to the blind poet, John Milton.

Hmm... I thought Milton dictated to one of his daughters.

Dark and Milton often discussed matters of biblical exegesis.

The New Babel presented the case for building a new paradise in America.

Paradise was not a place—it was immanent within man himself.

Like his mentor, Milton, Darke placed inordinate importance on the role of language.

Man could bring forth this paradise by building it with his own two hands.

Upon Milton's death in 1675, Darke came to America, where he headed a Puritan congregation.

In 1690 he published a pamphlet: The New Babel.

It was a visionary account of the new continent.

Stillman claimed to have the only existing copy.

Light

To undo the fall of man, the fall of language must be undone.

If man could learn to speak the original language of innocence...

...he'd recover the state of innocence within.
TURNING TO BABEL, DARK THEN ANNOUNCES HIS PROPHETY.

IN RESPONSE TO GOD'S COMMAND TO "BE FERTILE... AND FILL THE EARTH", MAN WOULD INEVITABLY MOVE WEST.

THE EARLY ENGLISH SETTLERS OF AMERICA FULLFILLED THIS COMMANDMENT.

IN THE YEAR 1960, WHAT HAD FALLEN WOULD BE RAISED UP; WHAT HAD BEEN BROKEN, MADE WHOLE.

IN THE NEW TOWER, THERE WOULD BE A ROOM FOR EACH PERSON.

ONCE HE ENTERED THAT ROOM, HE WOULD FORGET EVERYTHING HE KNEW.

ONCE THAT CONTINENT WAS FILLED, THE IMPEDIMENT TO BUILDING A NEW BABEL WOULD BE REMOVED.

THEN IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR THE WHOLE EARTH TO BE OF ONE LANGUAGE.

COULD PARADISE BE FAR BEHIND?

AFTER FORTY DAYS AND NIGHTS, HE WOULD EMERGE SPEAKING GOD'S LANGUAGE...

...PREPARED TO INHABIT EVERLASTING PARADISE.

1960.

AS BABEL HAD BEEN BUILT 340 YEARS AFTER THE FLOOD, 340 YEARS AFTER THE MAYFLOWER THE COMMANDMENT WOULD BE CARRIED OUT.

NORTH AMERICA

POPULATION DENSITY

Persons per km²

Persons per m²

200

512

100

256

50
STILLMAN'S TRAIN WAS NOT DUE UNTIL 6:41, BUT QUINN WANTED TIME TO STUDY THE PLACE.

I AM PAUL AUSTER.

HE WAS NOT REALLY LOST, JUST PRETENDING.

AND THE PURPOSE TO HIS BEING PAUL AUSTER ABSOLVED HIM OF HAVING TO DEFEND HIS LIFE.

QUINN FELT HE HAD BEEN TAKEN OUT OF HIMSELF, UNBURDENED OF HIS OWN CONSCIOUSNESS.

HE WAS REMINDED OF VISITING NANTUCKET WITH HIS WIFE DURING HER FIRST MONTH OF PREGNANCY.

HE SAW THAT A DETERMINED MAN COULD EASILY DISAPPEAR.

LOOK AT IT THROUGH AUSTER'S EYES.
YOU GOT A PROBLEM, MISTER?

NO PROBLEM. I WAS JUST WONDERING IF YOU LIKE THE BOOK.

DO YOU FIND IT EXCITING?

I'VE READ BETTER AND I'VE READ WORSE.

SORT OF. THERE'S A PART WHERE THE DETECTIVE GETS LOST THAT'S KIND OF SCARY.

IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT, WHY DO YOU GO ON READING?

IT PASSES THE TIME, I GUESS. ANYWAY, IT'S NO BIG DEAL...

IS HE SMART?

YEAH. BUT HE TALKS TOO MUCH.

YOU'D LIKE MORE ACTION?

I GUESS SO.
CLACK CLACK CLACK CLACK CLACK CLACK

CLACK BE DRA K CLACK CLACK CLACK

SO THIS IS WHAT DETECTIVE WORK IS LIKE.
Stillman did not look at the things around him. They seemed not to interest him.

He seemed to be moving with effort, a bit thrown by the crowd.

What happened then defied explanation.

For a second, Quinn thought it was an illusion. Whatever choice he made would be a submission to chance.

But no, this other Stillman moved, breathed, blinked his eyes. Do something. Do something now, you idiot.

There was nothing Quinn could do now that would not be a mistake. Do something.
They travelled to the West Side on the shuttle, then up to 96th Street on the express.

Quinn waited outside for two hours.

There was no way to know: not this, not anything.

He called Virginia Stillman and then headed home.
For many mornings after, that Quinn posted himself on a bench watching the hotel.

Every now and then he would pick some object off the ground.

As far as Quinn could tell these objects were valueless.

By eight o'clock, Stillman would come out.

The old man would slowly wander through the neighborhood.

Quinn was used to walking briskly. Shuffling was a strain.

The fact that Stillman took this scavenging seriously intrigued Quinn.

But he could do no more than observe.

...Write down what he saw, hover stupidly on the surface of things.

For two weeks this routine did not vary.

Stillman never seemed to be going anywhere in particular, but he kept to a narrowly circumscribed area.

He did not look up.

Other than picking up objects, Stillman seemed to do nothing.

He did not talk to anyone; go into any store, or smile.

He seemed neither happy nor sad.
MOST DAYS, HE SPENT SEVERAL HOURS IN RIVERSIDE PARK, COLLECTING...

...AND RESTING.

IT WAS POSSIBLE THAT STILLMAN WAS MERELY BIDING HIS TIME.

GUION PREFERRED TO THINK THAT STILLMAN HAD A PLAN.

BUT TIME AND AGAIN HIS THOUGHTS WOULD BEGIN TO DRIFT.

WHEN DARKNESS CAME STILLMAN WOULD DINE IN A COFFEE SHOP...

THEN RETURN TO HIS HOTEL.

THIS MEANT HE WAS CONSTANTLY IN DANGER OF OVERTAKING STILLMAN.

NOT ONCE DID HE TRY TO CONTACT HIS SON.

GUION Began TO WONDER IF HE HAD NOT EMBARKED ON A MEANINGLESS PROJECT.

HE DECIDED TO RECORD EVERY DETAIL ABOUT STILLMAN HE POSSIBLY COULD.

THIS KEPT HIM OCCUPIED, AND SLOWED HIM DOWN.
His nightly conversations with Virginia Stillman were brief.

From all I've seen, there's no threat.

You could be right.

But just to reassure me, give it a few more days.

On one condition.

Wouldn't that be risky?

Perhaps he had momentarily confused himself with Max Work.

Or perhaps he was just feeling his loneliness more keenly.

Good, I'll give it a few more days.

Mr. Auster?

I'm terribly grateful, Peter. He's been in such good shape, you're like... like... a hero to him.

To solve the case so brilliantly that he would win Virginia's desire.

That, of course, was a mistake.

Maybe someday she'll allow me to feel grateful to her.

Any mistake is possible. Remember that.

It was the thirteenth day since the case had begun.

He had always imagined that the key to good detective work was a close observation of details.

Yet Quinn felt no closer to Stillman than when he began following him.

Instead of narrowing the distance by watching and living Stillman's life...

...he had seen the old man slip away from him...

...even as he remained before his eyes.
The first day he had kept a full record of the old man's wanderings.

Quinn went on to the next day to see what would happen.

Am I just killing time, or what?

He traced out the next seven days.

Quinn wished he had started taking notes sooner. The first four days were irretrievably lost.

Maybe a "B"... or an "A"?

Definitely a "B".

For no particular reason, Quinn began to trace Stillman's path on a single day—

Each map was different.

He was ransacking the chaos of Stillman's movements for some glimmer of cogency.

There no longer seemed to be a question about what was happening.

-ow-e?
OWEROF BAB
OWER
OF
BABEL

But, why? It was like drawing a picture in the air with your finger... The image vanishes as you are making it...

AND YET...

...the pictures did exist...

...in Quinn's notebook...

...a note to himself?

...a message?

MESSAGE OR NOT, PETER MUST BE PROTECTED.

TWO MORE DAYS... TWO MORE LETTERS TO GO.

"E" AND "L".

EL IS AN ANCIENT HEBREW FOR GOD.
THEIR FIRST MEETING TOOK PLACE IN RIVERSIDE PARK.

...BUT IT WON'T BE POSSIBLE FOR ME TO TALK TO YOU.
I HAVEN'T SAID ANYTHING.

THAT'S TRUE, BUT I'M NOT IN THE HABIT OF TALKING TO STRANGERS.

I STILL HAVEN'T SAID ANYTHING.

AREN'T YOU INTERESTED IN KNOWING WHY?

WELL PUT, I CAN SEE YOU'RE A MAN OF SENSE.

I'M AFRAID NOT.

I THINK WE'RE GOING TO GET ALONG.

IT'S JUST THAT I PREFER NOT TO SPEAK TO ANYONE WHO DOES NOT GIVE ME HIS NAME.

BUT THEN HE'S NO LONGER A STRANGER.

QUINN WAS PREPARED. TECHNICALLY, AUSTER WAS THE NAME HE HAD TO PROTECT.

MY NAME IS QUINN.

EXACTLY.

H' QUINN.
**Very interesting, Quinn. Rhymes with twin, does it not?**

That's right, twin.

And sin, too.

**Hmm, Quinn... Quintessence... of quidity. Quick, for example. And quill, quack, quirk. Hmm. Rhymes with grin, not to speak of kin. Hmm.**

And win, and fin, and din, and gin, and pin, and tin, and bin. Hmm. Even rhymes with djinn. Hmm.

**But I have never been painted. I will soon hold the key to major discoveries.**

The key?

Yes, the key. A thing that opens locked doors.

I can imagine.

**You see, I'm the only one to understand. It's a great burden on me.**

The world is in fragments, sir. My job is to put it back together.

**Yes, or what is left of it.**

**Yes, my brilliant stroke has been to confine myself to a small area.**

**You see, I am inventing a new language.**

**Yes, I've often noticed that. Most people think of words as unmovable stones.**

**Exactly. I could tell you were a man of sense.**

**Stones can change, they can erode.**

**If only you knew how many people have misunderstood me.**
A NEW LANGUAGE?

Yes, when things were whole our words could express them.

But things have broken apart, and our words have not adapted.

"When an umbrella breaks and you get wet, is it still an umbrella?"

And if we can't name a common object, how can we speak of things that truly concern us?

"It has changed, but the word is the same. It is imprecise, false!"

Broken people, broken things, broken thoughts.

Could you give me an example?

I collect shattered objects to examine.

What do you do with these things?

I give them names.

My samples now number in the hundreds.

INVENT NEW WORDS THAT WILL CORRESPOND TO THE THINGS.

How do you know if you've found the right word?

Never make a mistake. It's a function of my genius.

Sorry, but once I've published my book, you and the rest of the world will know...

Then great things will begin to happen.

It will be the most important event in the history of mankind.
THE SECOND MEETING TOOK PLACE THE NEXT MORNING:

BECAUSE THERE IS NO HENRY DARK.

WELL, PERHAPS I'M ANOTHER HENRY DARK.

HMM. YES. YOUR NAME COULD BE HENRY DARK. BUT YOU'RE NOT THE HENRY DARK.

DO I KNOW YOU?

IS HE A FRIEND OF YOURS?

NOT EXACTLY, I MADE HIM UP. HE'S A CHARACTER IN A BOOK I WROTE.

I FIND THAT HARD TO ACCEPT. SO DID EVERYONE ELSE. I FOOL ALL OF THEM.

APPARENTLY HE DIDN'T RECOGNIZE QUINN.

I DON'T THINK SO.

UNFORTUNATELY, THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE, SIR.

MY NAME IS HENRY DARK.

WHY NOT?

AMAZING, WHY DID YOU DO IT?

I HAD CERTAIN IDEAS THAT WERE DANGEROUS AND CONTROVERSIAL.

"SO I PRETENDED THEY HAD COME FROM HIM."

72

73
WHY "HENRY DARK"?

IT'S A GOOD NAME,
FULL OF MYSTERY
AND STILL QUITE
PROPER.

THE INITIALS H.D.
REFER TO HUMPTY
DUMPTY.

YOU KNOW,
THE EGG.

— YOU KNOW,
THE EGG —

THE PUREST
EMBODIMENT OF THE
HUMAN CONDITION.

WHAT IS AN EGG?
IT IS UNBORN, YET
ALIVE.

WHEN I USE A WORD,
HUMPTY DUMPTY
SAYED, IT MEANS JUST
WHAT I CHOOSE IT
TO MEAN...

"THE QUESTION IS,
SAID ALICE, WHETHER
YOU CAN MAKE WORDS
MEAN SO MANY
DIFFERENT THINGS."

"HUMPTY DUMPTY WAS A
MAN WHO SPOKE TRUTHS
THE WORLD WAS NOT
READY FOR.

A MAN?

A SLIP OF
THE TONGUE.
I MEAN EGG...

"THE QUESTION IS,
SAID HUMPTY DUMPTY,
WHICH IS TO BE THE
MASTER—THAT'S ALL"

...BUT ALL MEN ARE
EGGS. WE HAVE NOT YET
ACHIEVED THE FORM
THAT IS OUR DESTINY.

"HUMPTY DUMPTY WAS A
MAN WHO SPOKE TRUTHS
THE WORLD WAS NOT
READY FOR.

A MAN?

A SLIP OF
THE TONGUE.
I MEAN EGG...

"THE QUESTION IS,
SAID HUMPTY DUMPTY,
WHICH IS TO BE THE
MASTER—THAT'S ALL"

...BUT ALL MEN ARE
EGGS. WE HAVE NOT YET
ACHIEVED THE FORM
THAT IS OUR DESTINY.

"HUMPTY DUMPTY WAS A
MAN WHO SPOKE TRUTHS
THE WORLD WAS NOT
READY FOR.

A MAN?

A SLIP OF
THE TONGUE.
I MEAN EGG...

"THE QUESTION IS,
SAID HUMPTY DUMPTY,
WHICH IS TO BE THE
MASTER—THAT'S ALL"

...BUT ALL MEN ARE
EGGS. WE HAVE NOT YET
ACHIEVED THE FORM
THAT IS OUR DESTINY.

"HUMPTY DUMPTY WAS A
MAN WHO SPOKE TRUTHS
THE WORLD WAS NOT
READY FOR.

A MAN?

A SLIP OF
THE TONGUE.
I MEAN EGG...

"THE QUESTION IS,
SAID HUMPTY DUMPTY,
WHICH IS TO BE THE
MASTER—THAT'S ALL"

...BUT ALL MEN ARE
EGGS. WE HAVE NOT YET
ACHIEVED THE FORM
THAT IS OUR DESTINY.

"HUMPTY DUMPTY WAS A
MAN WHO SPOKE TRUTHS
THE WORLD WAS NOT
READY FOR.

A MAN?

A SLIP OF
THE TONGUE.
I MEAN EGG...

"THE QUESTION IS,
SAID HUMPTY DUMPTY,
WHICH IS TO BE THE
MASTER—THAT'S ALL"

...BUT ALL MEN ARE
EGGS. WE HAVE NOT YET
ACHIEVED THE FORM
THAT IS OUR DESTINY.

"HUMPTY DUMPTY WAS A
MAN WHO SPOKE TRUTHS
THE WORLD WAS NOT
READY FOR.

A MAN?

A SLIP OF
THE TONGUE.
I MEAN EGG...

"THE QUESTION IS,
SAID HUMPTY DUMPTY,
WHICH IS TO BE THE
MASTER—THAT'S ALL"

...BUT ALL MEN ARE
EGGS. WE HAVE NOT YET
ACHIEVED THE FORM
THAT IS OUR DESTINY.

"HUMPTY DUMPTY WAS A
MAN WHO SPOKE TRUTHS
THE WORLD WAS NOT
READY FOR.

A MAN?

A SLIP OF
THE TONGUE.
I MEAN EGG...

"THE QUESTION IS,
SAID HUMPTY DUMPTY,
WHICH IS TO BE THE
MASTER—THAT'S ALL"

...BUT ALL MEN ARE
EGGS. WE HAVE NOT YET
ACHIEVED THE FORM
THAT IS OUR DESTINY.

"HUMPTY DUMPTY WAS A
MAN WHO SPOKE TRUTHS
THE WORLD WAS NOT
READY FOR.

A MAN?

A SLIP OF
THE TONGUE.
I MEAN EGG...

"THE QUESTION IS,
SAID HUMPTY DUMPTY,
WHICH IS TO BE THE
MASTER—THAT'S ALL"

...BUT ALL MEN ARE
EGGS. WE HAVE NOT YET
ACHIEVED THE FORM
THAT IS OUR DESTINY.

"HUMPTY DUMPTY WAS A
MAN WHO SPOKE TRUTHS
THE WORLD WAS NOT
READY FOR.

A MAN?

A SLIP OF
THE TONGUE.
I MEAN EGG...

"THE QUESTION IS,
SAID HUMPTY DUMPTY,
WHICH IS TO BE THE
MASTER—THAT'S ALL"

...BUT ALL MEN ARE
EGGS. WE HAVE NOT YET
ACHIEVED THE FORM
THAT IS OUR DESTINY.

"HUMPTY DUMPTY WAS A
MAN WHO SPOKE TRUTHS
THE WORLD WAS NOT
READY FOR.

A MAN?

A SLIP OF
THE TONGUE.
I MEAN EGG...

"THE QUESTION IS,
SAID HUMPTY DUMPTY,
WHICH IS TO BE THE
MASTER—THAT'S ALL"

...BUT ALL MEN ARE
EGGS. WE HAVE NOT YET
ACHIEVED THE FORM
THAT IS OUR DESTINY.

"HUMPTY DUMPTY WAS A
MAN WHO SPOKE TRUTHS
THE WORLD WAS NOT
READY FOR.

A MAN?

A SLIP OF
THE TONGUE.
I MEAN EGG...

"THE QUESTION IS,
SAID HUMPTY DUMPTY,
WHICH IS TO BE THE
MASTER—THAT'S ALL"

...BUT ALL MEN ARE
EGGS. WE HAVE NOT YET
ACHIEVED THE FORM
THAT IS OUR DESTINY.
A CONVINCING ARGUMENT. NO CRACKS IN THAT EGG.

EXACTLY.

BUT THERE IS ANOTHER. FAMOUS EGG AS WELL.

ANOTHER?

COLUMBUS'S EGG.

AH, YES.

GIVEN THE PROBLEM OF HOW TO STAND AN EGG ON ITS END, HE TAPPED THE SHELL'S BOTTOM...

COLUMBUS WAS A GENIUS. HE SOUGHT PARADISE AND DISCOVERED THE NEW WORLD.

...TO CREATE A FLATNESS THAT WOULD SUPPORT THE EGG.

IT IS STILL NOT TOO LATE FOR IT TO BECOME PARADISE.

的确。

TAP TAP

AS YOU CAN SEE, SIR, I LEAVE NO STONE UNTURNED.

HELLO.

WHO ARE YOU?

AGAIN, STILLMAN DID NOT RECOGNIZE HIM.
WAS IT POSSIBLE FOR SOMEONE TO BE SO IMPERVIOUS TO WHAT HE SAW?

THAT'S MY NAME. I'M PETER STILLMAN. I'M THE OTHER PETER STILLMAN.

MY NAME IS PETER STILLMAN.

O.K., YOU MEAN MY SON. YES, THAT'S POSSIBLE.

OF COURSE, HE IS BLOND. BUT PEOPLE CHANGE.

ONE MINUTE WE'RE ONE THING, AND ANOTHER ANOTHER.

EXACTLY.

I'VE OFTEN THOUGHT: "I WONDER HOW PETER IS GETTING ALONG."

I CAN SEE THAT. AND YOU SPEAK SO WELL, TOO.

I'M PROUD OF YOU, PETER. I OWE IT ALL TO YOU.

I'M MUCH BETTER NOW, THANK YOU.

ALL WORDS ARE AVAILABLE TO ME NOW.

AND WHEN WE DIE, THERE IS ALWAYS SOMEONE TO TAKE OUR PLACE.

WE ALL GROW OLD.

WHEN YOU'RE OLD, PERHAPS YOU'LL HAVE A SON TO COMFORT YOU.

I WOULD LIKE THAT.

REMEMBER, PETER, CHILDREN ARE A GREAT BLESSING.

AS FOR ME, I HAVE MY GOOD DAYS AND MY BAD DAYS.

ON BAD DAYS, I THINK OF THE GOOD ONES.

TIME MAKES US GROW OLD, BUT IT ALSO GIVES US DAY AND NIGHT.

MEMORY IS A BLESSING. THE NEXT BEST THING TO DEATH.

IT'S PART OF MY WORK.

WITHOUT A DOUBT.

IT MUST BE STIMULATING.
AND NEVER SAY A THING YOU KNOW IN YOUR HEART IS NOT TRUE.

A LIE CAN NEVER BE UNDONE. I AM A FATHER AND I KNOW.

THE FATHER OF OUR COUNTRY CHOPPED DOWN A CHERRY TREE.

"I CANNOT TELL A LIE," HE SAID TO HIS FATHER.

THEN HE THREW A COIN ACROSS THE RIVER. THESE ARE CRUCIAL EVENTS.

HE CHOPPED DOWN THE TREE AND THEN THREW AWAY THE MONEY. UNDERSTAND?

HE WAS TELLING US THAT MONEY DOESN'T GROW ON TREES.

YES. I SEE WHAT YOU MEAN.

YOU ALWAYS WERE A CLEVER BOY. I'M GLAD YOU UNDERSTAND.

I CAN FOLLOW YOU PERFECTLY.

I'LL BE ABLE TO DIE HAPPYLY NOW, PETER.

I'M GLAD.

BUT YOU MUSTN'T FORGET ANYTHING. I WON'T, FATHER. I PROMISE.

I WON'T FORGET WHAT YOU'VE TOLD ME.
The next morning, Quinn waited more than four hours.

I'd like to leave a message for one of your guests.

And who might that be, bub?

Stillman, Peter Stillman.

What time did he leave?

Forget it. It doesn't matter.

Have to ask Louie; the night man. He comes on at eight.

I don't suppose you have a copy of the book?

Maybe, I'll have to look in my office.

Yeah, I guess today's my day.

Stillman. An old man with white hair.

What did you say your friend's name was again?

Stillman, room 303.

He's not here anymore.

What?

He checked out.

Today was to have been a crucial day.

Hotel Harmony.

Nope, can't recall anyone by that name.

Boss keeps it locked up.
SO MUCH FOR FUNCTIONS!

SO MUCH FOR THE MEANING OF WORDS!

DON'T WORRY, I HAVE A FEW IDEAS, I'LL GET TO WORK ON THEM RIGHT AWAY.

I'LL CALL YOU EVERY TWO HOURS, NO MATTER WHERE I AM.

IT'S ALL MY FAULT, I'M SORRY.

I LOST HIM.

ARE YOU SURE?

HE CHECKED OUT LAST NIGHT.

I'M SCARED, PAUL.

HOW WILL I REACH YOU?

I'M SO SCARED I CAN'T STAND IT.

THAT'S JUST THE TROUBLE, I THOUGHT I WAS.

NO, NO ONE CAN WATCH A PERSON TWENTY-FOUR HOURS A DAY, YOU'D HAVE TO BE INSIDE HIS SKIN.

NO, IT'S NOT TOO LATE NOW, IS IT?

I DON'T KNOW...

HE WENT INTO HIS ROOM, CLOSED THE SHADES, AND REFUSED TO SPEAK.

NO, THERE'S STILL PLENTY OF TIME. I DON'T WANT YOU TO WORRY.

HE HAD MANAGED TO KEEP VIRGINIA CALM, SHE STILL SEemed TO TRUST HIM.

THE FACT WAS, HE HAD LIED TO HER. HE DID NOT HAVE SEVERAL IDEAS.

PETER ANSWERED THE PHONE THIS MORNING; HE WON'T TELL ME WHO IT WAS.

HE DID NOT HAVE EVEN ONE.
Stillman was gone now.

He had become part of the city, a brick in an endless wall of bricks.

There were no clues, no leads, no moves to be made.

Stillman's behavior had been too obscure to reveal his intentions.

If Auster is as good as the Stillmans thought, maybe he can help.

Quinn would make a clean breast of it, Auster would forgive him...

Only one Auster, on Riverside Drive...

...and together they would work to save Peter Stillman.

For a few blocks he walked at the old shuffling pace of Stillman's.

The spell was over, and yet his body did not know it.

He could suggest that Virginia change their telephone number...

...or move, or leave the city altogether.

At worst, they could take on new identities, live under different names.

Different names...

Brrrrt
Yes?

Were you expecting someone else?

I'm sorry to disturb you, but I'm looking for Paul Auster.

My wife, that's why I buzzed without asking who it was.

I'm Paul Auster.

I... it's complicated. I don't know where to begin...

Quinn... I know that name. You aren't a poet, are you?

Do you have a name?

I'm sorry. Of course. Daniel Quinn.

I used to be.

You did a book several years ago called unfinished business.

Yes. That was me.

I liked it. I wondered what had happened to you.

I'm still here. Sort of.

That's what I happen to be.

If that's true, then there's no hope.

A writer?

If that's true, then there's no hope.

I have no idea what you're talking about.

I have a feeling I've made a mistake. I'm looking for Paul Auster, the detective.

The what?

Quinn told him the whole story.

...do you think I'm crazy?

No. I probably would have done the same thing.
I EVEN HAVE PROOF.

IT SEEMS TO BE PERFECTLY NORMAL.

I WANT YOU TO HAVE IT.

I COULDN'T POSSIBLY ACCEPT IT.

IT'S OF NO USE TO ME.

THIS IS MONEY YOU'VE EARNED. I'LL CASH IT FOR YOU.

BUT I DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW MY NAME HAS BEEN MIXED UP IN THIS.

IS IT POSSIBLE THAT YOU KNOW THE STILLMANS?

I'VE NEVER HEARD OF THEM.

BUT IT'S A REAL CASE, WITH REAL PEOPLE.

YES, I'M AWARE OF THAT.

HOW DOES A HAM OMELETTE SOUND?

I REALLY SHOULD BE GOING...

BUT YES, THANK YOU.

YOU CAN'T MAKE AN OMELETTE WITHOUT BREAKING EGGS.

"YOU CAN'T MAKE AN OMELETTE WITHOUT BREAKING EGGS."

"YOU CAN'T MAKE AN OMELETTE WITHOUT TURNING ON YOUR HEAT."...

...BUT TEARS LURKED MYSTERIOUSLY BEHIND HIS EYES.

QUINN TRIED TO REMAIN CALM...

WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON NOW?
Right now, an essay about Don Quixote.

What's the gist?

It has to do with the authorship of the book.

It is there any question?

Ah.

Cervantes claims he is not the author, that the original text was in Arabic.

Right. It's an attack on make-believe, so he must claim it was real.

Precisely. Therefore, the story has to be written by an eyewitness.

Cervantes found the translation and had it rendered back into Spanish.

...so that when he finally read the book himself, he would see the error of his ways.

He only pretended to be.

They had the manuscript translated into Arabic.

The idea was to hold up a mirror to Don Quixote's madness.

But Don Quixote, in my view, was not mad.

Cervantes hired Don Quixote in disguise to decipher the story of Don Quixote.

He engineered the collaboration, and the translation from Arabic back into Spanish.

I like to imagine Cervantes hiring Don Quixote to test the gullibility of man.

To what extent would people tolerate blasphemies, lies, and nonsense if they gave them amusement?

The answer: to any extent.

But why did Quixote go to such lengths?

He wanted to test the gullibility of man.

Yet Cid Hamete Benengeli, the acknowledged author, never makes an appearance.

Sancho Panza is of course the witness—illiterate, but with a gift for language.

He dictated the story to the barber and the priest, Don Quixote's friends.

So, who is he?

For the book is still amusing us today.
THAT'S FINALLY ALL ANYONE WANTS OUT OF A BOOK...

TO BE AMUSED.

HELLO-O

Yo.

WHAT DO YOU HAVE THERE?

Yo yo.

DOES IT WORK?

Dunno.

A GREAT PHILOSOPHER ONCE SAID...

...THAT THE WAY UP AND THE WAY DOWN ARE ONE AND THE SAME.

But you didn't make it go up. It only went down.

YOU HAVE TO KEEP TRYING.

I SEE YOU'VE MET, DANIEL, THIS IS DANIEL.

And Daniel, this is Daniel.

THAT'S RIGHT. I'M YOU, AND YOU'RE ME.

Everybody's Daniel!
AND THIS IS MY WIFE, SIRI.

HELLO.

QUINN FELT AS THOUGH AUSTER WERE TAUNTING HIM WITH THE THINGS HE HAD LOST.

I KNOW IT'S SORT OF LAST MINUTE...

...BUT WHY DON'T YOU STAY AND HAVE DINNER?

AH... THAT'S VERY KIND, BUT I MUST BE GOING.

SO LONG, DANIEL.

Goodbye, myself!

I'LL CALL YOU AS SOON AS THE CHECK CLEARS.

QUINN WAS NOWHERE NOW.

IT'S JUNE SECOND.

THIS IS NEW YORK.

HE KNEW THAT HE KNEW NOTHING.

TOMORROW WILL BE JUNE THIRD.

HE HAD NOTHING, HE KNEW NOTHING.

HE HAD BEEN SENT BACK SO FAR BEFORE THE BEGINNING THAT IT WAS WORSE THAN ANY END HE COULD IMAGINE.

BUT NOTHING IS CERTAIN.

I COULD FORGET ABOUT THE CASE...

GET BACK TO MY ROUTINE...

WRITE ANOTHER BOOK...

...TAKE A TRIP.

THE HOUR HAD PASSED FOR HIS CALL TO VIRGINIA.
YOU'RE GETTING OLD.

YOU'RE TURNING INTO AN OLD FART.

IT WOULDN'T BE FAIR TO DISAPPEAR WITHOUT TELLING HER FIRST.

FOR THE TWENTIETH TIME HE TRIED TO REACH VIRGINIA STILLMAN.

HE WROTE FOR TWO HOURS IN THE NOTEBOOK.

BZZT BZZT

BZZT BZZT

BZZT BZZT

BZZT BZZT

BZZT BZZT

BZZT BZZT

BZZT BZZT

BZZT BZZT

BZZT BZZT
QUINN SPENT THE FOLLOWING DAY ON HIS FEET.

HE DIDN'T CONSIDER WHERE HE WAS GOING.

EVERY TWENTY MINUTES HE WOULD CALL VIRGINIA.

THE BUSY SIGNAL BECAME A COMFORTING METRONOME...

...BEATING STEADILY INSIDE THE RANDOM NOISES OF THE CITY...

...NEGATING SPEECH AND THE POSSIBILITY OF SPEECH.

VIRGINIA AND PETER STILLMAN WERE SHUT OFF FROM HIM NOW.

BUT HE SOOTHED HIS CONSCIENCE BY STILL TRYING.

WHATEVER DARKNESS THEY WERE LEADING HIM INTO, HE HAD NOT ABANDONED THEM YET.
WHAT HE THEN WROTE
HAD NOTHING TO DO
WITH THE STILLMAN
CASE.

He wanted to record
Things he had seen
That day...

...Before he forgot
Them.

Clik

Today, as never before:
The tramps, shopping-
Bag ladies, drifters
And drunks...

...The merely destitute
to the wretchedly
Broken. They are
everywhere.

Some beg with a
semblance of pride:
Soon I will be back
With the rest of you.

Others have given
up hope.

Still others try to
work for money.

Others have real
talent.

The man improvised
tiny variations,
Enclosed in his own
universe.

If it went on and on. The
longer I listened, the
harder I found it
to leave.

To be inside that
music: perhaps that is
A place where one
could finally
disappear.

Far more numerous
Are those with
Nothing to do...

...Hulks of despair;
Clothed in rags,
Faces bruised,
Bleeding.

They shuffle through
The streets as though
In chains.

They seem to be
Everywhere the
Moment you look
For them.
There are others locked inside madness—

_TUNG TUNG TUNG TUNG_

TAK TAK TAK TAK TAK TAK TAK

Perhaps, if he stopped drumming, the city would fall apart.

There are those forever on the move, as if it mattered where they were.

_Baudelaire: Si me semble que je serais toujours bien à voir je me suis pas._

_It seems to me that I will always be happy in the place where I am not._

_Or, more bluntly: Wherever I am not is the place where I am myself._

.CLIK

AND WHAT IF I DON'T WANT TO?

WHAT IF I JUST DON'T WANT?

WITHOUT EVEN KNOWING IT, HE HAD COME TO A DECISION.

THE BUSY SIGNAL HAD NOT BEEN ARBITRARY...

...IT HAD BEEN A SIGN.

FOOSH
A sign telling him that he could not break his connection with the case.

He had tried to contact Virginia Stillman to tell her that he was through...

...but the fates had not allowed it.

A long time passed. Weeks, perhaps months.

His job was to protect Peter.

What did it matter if he couldn't contact Virginia, as long as he did his job?

Facts are scarce, and even the notebook, which has provided much information, is suspect.

We cannot say for certain what happened to Quinn during this period.

From now on, it would be impossible for Stillman to come near Peter without Quinn knowing it.

For it is at this point in the story that he began to lose his grip.
NO ONE LEFT OR ENTERED THE BUILDING WITHOUT HIS SEEING IT.

HE FIGURED THAT VIRGINIA AND PETER WERE HOLED UP.

IN ADAPTING TO THIS NEW LIFE, QUINN'S FIRST PROBLEM WAS FOOD.

HIS SECOND PROBLEM WAS SLEEP.

HE DECIDED TO LIMIT HIMSELF TO THREE OR FOUR HOURS A DAY, DISTRIBUTED SO AS TO MISS AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE.

BECAUSE UTMOST VIGILANCE WAS REQUIRED, HE WAS RELUCTANT TO LEAVE HIS POST.

QUINN CHOSE TO DO HIS SHOPPING BETWEEN 3:30 AND 4:30 A.M.

HE TRIED TO TRAIN HIMSELF TO TAKE SHORT NAPS.

HE WAS HELPPED BY NEARBY CHURCH BELL RINGING EVERY FIFTEEN MINUTES.

HE ATE LITTLE, AND FOUND HE NEEDED LESS AND LESS AS TIME WENT ON.

HE DIDN'T WANT TO STARVE HIMSELF, HE JUST WANTED TO CONCENTRATE ON THE THINGS THAT CONCERNED HIM.

 THAT MEANT THE CASE, AND HOW TO MAKE HIS LAST THREE HUNDRED DOLLARS LAST AS LONG AS IT COULD.

EVENTUALLY HE HAD TROUBLE DISTINGUISHING THE CLOCK FROM HIS OWN PULSE.

THERE WAS NEVER A MOMENT WHEN HE WAS NOT DEAD TIRED.
Every now and then it rained.

Then Quinn would climb into a dumpster for protection.

The smell was overpowering.

How he managed to keep himself hidden is a mystery.

But it seems that no one discovered him.

It was as though he had melted into the walls of the city.

But there was a gap through which he could breathe and still keep an eye on the building.

He emptied his bladder in a far corner of the alley.

As for his bowels, he went inside the dumpster.

Quinn had always thought of himself as a man who liked to be alone.

Now he began to understand the true nature of solitude.

And of one thing he had no doubt: he was falling.

There was plenty of newspaper to wipe himself with.

As for washing and shaving, he learned to do without.

And if he was falling, how could he catch himself as well?

It did not seem to make sense.

Was it possible to be at the top and the bottom at the same time?
HE SPENT MANY HOURS LOOKING UP AT THE SKY.

ABOVE ALL, IT WAS NEVER STILL.

THE DAYS THEREFORE CAME AND WENT.

STILLMAN DID NOT APPEAR.

QUINN SPENT MANY AFTERNOONS STUDYING THE CLOUDS.

THE WIDE RANGE OF GRAYS HAD TO BE INVESTIGATED, MEASURED, DECIPHERED.

THE SPECTRUM OF VARIABLES WAS IMMENSE.

QUINN'S MONEY RAN OUT AT LAST.

IT WAS SOME TIME IN MID-AUGUST.

HE WAS CERTAIN THAT MONEY HAD ARRIVED FOR HIM.

ONE BY ONE, ALL WEATHERS PASSED OVER HIS HEAD.

SEEING A STAR, HE WONDERED IF IT HAD NOT BURNED OUT LONG AGO.

IT WAS JUST A MATTER OF GOING TO HIS POST OFFICE BOX.

HE COULD BE BACK IN A FEW HOURS.

WE WILL NEVER KNOW THE AGONIES HE SUFFERED AT HAVING TO LEAVE HIS SPOT.
Without money enough for the bus he began to walk.

His legs were weak.

He had to stop every now and then to catch his breath.

He shuffled along, barely lifting his feet.

In this way he could conserve his strength...

...for the corners, where he had to balance himself carefully...

...before each step up...

...and down from the curb.

For the first time since he had begun his vigil, Quinn saw himself.

He was neither shocked nor disappointed, merely fascinated.

He had been one thing before, and now he was another.

It was neither better nor worse.

In a matter of months he had become someone else.
AT 96TH STREET, QUINN ENTERED CENTRAL PARK.

I'T WAS THE FIRST UNBROKEN SLEEP HE HAD HAD IN MONTHS.

NO MATTER WHAT HE DID NOW, HE FELT THAT HE WOULD ALWAYS BE TOO LATE.

HE COULD RUN FOR A HUNDRED YEARS, AND STILL HE WOULD ARRIVE JUST AS THE DOORS WERE CLOSING.

HE CRINGED TO THINK OF THE TIME HE HAD LOST.

A TELEPHONE REMINDED HIM OF AUSTER.

Perhaps he could just collect the cash from the check.
Quinn here. One

I've been busy. Working on the case.

I want to come for the money now.

Newspapers? Godammit, say what you mean. I don't have time to read newspapers.

Stillman jumped off the Brooklyn Bridge two and a half months ago.

You're lying.

It was all over the papers. It was your Stillman, the professor.

The check, remember?

I don't believe you.

But it hardly matters now; does it?

What about Peter? I have no idea.

The number you have dialed has been disconnected.

The check bounced. That's why I've been trying to call you.

Come and see the letter from the bank.

I need the money to go on with the case.

What about Peter? I have no idea.

He hung up and called Virginia Stillman.

Stop being mysterious! I don't know what you're talking about!

Don't you read the newspapers?
HE DECIDED TO POSTPONE THINKING ABOUT IT.

HE WOULD RETURN TO HIS APARTMENT AND TAKE A HOT BATH.

THEN, PERHAPS, HE WOULD BEGIN TO THINK ABOUT IT.

EVERYTHING HAD CHANGED.

THE FURNITURE, THE PICTURES, THE RUGS—THEY WERE NOT HIS.

HIS DESK WAS GONE, HIS BOOKS WERE GONE, THE CHILD DRAWINGS OF HIS DEAD SON WERE GONE.

JANGLE CLACK

IT TOOK A WHILE TO CALM HER DOWN.

I'VE BEEN LIVING HERE FOR A MONTH. IT'S MY APARTMENT.

BUT I HAVE THE KEY. DOESN'T THAT CONVINCE YOU?
There are hundreds of ways you could have got that key.

They said a writer... but he disappeared.

You?! I've never seen a bigger mess in my life.

Look at you.

That's me! I'm the writer!

 Didn't they tell you someone was living here?

I've had some... difficulties lately.

Do you realize what this means?

Frankly, I don't care.

This is my place and I want you out.

But it's only temporary.

His apartment was gone, he was gone, everything was gone.

It didn't matter anymore.

Quinn was not surprised that the front door at 69th street opened without a key.

Nor was he surprised when he reached the stillmans' apartment...

...that that door should be open as well.
IF SO, THEN SURELY THE
SUN WAS SHINING
SOMEWHERE ELSE. IN
CHINA, FOR EXAMPLE.

WAS IT NIGHT?

HE TRIED TO THINK ABOUT
THE LIFE HE HAD LIVED
BEFORE THE STORY BEGAN.

SO MANY THINGS WERE
DISAPPEARING NOW. IT
WAS DIFFICULT TO KEEP
TRACK OF THEM.

MADDIE, WILSON'S REAL NAME WAS
WILLIAM WILSON.

THE TWO WILLIAM WILSONS
CANCELLED EACH OTHER OUT.

NIGHT AND DAY WERE NO
MORE THAN RELATIVE TERMS.

AT ANY GIVEN MOMENT,
IT WAS ALWAYS BOTH.
For the most part, his entries from this period consisted of marginal questions concerning the Stillman case.

Why had he not bothered to look in old newspapers about Stillman's arrest in 1969?

Why had Don Quixote not written books like the ones he loved...

Why had he taken Auster's word that Stillman was dead?

A good egg
egg on his
foot lay an egg
as alike
as two
eggs.

Why had Don Quixote not written books like the ones he loved...

He wrote until it was dark.

The thought of turning on the light did not appeal to him.

...instead of living out their adventures?

...Was the girl in his apartment the same as the girl in Grand Central?

Was the case over, or was he still working on it?
...And when it was light, he ate and wrote.

Little by little the darkness had begun to win out.

He began to skip meals, but the time continued to diminish.

He had forgotten that the electric light was there.

The light had gradually become fainter and more fleeting.

It seemed that there was less time to eat and write...

...that these periods had been reduced to a matter of minutes.

The number of pages in the notebook was dwindling.

He began to weigh his words with great care.

The case was far behind, and he no longer bothered to think about it.

Once there was time only to write three sentences.

The next time, only two.

...And now its meaning had been lost.

I had become a bridge to another place in his life...
He wrote about the stars, the earth, his hopes for mankind.

He felt that his words had been severed from him, that they were now part of the world at large...

...as real and specific as a stone, or a lake, or a flower.

He remembered the moment of his birth and the infinite kindness of the world...

...and all the people he had ever loved.

He wondered if he had it in him to write without a pen, if he could learn to speak instead, filling the darkness with his voice, speaking the words into the air, into the walls, into the city, even if the light never came back again.
What will happen when there are no more pages in the notebook?
At this point the information has run out.
I returned home from my trip to Africa in February. I called Auster and he urged me to come over.

Auster explained to me what little he knew about Quinn and the case. He wanted my advice about what to do.

I began to feel angry that he had treated Quinn with such indifference.

I scolded him for not having done something to help.

He had been feeling guilty and needed to unburden himself.

He said that I was the only person he could trust.

He had spent the last few months trying to track down Quinn, but with no success.

I suggested that we take a look at the Stillman apartment.

We had little trouble getting into the building.

We went upstairs and found the door unlocked.

In a small room in the back we found the notebook.

Auster handed it to me.

The whole business had upset him so much that he was afraid to keep it.

He never wanted to see it again.
As for Quinn, it is impossible for me to say where he is now. I have followed the notebook as closely as I could, and any inaccuracies should be blamed on me. There were moments when the text was difficult to decipher, but I have done my best. The notebook, of course, is only half the story, as any sensitive reader will understand. As for Auster, I am convinced that he behaved badly throughout. If our friendship has ended, he has only himself to blame. As for me, my thoughts remain with Quinn. He will be with me always.
Paul Auster's *City of Glass* is the first volume in the New York Trilogy. *Mr. Vertigo* is his most recent novel.

An accomplished cartoonist and script writer, Paul Karasik served as advisory editor for *Raw Magazine*.

David Mazzucchelli's own stories appear in his award-winning *Rubber Blanket* comix magazine.

Bob Callahan is a San Francisco Bay Area writer and editor. He is the author of the idea for this *Neon Lite* Noir Illustrated series.

Art Spiegelman is currently working on an illustrated adaptation of the classic, decadent poem *The Wild Party*, by Joseph March.