

THE BOOK OF PAUL

"The Hammer and the Nail"

TEASER

INT. TOP FLOOR OF CONDEMNED BUILDING IN ALPHABET CITY – DAY

PAUL, a grizzled old man with scraggly white hair sits in a throne-like chair in front of a filthy window.

Dressed all in black with a long trench coat and army boots, he stands, walks past cracked plaster walls and a ratty couch toward a dark hallway at the rear of room.

A YOUNG GIRL sings outside. He stops, listens.

YOUNG GIRL (O.S.)  
One, two, buckle my shoe. Three,  
four, shut the door.

Annoyed, yet curious, he returns to the window, looks down.

EXT. SIDEWALK BELOW CONDEMNED BUILDING – DAY

A brown-skinned girl with neatly braided pigtails and a crisp, red gingham dress plays hopscotch on a broken sidewalk surrounded by empty lots filled with rubble. The street looks like a war zone.

The blurry figure of a burly MAN approaches her. The girl keeps hop-scotching, unaware of his presence.

INT. TOP FLOOR OF CONDEMNED BUILDING IN ALPHABET CITY – DAY

Paul savors her sing-song voice, presses his face against the glass, closes his eyes, inhales. The singing abruptly stops.

Paul's eyes snap open. The burly man drags the girl by her arm across the street, tugging her like a dog on a leash. Paul clenches his fists.

YOUNG GIRL (O.S.)  
Daddy, it hurts!

Paul relaxes, smirks. The man pulls the girl into a building. Paul speaks with a lilting Irish brogue.

PAUL  
Kids. The kids these days!

He snorts with laughter, strides into the lightless hallway.

INT. HALLWAY/PAUL'S CHAPEL - DAY

Paul walks down a maze-like corridor, immune to the darkness. After a few turns, he pushes against a wall. It opens like a door, revealing a hidden chapel.

A giant statue of a crucified angel pierced with hundreds of rusty spikes looms over an altar covered with alchemical symbols and blood. The blood leaks from a shivering MAN nailed to the altar by his hands and feet.

Paul points to an ancient codex on a nearby lectern.

PAUL

Ya shunna come for the book.

Man opens his bloody mouth. Most of his tongue is missing.

MAN

Ee ade ee!

PAUL

He made ye? Can you still take no responsibility for your actions after all these years? Granted, your papa is a harsh taskmaster and your sovereign lord as well, so you had little choice. Even so, you surely must have known how this story would play out for you, aye?

Man sobs, gurgles. Paul leans over his face, grins.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Relax darlin', you're near the end.

Paul duct tapes his mouth.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Me ears are too sensitive for this next part, deary. Try not to choke on the blood. Just keep swallowin'.

Paul yanks the nails from the man's hands and feet. His screams are muffled by the tape.

Paul grabs a length of sturdy rope from under the altar, ties a knot around one of his ankles.

PAUL (CONT'D)

By the by, you'll never guess what I just saw outside me very own doorstep. A wee lass playin' hopscotch! On this shithole block! The sight of it, I tell you. Cute as a chocolate Easter Bunny she was, skippin' an' hoppin' and singin' with a voice so sweet it'd make an angel blush.

Paul looks up at the crucified angel's blood-streaked cheeks.

The man scrambles off the altar, lunges for the doorway. Paul shakes his head sadly, yanks the rope. The man trips, smashes his face against the floor. The seat of his pants is soaked with blood.

PAUL (CONT'D)

If you keep thrashin' about, yer gonna bleed out even faster, sonny. And I'd prefer you stay conscious long enough to see yer old nemesis one last time before you gasp yer last remorseful breath. Maybe then it will fully sink in how ill-advised it was for you drop by here unannounced on this of all days.

Paul hogties his ankles to his wrists behind his back.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Now where was I? Aye, the Easter bunny! Apt enough an omen, since tomorrow is Good Friday, as you're well aware, and sure to be a most glorious celebration, despite yer party crashin' antics.

Paul finishes tying him, stands, reaches behind the altar, pulls out a large burlap bag.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Anyways, the lass is hoppin' and scotchin' and along comes this big bruising brown buck, no strange sight in this neighborhood, and he drags the lil gingham-clad bunny to a building across the street to do god knows what with her!

Paul squats over the man, leans in close, whispers.

And I'm thinkin' maybe he's one of those monsters. The type who'd take a sweet young thing to a dirty dark place and do--and do whatever a monster like that is wont to do. But then she cries out--"Daddy!"

Paul imitates her high-pitched voice, then lowers his tone.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Well, I shoulda known. Who else but her not-so-proud papa would dare to act that way in public?

Paul stuffs his squirming body in the bag.

PAUL (CONT'D)

So then I got to thinkin' about your predicament. Your own da goading you into this suicide mission, makin' another play for the book when he knows I'll be needing it most.

Paul stands, faces a tarnished mirror on the wall, examines his wrinkles, tugs at his sagging skin.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Y'know, I'm not getting any younger. And neither is Lord Firth. Of course, that's why he sent you. The old coot needs to Turn as much as I. Alas, tis not to be.

Paul hoists the bag over his shoulder as easily as lifting a sack of potatoes and heads toward the hallway.

He stops for one last gaze in the mirror.

PAUL (CONT'D)

No, I'm not getting any younger. I'm gonna have to do something about that.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

INT. MARTIN'S EAST VILLAGE APARTMENT – DAY

MARTIN, late 30's, buzz cut, ripped torso, loose gym shorts, practices smiling in the kitchen mirror, poorly imitating the Ken Doll newscaster on his nearby TV.

He makes a few lame attempts, shrugs, enters the connected living room, pounds the shit out of a heavy bag hanging from the ceiling. He glares at the smiling TV guy between punches.

After a brutal roundhouse kick, he goes back to the mirror, attempts another smile. Nope.

INT. ROSE'S EAST VILLAGE APARTMENT – DAY

ROSE, early 20's, spiky dyed-black hair, scads of tats and piercings, does yoga in front of a small shrine with Celtic deities, a large, blood-red crystal and a picture of a woman wearing an antique necklace with a dangling key.

The woman's arm is wrapped around the shoulder of a small smiling Rose. The picture is torn to remove a male figure.

Rose glances at the picture, frowns, turns it around, feels guilty, turns it back again, faces away. She finishes her yoga with rigorous gymnastic moves, grins, enters bathroom.

INT. MARTIN'S BATHROOM – DAY

Martin trims the hair on his head and everywhere else to a uniform 1/8" length with an electric razor.

He enters the steaming shower, soaps, rinses, frowns at the mild spray pressure and tightens the shower head until the pressure is like a sandblaster. He nods in satisfaction.

INT. ROSE'S BATHROOM/CLOSET/KITCHEN – DAY

Rose shaves in the shower--everywhere. She sings happily.

ROSE

I feel pretty, oh so pretty!

Out of the shower, she puts on the necklace from the photo, kisses the key, dresses in a Kurt Cobain as Jesus t-shirt, ripped fishnets, tight leather mini.

In the kitchen, she pulls a poorly-covered dish of Mac N' Cheese from the fridge, sniffs it, wrinkles her nose, pours it down the sink. The sink clogs.

She stomps back to the bathroom, searches around the toilet.

ROSE (CONT'D)  
Where's that friggin' plunger?

INT. MARTIN'S BATHROOM/KITCHEN - DAY

Martin rubs a t-shirt on his face, savors the softness, puts it on with feline grace. He sits with perfect posture at his kitchen table with a single chair, slowly eats a soft-boiled egg, dips in a neatly trimmed toast crust.

A drop of egg yolk falls on his shirt. He panics, whips off the shirt and hustles to the sink where his trusty cleaning supplies are arranged with military precision. He scrubs the shirt in cold water, hangs it on a zip-cord to drip dry.

INT. ROOM IN PAUL'S APARTMENT - DAY

Paul enters a small room. A bare light bulb hangs over a wooden table and two chairs. A hammer and a six-inch nail sit on the table. Paul dumps the burlap bagged body in a dark corner of room with a loud thud. The bagman groans.

PAUL  
Have a nice nappy-poo! We'll be  
enjoying your company at supper.  
Or part of you anyway.

He laughs, leaves. A muffled howl escapes the bag.

INT. EAST VILLAGE BAR - DAY

WILLIAM, mid 30's, snidely self-satisfied, sits on a barstool in a near-empty dive, staring into the mirror behind the bar. He laughs, as if in reaction to Paul's cruel joke.

SALLY, 20's, sultry, jaded barfly, side-eyes him, grins at RANDY, the tall, surly bartender.

Randy nods, struts over to William, his head cocked to one side like a pirate pacing the deck. All that's missing is the eye patch and parrot.

RANDY  
What's so fuggin' funny Fred?

WILLIAM

Name's not Fred, it's--

RANDY

--It's Fred to me, as in I don't give a capital-F Fuck what your name is, anymore than I care about the name of THAT fuggin' Fred in the booth.

Randy chin-points to a pathetic drunk slumped in a booth.

RANDY (CONT'D)

Every Fred in this bar serves the same fuggin' purpose as you, which is a cash and tip dispenser. So when you start yukkin' it up when there's nuthin' remotely funny is goin' on, gawkin' in that fuggin' mirror like you do every fuggin' day from the moment you walk in here 'til you wobble out without leavin' a remotely adequate tip, then yeah, it's my sworn duty as captain of this leaky ship to point out that you have entered the red zone of my contempt and it's time for you to shut your hyena hole or leave a sawbuck on the bar and bug the fug out FRED!

William steams silently.

INT. MARTIN'S APARTMENT/HALLWAY OUTSIDE - DAY

Martin's doorbell rings with a DING-DONG sound. Martin seems shocked, like it's the first time he's heard it. He yanks out a pistol strapped under the sink, leans toward the peephole, carefully keeping his body out of shotgun range.

Martin sees Rose through the peephole, relaxes, puts the pistol away, unlocks seven bolts and a crossbar, opens the door a crack, stares at her disinterestedly.

ROSE

You the super?

MARTIN

No.

ROSE

Know which apartment he's in?

Martin points his thumb to the left.

MARTIN

2 D.

Rose frowns, heads down the hallway.

Martin closes the door, fusses with his drying t-shirt.

Doorbell rings. Martin sniffs the air, opens the door. Rose scans his washboard abs, glances down at his big package.

Martin notices her gaze, has no reaction. Rose pretends she wasn't looking.

ROSE

So, can you fix a sink?

Martin nods.

ROSE (CONT'D)

Got a plunger?

Martin opens the door wider, ambles into the kitchen, reaches under the sink, holds up a plunger.

Rose sneaks another package peek.

INT. APARTMENT STAIRCASE - DAY

Rose climbs the stairs. Martin follows cautiously behind.

She suddenly turns to him. He reflexively grips the plunger like a weapon. She smiles, doesn't notice.

ROSE

I'm Rose.

Martin nods, lowers the plunger, takes another step. Rose rolls her eyes, speaks as if talking to a child.

ROSE (CONT'D)

And what's YOUR name?

Martin ignores her sarcasm, answers after an awkward pause.

MARTIN

Martin.

Rose extends her hand.

ROSE

Hi, Martin.



Martin shakes her hand. Rose smiles, continues up the stairs. Martin stares at his hand, then follows.

INT. EAST VILLAGE BAR – DAY

William gawks at the mirror, shouts.

WILLIAM

Your real name? You told her your  
real name?

Sally scowls, looks at William curiously, swivels to Randy.

SALLY

Maybe he's got that shit, piss,  
fuck yellin' disease.

Randy shrugs like he couldn't care less and sidles over, cleaning a whiskey tumbler with loud squeaks.

RANDY

Last warning Fred. One more  
Tourette's toot out of you and  
you're banned for life.

William raises his hands in a white flag of surrender. Randy struts back to Sally to the tune of more annoyed squeaks.

INT. ROSE'S EAST VILLAGE APARTMENT – DAY

Rose opens her door. Martin is entranced at the opium den décor of her living room/bedroom. Every wall is covered with exotic draperies. A wispy canopy shrouds a large bed covered with satin sheets and piles of soft pillows.

Martin feels the canopy material, tests a pillow's softness. Rose ambles across the room. Martin hovers over a low, teak table with dragon inlays and burning candles. He frowns.

ROSE

What's wrong?

MARTIN

Fire hazard.

Rose laughs, realizes he isn't joking, points to a doorway.

ROSE

Sink's over here.

Martin passes her shrine, stops, admires the red crystal.

MARTIN

Nice.

ROSE

It's a bloodstone.

MARTIN

Rhodochrosite. Fine specimen. Best  
I've seen.

Rose squints at him. Amused. Curious. Perplexed.

ROSE

Thanks.

They stare at each other. Tension mounts. Rose is first to  
blink. She glances at the doorway.

MARTIN

Yeah, the sink.

They pass through a doorway into the kitchen. Martin slumps  
with disappointment at the barren surroundings. Rose fidgets  
at the implied critique.

ROSE

It's not finished. I blew all my  
cash fixing up the--

Rose cuts herself off, points at the clogged sink.

ROSE (CONT'D)

Plunge please.

Martin attacks the clog like a jackhammer. The sink drains.  
He stands proudly, then stares in horror at a bottle of  
Woolite on a nearby shelf.

MARTIN

Woolite? You use this shit?

Rose stares at him with disbelief.

ROSE

Did you just dis my fabric soft--

Martin raises an index finger, bolts from the kitchen.

INT. STAIRCASE/CLOSET IN MARTIN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Martin runs downstairs, unlocks his door, slams it open.

He enters a closet filled with army footlockers. Opens one filled with weapons and ammo. Opens another: a golden light bathes his face. Opens a third filled with jugs of Forever New softener. He grabs one, slams the closet door.

He runs back upstairs three steps at a time.

INT. ROSE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Martin proudly offers Rose the bottle of Forever New, sporting a giant erection. Of course, he's oblivious.

MARTIN

Here, this is the good stuff.

Rose ignores the bottle, stares at the absurd tent in his gym shorts, grabs his cock with both hands.

ROSE

No, this is the good stuff.

Martin gasps, drops the jug. Rose smiles, flashes her barbell tongue piercing, drops to her knees, pulls down his shorts, gets busy.

Martin's knees buckle from the intensity, but he longs for the opulence of the nearby room. He gazes at the doorway, pulls out of her mouth. Rose looks up with a concerned frown.

He lifts her like she's weightless, carries her to the bed, gently lays her on the sheets, crawls over her, his shoulders rolling like a big cat. He enters her. They gasp.

INT. PAUL'S CHAPEL - DAY

Paul strides into the chapel, approaches the lectern and the codex. He reaches into his shirt, pulls out a necklace with a key dangling at the end. The key is very old, like Rose's, but with different symbols and engravings.

He uses the key to unlock a large strap binding the codex, opens it, leafs through the pages.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

A) A galaxy-like cyclone of swirling light and darkness.

B) An ancient temple flanked by colossal statues.

C) The blood crystal from Rose's apartment placed in the center of a giant wheel.

D) A young man with deformed wings nailed to a cross.

Paul stops at the two blank pages in the middle of the book. He places his hands on the pages. His eyes roll backward in his head, so only the whites show.

INT. ROSE'S EAST VILLAGE APARTMENT – DAY

Martin and Rose screw with feral intensity. Martin sees the key on her chest. It lays on a crescent-shaped birthmark.

Rose notices the circular birthmark on Martin's chest, watches him stare at her necklace/birthmark.

INT. PAUL'S CHAPEL – DAY

Paul seethes with disgust and rage, his hands on the book, his eyes rolled backward. The parchment turns red.

INT. EAST VILLAGE BAR – DAY

William stares into the mirror with voyeuristic intensity. His expression mirrors Paul's.

INT. ROSE'S EAST VILLAGE APARTMENT – DAY

Martin and Rose climax. A single tear falls from Martin's eye to the key. Rose wipes away her own tears, confused, panting.

INT. PAUL'S CHAPEL – DAY

Paul's eyes roll back down. He slams the book shut, locks it, studies the engraved symbols on the key, tucks it away. His eyes roll backward again.

INT. ROSE'S EAST VILLAGE APARTMENT – DAY

Martin and Rose lay side by side, staring up at the canopy, sweaty, sated, yet anxious, bewildered, overwhelmed.

INT. PAUL'S CHAPEL – DAY

Paul opens his eyes, looks up at the angel, the nails, the trails of painted blood, the angel's chest, where bronze rays emanate from a circular tabernacle over the angel's heart.

PAUL

Not today!

Paul stomps toward the exit, passes a wall covered with old photos and odd objects: baby boots, faded postcards and the tarnished mirror. As he passes the mirror, the reflection of his profile pivots to peer at him.

Paul sees the movement in his peripheral vision, stops, faces his reflection, which morphs into William's face.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Billy!

William smiles back at him.

END OF ACT ONE