

STORIES IN GLASS BOOK 1

# RULES OF THE CAMPFIRE



PAUL MOORE



*Stories in Glass*

# Gardener of the gods

Paul Moore

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SAMPLE CHAPTER

# GARDENER OF THE GODS

**I**T SOUNDS CRUEL TO LET LOOSE A BOY OF TWELVE YEARS at the gates of a strange, dangerous world. I was expecting to walk through the arched entry and be handed greatness. Isn't that how it works for ... a chosen one? I strutted through the gates with confidence, but I staggered through the next two years in despair.

Think of my age. This is an age that still believes that goodness is what is expected in the world. It is the best age to recruit a true believer. It's an age too young for the burden of choosing a true belief.

Goodbye to the age of the delighted boy, preparing to become a man. I was stepping into that next age and there were problems. Lack of experience, chemical and hormonal changes, the craziness of finding out that goodness is both unexpected, and situationally relative. Endangered by that mix is the untested strength of belief in things taught.

Despite my mother's words, I felt over-matched. I cowered when no one stepped forward to show me my way. I prayed for an angel, for God himself, even for my parents to come and get me. All the prayers went unanswered.

## *Gardener of the gods*

After stealing food to stay alive, failing to sell seed, and being beaten for having nothing more valuable than seeds, I began to feel I didn't have the approval of Heaven.

It wasn't clear what exactly I was failing at, but I was failing. Tested, retested, and failing every day, until faith was gone.

Nothing replaced the lost belief in my mission. I tried to believe in people, but they wouldn't give me a reason to believe in them. People were either cruel to me or indifferent to my presence.

I saw people steal things for survival. I saw them steal things they didn't need. I watched big boys bully little boys. Big men bully little men. Powerful beings bully everyone. I saw murder for pleasure. murder for gain, and killing for survival and revenge. I saw the rape of children and the surrender of suicide. I watched as one of the bastard Anakim ate the blood of a man who offended him with an offer to share a goblet of beer. All before I turned fourteen.

Most of these things were viewed from my perch atop a grape arbor in the back yard of a fenced in butcher shop. Finding the butcher's shop saved me from a life in the alleys.

The shop shared an alley with an all-night beer hall and a gambling house. Whores who couldn't get jobs with the temple of Baal would frequent the alley because they were assured of the presence of drunken men with money. Thugs were attracted for the same reason.

It was under the light of the moon that I learned about the human capacity for depravity. I began to wonder why the God of creation who designed beginnings, endings, and limitations on all things didn't mandate brakes for such a horrible engine. Why was it so apparent that goodness had so many barriers and depravity such full license to run?

It was under the light of the sun that I tried to shake off my memories of those nights. I filled my head with the adventures of exploring. I was living in a city of such size, even after two years, I hadn't penetrated beyond its outer circle.

The owner of the butcher shop first brought to my attention the importance of this city being a series of circles. His observations became building blocks fitting squarely onto the foundation I

received from my parents in our years of wandering. I was failing and falling when he saved me.

I was hiding from him for so long, it surprised me when he reached out to me. He made it obvious he was aware of the freeloader in the back of the shop.

First, I noticed that my ladder had been taken down. I spotted it leaning on a table under the arbor. I might have thought nothing of it if I didn't also notice that my sack of seeds was sitting on the table.

I kept my eyes on the bushes and the door to his shop while I inched my way toward the arbor. My heart sank with the fear of realizing I may have lost my safe bed. It dropped further after shuddering with memories of nights without comfort in the alleys.

Closer to the table I saw something that made me gasp. Next to my bag was a plate. It was stacked with beef and piled with grapes. A bowl lay next to it — a barley soup with floating islands of carrots, celery, and onion.

All my senses were on alert. The owner, I thought, was surely in hiding, waiting to catch me in his trap like a mouse. I finally acquiesced to the inevitable and approached the table. This looked like a fine last meal.

I attacked the plate like a ravenous animal, making guttural noises while violently waving my free hand to warn potential interlopers away. I was determined to force down as much as I could before my trapper seized me and punished me for squatting on his land.

Nobody materialized, but I soon learned what happens when a mouth full of stringy beef forms a mass of sinew in the throat of a glutton.

I remembered Auth dislodging a sprig of mint from Puth's throat. He had slapped her hard on the back while she hacked and coughed. The noise she made sounded like a dog with laryngitis. I was making that noise now. It seemed to echo off the gate. Barf! Arf! Barf! Arf!

The spasms grew more painful. The sound seemed to grow quieter. I couldn't reach my back with enough force to dislodge the meat, so I threw myself backward against the central pillar of the arbor. The pillar gave away and I fell down. I rolled to my feet and

threw myself backward into the wall of the butcher shop. My head started to tingle at the scalp and the feeling spread down my face and began to center itself at the back of my neck. Still, the sinew held its ground.

My spasms stopped. I was no longer emitting sounds. My body had resigned itself to death by hysterical eating. I had just enough awareness to notice that something wasn't adding up.

I felt it odd that the sound of my choking should still be echoing off the gate. I found it even stranger that the gate was moving. It was moving like someone was throwing a weight against it. I made it across the yard, slipped the latch, and swung it inward.

Through tearing eyes and a clouding mind I saw something that terrified me more than the thought of choking. A beast, very dark, not shapeless, but nearly indistinguishable from the night.

The beast rose up in front of me and I discovered it had claws. I could feel them tearing at my solar plexus. The weight of the thing pushed me off my feet and air exploded from my lungs before I hit the ground. Meat erupted from my mouth. Once again, I felt claws dig into my body, then a wet tongue on my face

After removing the trailing scraps of meat from my face the beast sniffed the ground and found the larger pieces he had just forced from my esophagus.

I spent the rest of the night propping up the arbor, petting my new dog, and slowly enjoying the soup and grapes. A note on the table made the evening perfect. The butcher was offering me a job.

After two horrible years in the city, I finally had one good night. A night that began with the usual permeance of gloom turned into a hopeful evening filled with thoughts of a new companion, a surprise benefactor, and a job. I was feeling like the chosen one again. I fell asleep while scratching my new companion behind the ear, and wondering what kind of job a butcher would offer a chosen one.

When the butcher opened the back door. I jerked awake. The sun was rising. I could see the features of a dog resting his head on my lap. It was a forty-pound black dog with visible ribs, a white walrus mustache, and a brown mask. We were both looking at a round, red-faced man standing in the doorway. He stood still and silent. All three of us looked puzzled.



I jumped to my feet when the butcher turned to close the door. My new dog walked over to the butcher suspiciously and smelled a circle around his feet. Whatever the dog discerned from this made him bold enough to look up and sniff the air while he stared into the butcher's face. After sniffing the butcher's butt, his tail began to wag, and he ran back to my side. He had given the butcher his approval.

I didn't know what to think of the look on the butcher's face. It certainly wasn't the look of approval. I had cleaned up as much as I could. I fixed the arbor. Nothing was broken. Why did he look so concerned? So stern?

"Oh, sir! The food!" I said. "I just thought that ... I mean I thought ... the note said I could ... You didn't?" I was stammering and feeling foolish. The round red face in front of me opened its mouth and guffawed.

"The food was for you," he laughed. "I'm sorry about the soup. Good herbs are hard to find. I meant the meal to be a business dinner." He looked down at the dog. "Business that has no place for dogs. Have you been hiding this dog since you adopted my arbor last year?"

"Well, no sir. This isn't my dog. I mean ... not really ... yet." I was surprised he knew I was his tenant for the whole year. I wasn't sure I still had a dog.

The butcher stated the obvious. "He acts like he thinks he's your dog."

I was hoping I could gain the job and keep the dog, so I began negotiating for both. "Well, we just met, sir," I said. "He's a good dog."

"Even good dogs have no place in a clean butcher shop. Even if they don't steal."

"I wasn't thinking, sir." It was true. I couldn't think of a reason for a dog in a butcher shop.

"They don't belong in my new restaurant either." Logic was the enemy again.

"I can see that, sir." I looked down and could tell from the ribs showing through the dog's coat that no food would be safe around him. "If only I could feed him well enough." My own attempt at logic sounded weak, but I was hoping the butcher could be generous to boy and dog.

"Why would you feed someone else's dog?" The relentless questions wore me down. I tried a question of my own.

"Well ... why would you feed me?" I didn't think it so funny a question, but the ample deposits of fat on my benefactor began to undulate rhythmically as he sat down, laughing.

"It's clear to me you have a dog," he said. "I'm going to go into business with a boy and a dog. What are we going to call him?"

"I was thinking I would call him Barfarf, sir."

"Barfarf? Barfarf?" The rolling laughter came again. "Have you thought this through?"

"Well, there's a sort of story behind it, sir."

"I'll tell you what." The butcher said it suddenly as he rose to his feet, "I'm going to make us a pot of tea. You tell me the story behind that name, then we'll put our heads together to find a proper name."

"What's wrong with Barfarf?"

"Okay, let me put it to you like this ... Picture yourself in the street. The alley. The park. You are calling your dog. You put your hands to your mouth and scream out ... Barfarf! Barfarf! Barfarf! They have rules about people acting mad in public. Barking like a dog in public is usually construed as madness. There's also the problem of calling unwanted dogs to you."

I hadn't noticed anyone enforcing rules about acting out madness in public. The first argument didn't carry much weight with me. I had no trouble seeing the logic of the second argument. "Alright," I said. "We should find a proper name."

"Splendid," he said. "After we get that issue settled, we can discuss a business venture." After announcing those intentions, the butcher headed into his shop and returned a short while later with the worst tea I ever politely choked down.

I drank two cups of that bitter tea before I could finish telling him about the events of the night before. He kept asking questions about details, pouring more tea when my cup emptied. I didn't know a man could laugh so much. I didn't know that a man could be kindly, yet find such delight in hearing the story of a starving, scared, choking boy. His face, interactive with my story made me

feel comfortable. I felt I had been listened to. When my story was completed, his face turned suddenly serious.

"I have an idea for a business," he said abruptly, "I think it's a good idea, worth pursuing. We have an immediate barrier to overcome, and I believe in the principle that immediate barriers be immediately removed. Are you in agreement?"

"I couldn't say, sir. What is the barrier?" I wanted my life to change, but I was cautious.

"We haven't introduced ourselves, and we can't go into business together without a proper introduction. I am Sami, Sami the butcher. With your help I expect, soon, people will know me as Sami the restaurateur — the finest restaurateur in all of Samyaza."

"And I am Asitr," I said. "The confused boy from atop your arbor."

"That is about to change," he promised. "You will soon be known as Asitr, the boy who grows the finest herbs, exclusively for Sami the restaurateur."

"I see. How did you know? How did you find out?"

"I've been watching you. I know about your little garden outside the city. Mighty fine herbs. They can make a top chef of me." Sami widened his eyes and spread his hands in front of his face. He looked like he believed he was talking about magic, or gold, or something equally wondrous.

"They are what they are. I've had little use for them since I came here. I'm sure they could be used to improve your tea-making skills." I was being honest. The seeds didn't open doors for me when I expected them to. Now, they were the reason Sami entered into his negotiations. We didn't need a written contract between us for what followed.

"Then what say we call our little business a 20/80 proposition?" Sami began.

"And the dog?" I was hoping the dog was negotiable.

"I'm afraid we still have an immediate barrier to a business relationship with the dog."

"He needs a name?" I was hoping that was going to be all there was to overcome.

"Yes, we can't be properly introduced without a name. Have you thought of something?"

"I think I will call him Sami, after his benefactor."

"Too confusing. It would be hard to tell us apart."

It was my turn to laugh. I was using muscles I hadn't used for two years. My face was getting stiff from smiling. I very much wanted to go into business with this man. "What should we call this dog?" I asked. "A good dog should have the proper name."

"Well then, I think we should give him a name that will reflect his role in our business." Sami rubbed his own walrus mustache and rolled his eyes in thought, but he wasn't offering any names or clues as to the role of the dog in the business.

I finally had to ask, "What role will he have?"

"I need a dog that will dispose of the larger bones in my shop. Does he like bones?"

"I think we should find out. Do you have any bones just lying about?" I relaxed. Negotiations were over.

I can tell you with certainty that the dog adapted to his new job as easily as his proper name became apparent. We anointed him with the name Mr. Bone. The name fit. He was born to the task of demolishing bones. Soon he was an eighty-five-pound partner in a business that grew as quickly as the herbs I planted in the back yard of the shop.

Mr. Bone didn't seem to mind that we didn't take him to the restaurant. After the unfortunate flatulence incident at the grand opening, he was barred from the premises. He was tail waggingly happy to be banished to the shop.

Sami was just as happy to spend most of his time at the restaurant. Soon after my first big harvest he learned to make a really good cup of tea. Customers began to give him gifts of teapots from all over the known world. He topped off his collection by purchasing one pot from every merchant in the city. His reputation heightened among the merchants when we hung the pots in the outdoor dining area where light illuminated the collection.

Sami, the jovial entrepreneur, was truly in his element when mingling with the lunch and dinner crowd. His customers came from all circles of the city. I, also, settled into my job with delight.

We hired a serious and talented young butcher named Vanpandikuladezan to run the butcher's side of the business. We called him Vandí. Vandí treated Mr. Bone like an equal in the business. He took care never to give him more bones than were healthy to eat. The excess, he ground up to fertilize my gardens. All was well. As Sami would say, "All is well and getting weller!" It kept getting weller and weller for two more years.

Sami congratulated himself on many a night for placing his restaurant in the second circle from the gate. "Too dirty for the temple bunch and too established for the criminals in the first circle," he would say. It was that same safe, but not staid, atmosphere that lured the artists and musicians into the second circle. Many of them were regulars at Sami's.

One of those musicians got lucky. He received a garden apartment and an expense account when he accepted an offer to play during morning offerings at the Azazel complex.

I began an exciting project of my own. I had just turned sixteen and was starting my own business. It was Sami's idea. He set me up with enough equipment to begin my own landscaping business. The lucky musician was my first customer. With my first job being in the temple district, I was getting good word of mouth in all the right circles.

Word of mouth cost me everything, friends, companions, business, sanity ... everything.

The momentum for that little ball of events began rolling when my client referred me to his patrons in the temple of Azazel. He gave them two locations for places where I could be contacted. He mentioned a butcher named Vanpandikuladezan and a restaurateur named Sami.

Vanpandikuladezan was a name known to an infamous bastard Anakim named Herakles. I never met an Anakim that wasn't dangerous. All of them are bastards born as an unblessed creation and every one dangerous. Nonetheless, you can't help but pity them their existence. I pity them all but Herakles. He is a lover of monstrous acts, and lovers of monstrous acts are so damned hard to pity.

The malign focus Herakles leveled at Vandí is difficult to understand. The proportion was so off. In Herakles' mind, a seed

of disappointment grew into a living rage, was fed by hate, unconstrained by compassion, and bore the rotten fruit of a plan for casual violence. He set his mind to taking Vandi's soul, and he was going to have fun doing it. We never saw it coming.

They came with the noon crowd. I was at the restaurant with a batch of newly dried lemon verbena. Things were getting busy, so I strapped on an apron and began to take food orders.

Sami was in the back, negotiating with his friend Baddar. Baddar was delivering fresh fish for the evening meals. Those negotiations came to a halt when, to the sound of breaking pottery, the birthday boy entered the restaurant, shouting for service.

Sami knew the source of the shouting and understood the sound of breaking pottery was from his prized teapot collection, but he acted calmly and quickly. His first impulse was to protect his customers and his staff. He chugged toward the dining area.

I bumped into Sami at the kitchen door. He pushed me, hard, into the kitchen, and hissed for me to stay put. He was much quicker than a man his size should be. At the sound of a bellowing voice, he spun and zipped away, dancing and dodging through the aisles between tables.

Louder than the din of the entry, the bellowing voice cut through the restaurant, shouting repeatedly, "owner, owner, owner."

"Yes, sir. Yes, sir. Coming!" Sami knew the urgency of the situation. He knew Herakles was the strongest, meanest, and dumbest of the Anakim. Familiarity with the monster made him anxious and eager to grant every request the brute would make. I, myself, was frozen when I saw his face. I remembered him as the blood eater from the alley.

"I'll have a table away from the street stench." Herakles's first demand was no surprise. He was known to hate the smell of unwashed people.

"If only I had known you were coming." Sami was thinking quickly. "I would have reserved the patio for you. I have the perfect table, near the smoker. The way the wind is blowing, you will smell only the chicken roasting in sage butter."

People were already edging toward the exits. Stories went around about Herakles and his penchant to become violent if he

perceived people were fleeing him in social situations. Sami didn't know which way the beast was thinking today, but Herakles gave him the opening he was looking for to clear the room.

"It's my birthday," he said. "I'll need your best."

"Did you hear that?" Sami said it loud enough to be heard. "We are having a private celebration for a man of renown." Herakles nodded in approval. "Everyone out," commanded Sami. "No need to pay for your meal. See you soon. Out, out, out."

The diners rushed out eagerly. The last to pass Herakles on the way out was Sami's friend Baddar. The fisherman's exit brought some comments from Herakles.

"Hooga Mushka, man. What are you? Some kind of fisherman? Take a bath. Sheesh and Sheeshka Mushka!" Herakles was shouting terms of disrespect. Then he laughed as Baddar scooted off. Taking out his short sword, he smashed another pot in celebration.

I could hear Sami's anger as he entered the kitchen. "Impotent freak," he whispered. Much more loudly he added, "Asitr will seat you, and I will bring you everything I have for your sampling. Please, be comfortable ... Asitr!"

I knew Sami was worried. I could see his face was grim. He put a finger over his lips, looked into my face, and bellowed, "When you have seated the gentleman you can take your clumsy fool of a self home. I will entertain these luminaries myself." His attempt to get me out of harm's way didn't have the desired effect.

"He stays," Herakles shouted from his table. "He will be my wine bearer for the evening. I will train the fool for you, teach him some focus." I hurried to his side, and he grabbed my tunic, pulling my face close to his. Up close to him, I thought he smelled like a toad.

"Got ears boy?" He asked. "Spill a drop, you lose an ear. Drop a goblet, you lose your head. Fair enough?"

I answered with a steady voice. "I'm equal to the task, sir." I meant it in a different way than Herakles heard it. Hatred had overcome my fear, and I felt my moment was coming.

The feeling washed over me casually at first but developed into a certainty. As surely as I'm chosen for greatness, I knew this thing didn't need to live. I was going to find a way to destroy the

monster. Reasonably sure I was under the protection of Heaven, I asked. "Allow me to choose you a wine?"

Taking a detour past the wine rack, I ran to the shed. Inside, I had some hemlock, dried dragon berries, and datura seed soaking in a jar of alcohol. They had been soaking for two weeks, and the potion was ready.

I knew I had one bottle of stout wine with a flavor heavy enough to hide the poisonous content of the brew. It was going to need a minute of breathing before the flavors could blend, so I grabbed a weak offering of melon rind wine to buy some time. I was sure he would demand something more powerful.

Time was on my side. I was certain he would remain until the cupboard was bare. Complete immersion in overindulgence was his reputation in the days he was unconstrained.

This is what I have done in every life I have lived. I have gathered good facts and reached bad conclusions. Herakles and his party stayed less than ten minutes. He ignored the weak wine.

Sami served him potatoes and roasted beef within two minutes of his arrival. Herakles finished his plate and once again bellowed for the owner. He was beginning to show his intentions.

"Where did you get this beef?" he demanded. Sami ran to the table. Herakles asked the opinion of his friends. "Do you recognize the source of this beef?" It appeared they did. They all agreed they couldn't be mistaken. They were certain they recognized from where this beef had been attained.

"What is the problem, sirs?" Sami was clearly in the dark. "Is there a problem with the beef? I have lamb and chicken. Let me clear your plates and bring you something suitable."

Herakles gave a surprise answer. "I want to see your butcher. The beef is delicious. Bring me the butcher."

Sami was visibly shaken. He wasn't on the same page as Herakles, but he knew the book. "The butcher's not here," he said. "He only delivers. Please, let me get you some mutton, maybe?"

"From what address? I have to tell the man how much I appreciated his cut." Everyone at the table weakly suppressed a laugh into their hands. They were sharing some mysterious enjoyment of Herakles's declaration of appreciation.



Sami was suspicious of any polite reason for Herakles to want to see Vandi, so he lied. "I would have to look it up sir. I don't have a head for remembering addresses or names or ..."

Herakles cut him off. "Get the address." he demanded.

Sami jumped. "Yes, sir, I'll find it right now." He sped away back to the kitchen, grabbing my arm on the way. Loudly, he shouted, "Come here fool, get the good wine." Quietly he whispered, "Run to the butcher shop and tell Vandi who it is that wants to see him. Tell him to run to the bridge grove, and we'll try to find out what he wants. Make sure he hangs the closed sign ... go!"

I ran as fast as I could. I used all the shortcuts I knew. It wouldn't have mattered. Herakles had stopped by the butcher shop before he went to the restaurant.

Why the little head game? He didn't stay to watch our pain. He didn't linger to enjoy the public reaction to his crime at the butcher shop.

The public reaction. My fellow human beings. I saw them milling around the shop from two blocks away. I turned the corner, lost my balance, and dropped to the ground when I focused on the object decorating our sign pole. It was the head of our friend Vandi.

I stood up and stumbled through the excited crowd, stopping at the front door. The rest of Vandi's body was in our display window. He was hanging up-side down, wearing a garish note of explanation that explained nothing.

*You took my cow. I killed your pig. Ledger even.*

There was nothing in the note I could understand. The only thing standing in that vacuum where I searched for reason was my own rage.

In shock, my body wracked with a sickly shiver, interrupted by an arm on my shoulder. It was a man I had come to recognize as a regular at the gambling hall.

"Hey look, it's the seed kid!" he said. The crowd pressed in on me. "Sorry 'bout your dog, kid. He was a good dog."

"My dog?"

"Squashed his head flat with one foot," he grinned. "Go see. Brains all over the alley."

I didn't know if I was more shocked at the gleefulness of the delivery or because he didn't express regret about Vandī. It didn't matter. I had no time for paralyzing outrage. Sami was alone with a monster.

After one step toward the restaurant, I changed my mind and ran down the alley, letting out a primal scream of rage when I ran past the body of Mr. Bone. I was still screaming when I leaped over the fence, ran through the yard, and into the shop. Vandī's sharp cleaver was still there, coagulating blood cooling on its surface.

I picked up the bloody blade and ran toward the ogling crowd. It gave me pleasure that they mistook my intentions. Some of them screamed. I couldn't help but notice how abruptly their attitude changed when they thought it might be their own head about to be taken. My path cleared in front of me as I ran past them and back to the restaurant.

In hindsight, I could have come up with a better plan than running and screaming through the streets with a bloody cleaver. I was rushing headlong into the worst of it. Soon, I would feel like a fool with a butterfly net, trying to catch a mammoth jumping off a cliff.

"Asitr?"

"Yes Bill?"

"We have station identification and national news. We'll be right back to our madman with a cleaver in just three minutes."

\* \* \*

## ***THE BILL ELLIOTT SHOW*** **ON AIR TUESDAY**

"Okay. We are back. I don't know about you guys listening at home, but I am getting a serious case of tingling neck hair. I didn't expect so dark a tale in your first life, Asitr. What type of artifact are you going to produce from this story?"

"Artifact?"

"Evidence. You know, the promised proof of your tales?"

"From this story? No, but listen to the BBC Asian report tonight. They are going to air a segment mentioning your show. I believe what they talk about will be another proof of my truthfulness. You will be surprised."

"My show, mentioned on the BBC? Why? Never mind, I'll check it out. Everybody else keep your dial tuned right here."

"You needn't worry Bill. I think the Asian report will air just after your show ends."

"Okay, Astir. Let's get back to the story. How does your mission with a bloody meat cleaver become a fool's errand with a butterfly net?"

"I get arrested for madness in public and murder. Madness and murder."

"Take a breath Asitr. Tell us the rest."

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paul Moore was born in the Missouri Ozarks, raised in St. Louis, and eventually settled in the sand of central Florida. He calls each of these places home.

His inner mix of hillbilly river rat, lowlands daydreamer, sand road hermit, and reader of nineteenth-century history writers form the base of a non-elite education. These roots allow imagination to turn historic events into serendipitous thoughts. Those thoughts organize into stories, and stories become novels.

With the remedial help of a good critique group, and the birth of publishing companies that read a manuscript without asking first, “What are your credentials?”, he’s found a voice to share those stories.



*IF YOU WOKE UP ONE DAY AND REALIZED YOU HAD MEMORIES FROM MORE THAN SEVENTY LIVES, FLUID IN EVERY LANGUAGE YOU'D EVER SPOKEN, AND RECALLED ALL THE TEXTS YOU'D EVER READ, WOULD YOU WONDER WHY?*

It took Asitr forty years to discover the why. Soon after, he appears as a guest on a radio talk show to bait traps with the telling of stories. He tells tales about his life as one of the world's most popular and quickly forgotten celebrities — of gardening for the Prophet Enoch, eavesdropping on Satan and Baal Zebub, and living between lives in a lost world. They sounded like the tall tales of a crazy man.

Twenty years later, a John Doe is found, naked and shivering, on the grounds of the Harbinger Psychiatric Institute, clutching a six-inch orb of blue glass and anxious to tell his own story. Is it a tale of organized insanity inspired by Asitr's radio appearance?

Dr. Henry Milton has what looks like an easy assignment: he has twenty-four hours to evaluate the John Doe and refer him for processing. But John Doe has a timetable of his own. He has less than forty-eight hours to convince Dr. Milton to suspend his disbelief in a supernatural world where activities swirl around us unseen and mingle within our own natural realm.



Paul Moore was born in the Missouri Ozarks, raised in St. Louis, and eventually settled in the sand of central Florida. He calls each of these places home. His inner mix of hillbilly river rat, lowlands daydreamer, sand road hermit, and reader of nineteenth-century history writers form the base of a non-elite education. These roots allow imagination to turn historic events into serendipitous thoughts. Those thoughts organize into stories, and stories become novels.