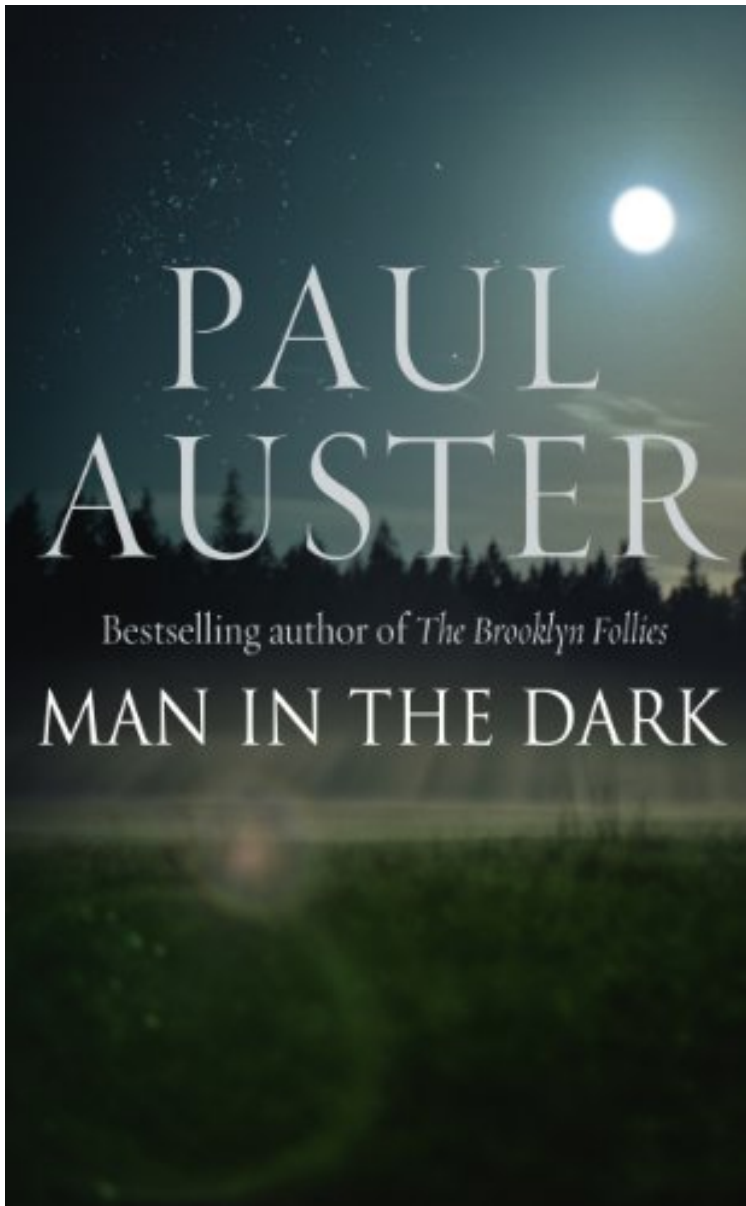


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Man in the Dark (English Edition)



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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteur'I am alone in the dark, turning the world around in my head as I struggle through another bout of insomnia, another white night in the great American wilderness.' Seventy-two-year-old August Brill is recovering from a car accident in his daughter's house in Vermont. When sleep refuses to come, he lies in bed and tells himself stories, struggling to push back thoughts about things he would rather forget - his wife's recent death and the horrific murder, in Iraq, of his granddaughter's boyfriend, Titus. Brill, a retired book critic, imagines a parallel world in which America is not at war with Iraq but with itself. In this other America the Twin Towers did not fall on 9/11, and the 2000 election results led to secession, as

state after state pulled away from the union and a bloody civil war ensued. As the night progresses, Brill's story grows increasingly intense, and what he is so desperately trying to avoid insists on being told. Joined in the early hours by his granddaughter, he gradually opens up to her and recounts another hidden story, this time of his own marriage. After she falls asleep, he at last finds the courage to revisit the trauma of Titus's death. Passionate and shocking, political and personal: *Man in the Dark* is a novel that reflects the consequences of 9/11, that forces us to confront the blackness of night even as it celebrates the existence of ordinary joys in a world capable of the most grotesque violence. From *The Washington Post's Book World*/washingtonpost.com ed by Jeff Turrentine One doesn't want to say it, and yet it must be said: Here we go again. Another elegantly slim volume, the perfect size for palming single-handedly while riding the Metro or sipping a double espresso. Another wild fictive device that demolishes the walls separating author, character and reader, leading to that familiar through-the-looking-glass feeling -- the one that blew you away when you first discovered *The New York Trilogy*, continued to impress you all the way up through *Oracle Night*, and maybe didn't even begin to wear thin for you until *Travels in the Scriptorium*. Another story that, in the end, turns out to be about storytelling. Another Paul Auster novel, that is. The Brooklyn-dwelling, 61-year-old writer still has his fierce champions; but, lately, championing Auster has come to feel more like defending him. Even in the most flattering reviews, critics have begun to express fatigue at the way he continues to rely on the same hall-of-mirrors approach to narrative design in novel after novel after novel. The man is a magician, indisputably, and his magic is still capable of dazzling. But over the course of 23 years, a lot of his readers have figured out the secret to his signature trick, and it's gotten to the point where some of those Austerian tropes have lost their otherworldly luster. The trick works best when it's in service to a feeling rather than an idea, which is to say when Auster treats his characters like human beings rather than symbols. In *Man in the Dark*, his latest, the author has struck the right balance: Here is a novel that opens with chilly existentialism -- "I am alone in the dark" -- and winds its way through a surreal Borgesian labyrinth before ending tenderly, and humanely, with a grandfather and granddaughter keeping each other company during a long, sleepless night. As was the case in *The Brooklyn Follies* (2006), which, like this novel, featured a man in his twilight years recollecting a life that could have gone a little better, Auster is attempting real portraiture, not merely the Escher-print trippiness that has earned him a spot on every freshman English major's dorm-room bookshelf since the late 1980s. *Man in the Dark* still manages to be pretty trippy, though. August Brill, a retired book critic who has moved in with his divorced daughter and adult granddaughter, deals with his chronic insomnia one night by making up a story about an ordinary man thrust into a parallel reality, one in which America is embroiled in a civil war brought about by the disputed presidential election of 2000. Brill names his character Owen Brick, and he begins Owen's story by having him wake up in a deep pit wearing a soldier's uniform. After being rescued by another soldier, the befuddled Brick learns that he has an important mission: He is to travel to Vermont and assassinate a man named August Brill, who has recklessly invented this crumbling, war-torn alternative America using nothing but his insomniac's imagination. "There are many worlds, and they all run parallel to one another, worlds and anti-worlds, worlds and shadow-worlds, and each world is dreamed or imagined or written by someone in another world. Each world is the creation of a mind." So Brick is informed before being sent off to kill his creator, our narrator. Auster, of course, is as much at home in these roiling metafictional waters as Michael Phelps is in a swimming pool. And it's certainly fun to play along, wondering -- with Brick and his author(s) -- how things in this weird multiverse will play out, as Brick edges ever closer to his target. Or is the target moving toward Brick? Then Auster does something he might not have done in his younger days, back when he stayed up obsessing over story structure rather than musing on those topics that keep older men awake all night. Three-fourths of the way through *Man in the Dark*, the magician cuts short the act, calls up the house lights and explains the whole trick. Brill is visited in the dark by his grieving granddaughter, who owes her crippling heartbreak to a war that readers will recognize, sourly, as belonging to the real world. The code of Owen Brick is slowly cracked, as we begin to see how the figures, events and emotions in August Brill's life have been converted into the vocabulary of his waking dream. "Stick to the story," Brill tells himself at the beginning of his sleepless night. "That's the only solution. Stick to the story, and then see what happens if I make it to the end." It wouldn't be an Auster novel without such moments of cheeky narrative reflexivity. But all the paradoxes, coincidences and origami-like plots -- the elements of this author's unique style -- really do add up to something more than trickery. Shortly before dawn, his insomniac concludes: "The real and the imagined are one." Maybe every story, Auster seems to suggest, turns out to be about storytelling, and maybe every storyteller is telling his or her own. Copyright 2008, The

Washington Post. All Rights Reserved. Presentation de l'auteur I am alone in the dark, turning the world around in my head as I struggle through another bout of insomnia, another white night in the great American wilderness.' Seventy-two-year-old August Brill is recovering from a car accident in his daughter's house in Vermont. When sleep refuses to come, he lies in bed and tells himself stories, struggling to push back thoughts about things he would rather forget - his wife's recent death and the horrific murder, in Iraq, of his granddaughter's boyfriend, Titus. Brill, a retired book critic, imagines a parallel world in which America is not at war with Iraq but with itself. In this other America the Twin Towers did not fall on 9/11, and the 2000 election results led to secession, as state after state pulled away from the union and a bloody civil war ensued. As the night progresses, Brill's story grows increasingly intense, and what he is so desperately trying to avoid insists on being told. Joined in the early hours by his granddaughter, he gradually opens up to her and recounts another hidden story, this time of his own marriage. After she falls asleep, he at last finds the courage to revisit the trauma of Titus's death. Passionate and shocking, political and personal: *Man in the Dark* is a novel that reflects the consequences of 9/11, that forces us to confront the blackness of night even as it celebrates the existence of ordinary joys in a world capable of the most grotesque violence.