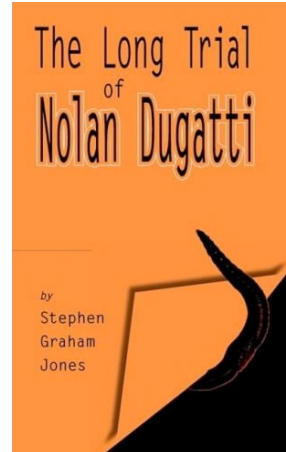


Though *The Long Trial of Nolan Dugatti's* not officially released until early September, it looks to be slipping through Amazon already. And that seems to me to be a good time to explain it a bit. Or, not explain it, but explain around it. And not like this, but with this running journal-thing (my first ever) I kept for the seventy-two hours it took me to write it. That Three-Day Novel Contestyep. Which, if I could find a way to make a living doing one of those every weekend, then I guess I'd do pretty well for about a year, at which point I'd of course have to die. Anyway, the week after that contest, I read this journal-thing, and my knee-jerk reaction—pretending, say, I was reading a journal-thing somebody else had been keeping—was that something wasn't right. At some very fundamental level. And also I kind of knew that I shouldn't show to this to anybody.



Nevertheless.

Here it is. All I've done's correct a couple of typos, pretty much, and erase one name, so as to protect the innocent

### My 3-Day Novel Journal

*Days -6 through 0:*

- read no fiction, write no fiction, knowingly listen to no fiction.

*Day -1:*

■ 3pm: hand-deliver contest registration to post office, then make sure the postage is right for Canada, then mail it and become absolutely certain I've again forgotten to sign the check.

■ 9pm: finally, while reading HORTON HEARS A WHO, figure out all at once what the novel's going to be about, front to back, but resist writing it on the endpapers, as they're illustrated, and I somehow don't have my pen on me anyway.

- 9:30pm: write as much of that as I can remember into an email draft.

*Day 0:*

- 10am: gym

- 2pm: work meeting

- 4pm: Rob Zombie's HALLOWEEN
- 6pm: dinner (chicken breast, rolls)
- 7pm: two hours basketball with good music
- 9pm: make first pitcher of sweet tea
- 10pm: watch AMERICAN ANTHEM, love it even more than ever. Meant to watch FOOTLOOSE, but my DVD of it's somehow gone, I can't even begin to imagine where.
- 11:45pm: watch last twenty-eight minutes of a LAW & ORDER episode I'd already watched the first half of earlier (last two minutes: unrecorded), and eat second dinner, of spaghetti & meatballs & ketchup and then two bowls of honeycombs with real milk.

*Day 1:*

- 12:02: check contest rules, to make sure I don't need to be doing any special documenting.
- 12:03: open new blank document, title it, wonder why my new computer already sucks so much, then save the file to its own folder, so hopefully all the temp files will be there as well, in case documentation becomes any kind of issue.
- 12:04: try to figure out what music's good. Try Jerry Reed, but, when that doesn't work, just turn up George Strait real loud, over and over. Saving all the hair metal for day three, I'm thinking.
- 3:33am: call it a night, twenty-three pages in.
- 4am: set alarm for 8:00, then turn the lights back on, reset it for 8:59.
- 8:59: wake up, eat some breakfast burrito while watching a recorded SEINFELD and a lot more of VH-1's top 20 countdown than I mean to.
- 10am: back at it, nervous I've lost the thread. Have to eat a lot of Whoppers and drink a ridiculous amount of sweet tea and listen to Journey at a stupid, painful volume. First pitcher: gone.
- 11:43am: call it a morning, thirty-eight pages in now. Am very glad that first line kind of seeded a structure, as I think that's what went wrong with my novel the last time I tried this contest: it spooled out of control.

■ 11:45am: wrote all this, so far, while I still remembered it. Only trying to ring that fifty-page bell today (going for one hundred pages total this time, instead of one-fifty, like last time), so, only twelve pages to go. May have to sneak into town, catch SUNSHINE, maybe STARDUST, or whatever that Gaiman movie is. Though too BALLS OF FURY is calling my name.

■ 11:48am: check mail, which usually doesn't make it here until noon, but Saturdays are kind of special, mail-wise. Today's especially good: a Russian postcard from a friend I'd been wanting to hear from, a royalty check, Eric Shapiro's THE STRAWBERRY MAN, a Netflix DVD (THE LOOKOUT), and a watch band, for the neverending saga of my favorite watch that I hate more than any of my other watches.

■ 11:51am: do what I'd promised not to do—"turn on the internet. Nothing good, though; only bills

■ 11:53am: figure out how this next chapter, chapter five, should start. Not the wording, but the necessary development. Very happy.

■ 12:20am: too jittery, have to work-out. Watch an old STAR TREK, "The world is hollow and I have touched the sky," I think, where McCoy gets the girl, and the girl either has this just gorgeous hair, or else she's wearing one very cool wig.

■ 1:36pm: make more sweet tea.

■ 1:40pm: lunch (chicken breast, can of shoepeg corn, which I spill most of, so end up having to pick up one kernel at a time from the carpet). Question for lunch: why does the classic country music station play Okie from Muskogee so much? Hate that song. Always have.

■ 1:47pm: check front door for tenth time, sure my ninja UPS guy has left the package I'm expecting, but now probably won't get until after Labor Day.

■ 1:48pm: do all dishes, drop a knife on my foot but it doesn't cut me, promise to eat no more Whoppers because I hate them now, especially because they're not Sixlets, which were perfect, but scarce now, and back here again, wishing I either had a Jimmy Buffet album on CD or mp3, or that I had a cassette player at my desk, to play some of my old Jimmy Buffet. Though Eddie Raven would do too, I think

■ 2:34pm: finished chapter five. More happened in it than I planned. But you have to escalate, nevermind plans. Forty-four pages in. Could easily hit fifty right now, but SUNSHINE starts at 4:40, it looks like, and I should have all night, and

I'm very excited about that, as I get to eat a lot more of spaghetti and meatballs and also because, now, I can watch THE LOOKOUT if I want. Too, though, I really want to find my FOOTLOOSE. Washing dishes earlier, I kept feeling like a big bug was crawling on me very lightly. And somehow there still aren't any clean forks, I don't think.

■ 3:04pm: accidentally wrote two or three more pages. So, at forty-seven now. And, going by chapter count (starting six [year-later edit: no clue what this part of the parenthetical means], and counting epistolary interludes), I'm exactly halfway through. Which is about right.

■ 8:59pm: bam, fifty-five pages. SUNSHINE rocked. What didn't was jacking my separated rib up playing basketball. Resulted in a lot more muscle relaxer than can be good. It's nice to walk around an unfamiliar grocery store on a very high dose of pretty old muscle relaxers, though. And I can't find any Sixlets anywhere in town. Or the powder Nestle Quick. Was really wanting some spoonfuls of that.

■ 9:02pm: have no idea how to keep a journal like this. No clue what tense to use, what the point of narration is supposed to be, any of that good kind of stuff. Sucks

■ 9:04pm: THE LOOKOUT, I hope. May yet push through another chapter or two tonight. Just not having so much luck sitting up in a chair. Ribs suck. If I were Klingon, none of this would matter.

■ 9:05pm: I get it. Incomplete sentences. What you use in a journal. Just notes to yourself. Almost a to-do list, just slightly after the doing. Not that I'm going back and fixing anything, this sentence included. Melissa Etheridge's "No Souvenirs" has been one of my favorite songs for so many years now. Still sitting here just because it, the song, hasn't gone over yet, quite. It might be day two by the time I get back to my keyboard too.

#### *Day 2:*

■ 5am: wake, totally lost, in my clothes. Evidently the amount of hydrocodone and muscle relaxer I took equalled about three bottles of Nyquil.

■ 6am-ish: grab some energy bars, back to writing. Jam through ten pages.

■ 9am: eat breakfast (-burritos), accidentally pour far too much hot sauce on. Watch another SEINFELD, the dognapping one, which I love. Resist music videos somehow. Another muscle relaxer.

■ 12:26pm, if that's noon: wake up again, wholly confused. I may be using those muscle relaxers wrong. Anyway, lunch (chicken + corn, which I spill again, like

gravity has a different pull on it than everything else, I don't know), another piece of THE LOOKOUT (about five-sixths through it by now), then back here, for some-odd amount of pages.

■ 3:21pm: get email pop-up, which reminds me I forget to kill the net. But this one I want: it's a story rejection (story: rodeo bulls possessed by death row inmates). I reply to it with another story, about a werewolf.

■ 3:23pm: accidentally write two more pages, even though I've just, last stop, hit the seventy-five I had planned. Not sure how I'm supposed to wrap this story with less than twenty-five pages left. Always the dilemma. Listening to, over and over, that Pink "Who Knew." Trick is, too, now there's this girl with pink hair in the novel. Also, thanks to shuffle, Tina Turner and Thunderdome are now supplying the epigraph. But she can do anything. Now to decide whether to hit the gym with a busted rib, to play some hurting ball, or to catch BALLS OF FURY or STARDUST or try to hold out for a sneak peek of 3:10 TO YUMA. Or none of the above. I hate flies, see no reason for them to exist. So tired of spaghetti and meatballs. Had no idea that was even possible. Want only to watch music videos for hours. They always save me.

■ 8:04pm: back from gym. Got lost getting there. Not at all sure how that happened. Ridiculous. But I think I sweated all the muscle relaxer and hydrocodone out. Good until the next round. Just now wrote, I don't know, five pages. At eighty-one now. This may go a touch longer than a hundred. Hope that doesn't work against me. Each time I go back and read the page I've just written, there's all these missing words. THE LOOKOUT seriously rocked. Enough that I watched all the extra features, and even about half the movie over again, with commentary. Still never eating Whoppers again. Hate them.

■ 10:06pm: eighty-eight pages in. And my ears seriously hurt. Some of these songs are so loud, and some idiot's got every volume control twisted around twice. Four candy bars gone for the day (100 Grands & Nestle Crunches—poor substitutes for Sixlets), no clue how much sweet tea. More than enough, though. All jittery again. Want to go back to the gym, or maybe watch TALLADEGA NIGHTS. BORAT's in the player, though. Can't drink anything either. Trying some different meds I just found. Could be a bad mix waiting to happen, and I'm all alone in the house. Really liking Cher. I think I like everything she's ever done. Sat outside for a while earlier, and it was very nice. No flies.

■ 10:17pm: have decided that what makes or breaks a journal isn't the diction, like I thought, but the point of narration. And the intended audience. There's something tying those two together, I'm pretty sure. Something it's possible to luck onto, but not really do on purpose. My ears really hurt.

■ 11:58pm: BORAT was good, but I really could have done without the naked fight. Should have watched TALLADEGA NIGHTS again.

*Day 3:*

■ 12:00pm, or am, whichever one's midnight: only two chapters to go, but I'm going to save them for tomorrow. Also, it's scary to write the end. No clue what I'll do instead now, with the rest of these hours

■ 12:45pm/am, I don't know: accidentally did five more pages. Still very jittery. This definitely isn't fitting into a hundred pages.

■ 8:19am: too much hot sauce again. Been up for a while, but had to wait for chapter nine to gel. Waited and waited for the music video I wanted, but it never came on. Onward. Faster Pussycat at high volume now. I think "House of Pain" is this novel thing I'm writing. "Five years old and talking to myself."

■ 10:02am: finished. One hundred three pages, looks like. Love it. AMAZING STORIES. Not going to read it all through again now for a few hours. Still fourteen left. Thirteen and change. Put too much of myself in it, but that's always.

■ 10:18am: reconsidering the epigraph-thing. It might have to be "House of Pain." Been listening to that song so much. Now I know where the mime came from, anyway. Never realized that was the lyric until now.

■ 10:40am: just had to look 'missile' up in the dictionary. And Faster Pussycat won't work for the epi, nope. Because of the first line. Sucks. Spellchecking way too early now, but need to get it printed, polished. Lots of tense-problems as the thing started speeding up, wrapping around itself.

■ 10:45am: this Word07 spellchecker is a completely different beast. One I love. It learns, and checks for the right-spelled word in the wrong place, which I have pretty serious, stupid issues with.

■ 10:02pm: recap of last twelve hours:

■ 11:30: buffet.

■ 12:25: STARDUST, which rocked.

■ 3:00: print the novel up.

■ 3:40: gym, & read novel very closely.

■ 9:00: finish novel. Still like it, which is rare.

■ Now: about to enter all the corrections. Actually going to be a clean mss this time. Last time was sloppy as can be, I think.

■ 11:14pm: still correcting. Keep writing more than I mean to. Half-nervous. Forty-four mins. No, forty-six. Now forty-four probably. Being careful not to make any additions that up the page-count, though. Happy to be keeping it low.

■ 11:42: done deal. Now just to save it on the flash drive, truck it to the office in the morning, get it printed and mailed. Eighteen minutes to spare.

*Stephen Graham Jones*

—

And, as for the year since, it's been a lot like this:

**ME:** It's got this, like, this big, um, I guess you'd call it a caterpillar, only it's sentient, and in the future, and the 'camo' part, that's where—

**CHIASMUS:** We already said yes, didn't we? Is this connection good?

**ME:** I'm just. Um. Did I mention how fictional this was? I just made it up, I mean. What I was saying earlier about three days not being enough time to lie, *that's* what I was lying about.

**CHIASMUS:** You keep saying that.

**ME:** I just don't want anything bad to happen.

**CHIASMUS:** To . . . ?

**ME:** I don't know. Everybody. This, the planet.

**CHIASMUS:** And don't say 'just' in relation to 'fiction,' please. You do know who we are, don't you?

**ME:** It's just a story's what I mean. It doesn't involve me at all. Hardly. Except for where it has to.

**CHIASMUS:** . . .

**ME:** Okay, okay. Is it possible, can y'all, like, control who does and doesn't read it, maybe? There's certain people, I mean.

**CHIASMUS:** Individuals?

**ME:** Classes. Types. Uniforms. ~~Relations~~. Forget it. It will say 'novel' on it somewhere, won't it? Have that disclaimer?

**CHIASMUS:** It's assumed.

**ME:** Good, good. Thank you. I just—I wouldn't want—

**CHIASMUS:** So let [us] get this straight. You want your novel about a 'camopede' to be itself someway *camouflaged*, so as to keep you out of some trouble you rather distinctly perceive?

**ME:** [subject may have averted his eyes here, and covered his mouth, nevermind that this isn't even a phonecall, but the dramatized distillation of a series of email

communications]

**CHIASMUS:** Hello?

**ME:** Maybe we should start over, like. Did I tell you about that bunnyheaded zombie novel I have? or the one with the wrestlers?

**CHIASMUS:** They're made-up as well, right? With lots of quotation marks around the 'made-up' part?

**ME:** Well, yeah. But they're really made-up, like, from nothing.

**CHIASMUS:** What are you saying?

**ME:** . . .

**CHIASMUS:** [here floated author's first name through the phone in a way at once tolerant and impatient—perhaps in the same way you would coddle a hyena, had it just 'accidentally' eaten some item you valued, and you were now having to wait around for said item, and make nice in the meanwhile, the sun beating down on you the whole time, and somebody back in the grass honking the horn at you, and this hyena just grinning and grinning, its nastymatted tail sweeping a clean little arc out of the savanna, these long lines of saliva trailing from its black lips]

**ME:** Nothing. [eyes averted again: is there something against that wall? Shit, no, no—]

**CHIASMUS:** Hello? Hello?

Or something like that.

And then, about two seconds after that to collect blurbs (we had four seconds total, I think, as the book wasn't picked up until—May, maybe? Right around then, and we still had to dream up a cover, and figure out how to do the text, and, luckily, my editor Trevor Dodge was able to get all this done, don't ask me how). Blurbs for which I'm so so grateful. Means so much to get support from writers I really respect:

Two unreliable narrators, a bunch of suicide letters, and a plot that collapses on itself just like the characters do—Stephen Graham Jones is our contemporary Jorge Luis Borges.

—Michael Kimball, author of *Dear Everybody*

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Stephen Graham Jones's novel *The Bird is Gone* was the most brilliantly original book I'd read in years, but *Nolan Dugatti* may top it. Like Lethem and Murukami before him, Jones mines his genre fiction past to bring us a work of startling literary merit. Mystery, horror, sci-fi: the ingredients are all in there, and the chef—as confident and creative as ever—knows exactly what he's doing."

—David Goodwillie, author of *Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time*

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Suicide notes from a father who can't quite manage to kill himself, the nine final hours of customer support at a help desk for a video game no one has played in almost a decade, train-length, time-traveling, hyper-adaptive super-centipedes, lethal shrimp cocktails, ninjas (blind and otherwise), and a posthumous Pong match all cryptically connect in this stark exploration of guilt, grief, and fear by the prolific Stephen Graham Jones. And did I mention that it's funny? Unplug your consoles, kids, and play this book.

—Zack Wentz, author of *The Garbageman and the Prostitute*

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Stephen Graham Jones has one of the most restless and individual imaginations in American writing today. This strange, subtle story of father-son disaffection and disjointed love is told with his signature narrative inventiveness and dark humor. It moves forward with a gently predatory Kafkaesque logic that will draw you in and leave you remembering other lives, while wondering more about the one you call your own.

—Kris Saknussem, author of *Zanesville*

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Stephen Graham Jones continues to deftly demonstrate that there's something warped and even a little scary behind the curtain of our culture. At once funny, poignant, and unsettling, *The Long Trial of Nolan Dugatti* pulls it back to reveal the guilt and existential drift resulting from our attempts to escape.

—Patrick Schabe, *PopMatters*

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So, yeah. Nolan Dugatti. Like Jim Doe and Pidgin and LP Deal, like Hale and Doby Saxon, I'm him, he's me, we're neither together and twice something the farther apart we get from each other. It's why I keep sending them out to the shelves, I suppose.

Hope you like it.

be famous,  
*Stephen*