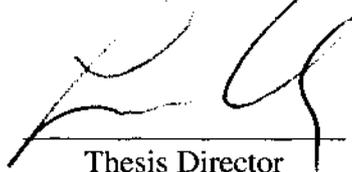


# **a forty-eight year old burglar from San Diego**

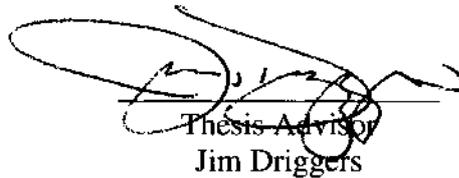
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a forty-eight year old burglar from San Diego

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a forty-eight year old burglar from San Diego

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Rapture

I was putting on dirty socks  
looking out my window  
and thinking I had  
something to do this morning

My mother was nearly struck by lightning when she was pregnant with me. She said the bolt singed the grass. And also that it smelled like burning plastic. She said that the thunder nearly broke all the windows, but my mother sometimes exaggerates. I think that she may have even exaggerated me on a dark night in January with a bottle of Jack Daniels in one hand and my dad in the other. I couldn't say. I wasn't there.

My fingernails are getting long. I wish I could take my fingernails and use them to buy coffee on a rainy day as though fingernails were some forgotten currency. The fingernail on my right index finger has to be worth at least forty eight cents. But I've been wrong before. Once at a bar I tried to buy a scotch-water with a chipped tooth. The bartender said, "Keep that up and you'll leave with more than one chipped tooth. I'll knock your whole fucking mouth out."

The place was a shithole anyway; one of those bars that smell like my grandmother in her bathrobe.

"Fine." I said. "Suit yourself." I had already made up my mind to start going to nicer bars.

Like I said though; my fingernails are getting long. When I was a kid one of my most favorite books was a nineteen-eighty-five Guinness Book of World Records. My dad wanted to see if I could break any records with my birth and wanted to know just what all I was up against. So he read it while my mom was in labor with me. On page seven hundred and four there is a picture of the man with the world's largest fingernails.

I don't quite have that guy beat. His fingers were so long they had curled up and over themselves like ancient pythons. The man had the Great Wall of China growing from his pinky finger. In the caption under his picture it doesn't say that his life long ambition was to be a great and fantastic piano player. Nor does it say that he hand stitches his own line of jeans for the Gap.

He is the Mount Everest of fingernails. I am clipping mine right now. In thirty three minutes, because I am typing this too, I'll have my fingernails in a bucket under the sink where I shave. Fuck climbing mountains. I'll steal some coffee.

---

I did a line of coke off the kitchen table and decided that all I wanted to do was read *Pictures from Brughel*. I ran to the library. And plus I had to take a huge shit and needed something good to read. My bathroom library is full of very fine material but *Pictures from Brughel* is not included. In fact if you would like you could maybe send me a copy for Christmas. I would shelve it gently between *Les Fleurs du Mal* and *Ariel*. I would make my bathroom reading sparkle. I'd even read it when I was taking a piss.

My adventure turned into complete disaster. The cocaine hit me at the most awkward moment. And well...well I fumbled. I dropped *Pictures from Brughel* right into the toilet, right before I was about to sit down.

It was just like this Holocaust class I was taking. And I was standing there with pants down, which didn't really help me feel better about anything. I learned recently in this class that Adolph Hitler stole so much art during the Holocaust that the paintings he stole were over a mile long if you were to line them up. And I don't really pay that much attention in that class.

It's an utter travesty no matter what way you look at it.

I felt like the biggest walking butthole in the world.

...

these are poems I wrote about me and other people

\*\*\*bad posture

I grew bad posture  
on brown pleather  
bus seats

knees crammed  
into the seat in front

back making a halfassed U  
to be more like a dolphin

this all through second and third grade  
wondering all the while  
with my head turned up  
why there were  
little holes in the ceiling

and where my  
bus driver  
drove her bus  
in the dark

...

Maddy

Madeline moves like  
the goddess of milk

with hips  
she bought  
at a yard sale  
used

the right light  
the thigh light  
makes them shine

Madeline moves in moons  
her body  
an orb of itself

hips ass breast thigh  
patterns of ribbons  
ribbons of Christmas lights  
ribald in tardiness  
vagrantly sensuous

Madeline's moons move milk  
a straightening curve

...

Sadie

a well liked bowlegged  
shy child with a  
song voice

straddled the air  
close to me  
awkward and unsure  
of a self-thing she

was beautiful enough to  
hide a smile  
behind her voice that  
soaked the sound  
a feldspar ring

almost as though her  
souls was made of sound

all she said  
“my shorts used to be my  
brother’s who died”

...

me or something

when I was fifteen  
spry and high on pills  
I took a small craft hammer  
and  
smashed the video tapes  
my parents made of my childhood

I took small  
pleasure  
in it ever graceless  
hammer fall meticulous  
and blood handed

it took me about two minutes  
which amounts to about

forty-eight days a second

...

I finally got to where I would push around panhandlers. It was kind  
of a long time coming

Found Poem: Luis (taking a shit reading national geographic)

hysterical his  
children would die  
from starvation

hysterical and depressed  
of course it would never come to  
starvation

manure serving as a crucial link

unavoidably little, the black turds  
metaphysically commune with stomachs

hysterical and depressed  
of course it would never come to  
starvation

manure serving as a crucial link

obviously, they were all doomed

...

---

I have never been able to believe that things existed as they are all the time. I like to think that when I turn my back on a bird in flight, it turns into a freight train or a bathroom on an airplane or an apple orchard. People are the same way. You might be you right now but in thirty seconds you could be a street sign in Nebraska or a shotgun shell in Panama. Open yourself, let the world swallow you.

---

### Swimming Lessons

One sad sweet summer shade day I spent drinking gin at nine and swimming laps while my father stood at the pool ledge and clapped eagerly and whole saint heartedly with his fat face glimmering in the shallow end as clouds made shadows and birds too hot for singing slept in their shade dreams angelic and fat. My father was a curt abrasive man, long given to the drink, whose vigorous excesses made him famous, who would tirade up and down Sleaford Street candidly, half clothed while my mother called him every vicious thing she could fathom from the porch steps and so there at the pool ledge he howled at me in a half growl chamber orchestra moan and belittled me as I came up for air, so as soon as he went to piss I stole his drink, slammed the warm gin, and filled it pool fluid and should have filled it with spit the son of a bitch.

the last resort

My father, my two brothers and myself were driving through Cairns looking for a good place to spend a couple of days and maybe play some golf. A place close to the beach perhaps, accessible to the reef obviously. It was a brilliant summer. My dad stopped at a Marriot that promised fantastic snorkeling in a luxurious forty foot deep lagoon stocked with an assortment of tropical fish native to the area. It also professed to have a great package deal with a pontoon on the reef. Lunch buffet included.

He said, stopping the car, "Kids I guess this is the last resort." Thank god we all thought, we got out of the car our shorts stuck to our asses with sweat. And we wondered off into only what would later be a dream and nothing more.

## Large Fries

I got heart burn like a  
bastard  
it feels like someone  
let loose fifty ninjas  
and jet li  
all up in my chest

why does fast food ice always sound like four thirty on a Tuesday afternoon? I wonder what fast food ice really aspires to be. Listen to it in the Styrofoam cup half melted. You always hear about ice clinking. Fast food ice never clinks. Fast food ice thuds. Fast food ice melts slow like a precocious metal. When people talk about the economy or elections I always think fast food ice. It's the mustache on the American Spirit.

Poem to young brother as children couldn't sleep

if you are quiet enough here  
if you blend the crickets  
into your breath  
if you think about nothing  
but the stars closing their eyes  
too  
softly and tender as the universe

then maybe we can get  
some fucking sleep

and I won't have to  
stomp your dumbass  
face in

...

---

in a winter where whispers  
were strung out like snakes  
blood thick and  
fat happy where  
a smile could spread  
heaven with a love damp  
throw rug you

threw diapers  
drug needles and ringworm  
with every

hey-how-are-you  
you mouth farted out  
of your lovely fuck stick  
face and I  
followed you like  
seagulls follow hurricanes

...

---

## Ass Bags

I was in 11<sup>th</sup> grade when Bethany Bagley made me realize that god obviously spent the weekends getting hammered drunk and driving his car into trees. Bethany was a monster in every way. She had this translucent skin that stretched taut and thin over her lumpy greasy body and she wore makeup that highlighted her pastiness and collected around the acne on her face like flour flakes on burnt biscuits.

She sat in front of me in Mrs. Mitchell's technical math class for dumbasses. Not that I was a dumbass but I failed algebra and had to take this shit.

She dropped her pencil while I was trying to staple some homework together. Her jeans slid halfway down her ass crack exposing butt pimples and stretch marks that wove up her jelly ass. And she was wearing some kind of g-string like someone had taken three fishing lines and tied them around a key ring. I screamed.

Not at the sight of it alone but because I was so disturbed I accidentally fired a staple into the bottom of my left eye. It's interesting too because my whole family has had something gone wrong with at least one of their eyeballs.

Anyway the shriek I let loose caught the class off guard; they all turned to look as Bethany struggled to squirm back into a better portion of her jeans and I had jumped up and was holding my left eye and pointing at her.

Naturally I was excused from class, and because Mrs. Mitchell was such an honorable and good natured woman she saw to it that I only get three days in school suspension for my latest "episode."

Yeah, but my whole family has had some deal with an eye. My dad hooked Cousin Trevor in the eye with a fishing hook. But it was cool because he got him while he was blinking although nobody realized that at the time, Trevor being freaked out and yelling and everybody screaming at the kid, "don't open your eye Trevor." So they get him to the emergency room and Trevor calm as a little cat looks up at my dad and says, "Uncle Glen can I open my eye?" And he does and the hook fell on the emergency room floor with a soft clink.

My brother stabbed himself in the cornea with one of those electric Christmas candles people put in their windows. Burnt his eyeball to all hell and now he wears glasses and looks good in them too.

I poked my mom in the eye on the way to preschool with the jagged end of a plastic laser gun. She had to go to the hospital.

And youngest brother too had a sebaceous cyst under his eye for like three years. It kept coming back.

Very much like Bethany Bagley's flabby ass. It wasn't just the physical side of her ugliness that disturbed me. It was a part of though. She would talk to the girl who sat next to her about how she got fucked by three guys at a party over the weekend and then turn around and cough on me and ask is she could copy my homework. Altogether a monster. So was the girl who sat next to her, Tina Ciardi, who laughed until she wheezed and choked on phlegm and then smiled.

There was another girl in another math class much later that again had the ability to make me shoot my eyes out with staples. But she was sweet natured and tender. You could tell by the way she picked at her pimples; with thumb and forefinger and then rolled the insides out in her palm and massaged it into her jeans.

Her name was Elizabeth something. Morgansomething I think, she had it written on masking tape on her lunch box. It was some kind of lunch box too, and you could smell it and how the box made everything inside it smell like plastic.

Elizabeth Morgansomething was the most carnally American girl I ever met. She carried a thermos of kool-aid and wore her grandmother's clothes. I know because she told me. And she had braces that were often full of ham and cheese sandwich and she laughed nervously, and sometimes when she laughed pieces of cheese would fly out of her mouth and land on your lower lip.

I am not averse to ugly people. But that utter train wreck that was Bethany Bagley. That's another story all together.

“this is seasonal dirty work”

the slogan  
of the meanest, dirtiest, most shameless  
organization ever

the black-jack-o-lantern-death squad

watch your asses

...

---

once there was a very pretty  
girl who  
laughed  
like cherries  
crashing on  
concrete

she tied her  
hair in  
pony tail  
rhythms and told  
ghost stories in the  
dark cold about  
an old man  
carrying a heavy  
bag of cherries  
through San Diego  
streets at dawn

she tied her  
socks in knots  
at low tide  
and screamed at  
the jelly fish that  
rolled onto  
the beach at her feet

like white cherry pits  
falling on sidewalks  
from an old man's mouth

...

Kerouac attack

in sea neon  
sea  
Nebraska  
serious now all alone  
serious as all hell  
in a gas station I  
saw the virgin Mary  
in shadows at a gas station  
and climbed the  
stations of the cross  
from the back seat  
of a Civic  
all the way to heaven

...

Tribute

When I was young every picture of me had me smiling like Elvis. All because my dad collected stamps. Sounds crazy I know but among his most prized stamps were his Elvis stamps and I really only wanted to make my dad happy.

He used to get hammered on the weekends and show me his stamps. And it was so hard to please the bastard with anything I did that all I ever wanted to do was look like his stamps and mail other peoples letters with my face.

---

Picture

Madeline is standing with her elbows on a long brown fence in Kansas. The sun droops behind her head like a woman bending over to check on her roast in the oven. Grass waves at her ankles. Madeline watches the cars pass on the dirt road. Their tires, like they are mad at something, throw up rocks. Her face looks like a cherry even a fat kid would be afraid to touch. It looks like if she took a deep breath the sun would fall right into her mouth, along with every single dirt road in Kansas.

Coincidentally

There is a railroad track in northern Minnesota that dodges lakes like a running back; a good running back, with surgical agility and not a bit of ferociousness. In America, in the deepest pits of our hearts, we like our running backs to be ferocious, like lions not housecats. Think Earl Campbell, Walter Payton, there is an embodiment, a sentiment expressed that is affecting in their running watching them almost makes you feel like you their pads. This railroad track is different; it's more like Marshall Faulk than I would care to admit, like Dickerson, Sanders, after they got slow, Sanders never got slow, Sanders is the exception, that was a bad example.

If this railroad track was like Barry Sanders it would bear the weight of cold towns. The burden would be milestones. I probably wouldn't pissing on it.

1 and 2

1

I had just finished my first novel about a cemetery gardener with cerebral palsy and it was accepted in the academic community with a flourish, a solid debut. I was working on a stipend at the university and living in the basement of a certain professor Thrash. Thrash had once been a mediocre poet. In the late seventies he published under the name Hugo Pounce and his work was somewhat acclaimed.

Thrash was a devout drunk.

He had about him a peculiar genius but he hadn't written a poem in years; in fact the last thing he published was an essay on Yeats that had been described within the community as plodding. He confided to me, late one evening between bottles of Jameson, that he had been working for the past eight years on a novel and was close to completion.

"It's a pleasant feeling," he said.

"I imagine it is."

He then produced a derringer from his coat pocket and blew his peculiar genius all over the kitchen wall.

Following the investigation the university decided that a leave of absence would do me well. The entire incident left me scathed. I had never been a murder suspect. It was grueling. An inhabitable mindset, I could write a sentence. I wouldn't do living there anymore. I moved into a small apartment and began work at a grocery store stocking produce.

2

A student by the name of Goolsby, I think it is, Goolsby or O'Meara, something distinctly Irish, expressed an interest in renting my basement. He is a fair poet it seems, juvenile, at times but decent. If I recall he had a collection published as an undergraduate.

I believe he said he went to Kansas. Or maybe it was Kentucky.

How he got way out to San Diego I have no idea, the fellow is charming enough however. He has a thick chin and his Midwestern sentiments sometime flounder around there. Harmless bastard from the looks of him.

I am close to finishing my seventh novel, The Bone Giver, about a cemetery gardener with cerebral palsy. The kid moves in a week from Saturday.

Laundry Mat Poems

(gangsta)

(reading Cynthia Ozick and a woman blends herself into my book and becomes an arm of the narrative. A beautiful middle aged arm of the story covered in rings)

Into the toil goes the toiled. And the soiled. So thinks Stella at the wash.  
And for a moment the world  
looks up and all is underwear  
all is lint and simple

seafoam stocking socks  
and for a moment the  
world looks up  
and aunts are locked out in Miami

left to burn  
or left  
to flick matches

the last asylum            so thinks Stella at the wash  
the final resting place for  
the diseased of mind

into the wash so thinks Stella  
soiled pants press at the glass  
and are pulled back again

everything spins in cycles

...

the bread mold downstairs  
has taken artistic license of  
my notebook and is giving a reading  
tomorrow at five forty five

I hear there will be a  
Musical accompaniment

...

---

(for Brautigan)  
At the age of forty-nine  
I am sick and tired  
Of socks

It's a short walk to heaven  
I could take it barefooted

...

---

Pockets

it is unlawful to remove this tag  
new material monthly  
    subscriptions available  
your cashier today was Daniel  
Daniel survived the lions den  
the loins den  
the garden of lions eden the edict of the garden of loins and the backbone of Daniel is suffused  
with marble  
suffice to say

new material  
    fold  
keep folding eyes down  
ears it is unlawful to remove material  
your cashier today was Caesar Augustus  
hair matted yarn  
bad breath broken  
teeth  
chipped bones  
send by hair mail  
    hold your breath  
keep folding  
creases and grease  
toss the receipts

...

---

I used to get high before baseball games  
and there was this pitcher  
(this after I was kicked  
out of high school  
and played rec league)

who threw nothing  
    but lazy eyed  
limp dick curveballs  
that hit the dirt at  
home plate and threw  
up jack shit

    Davis Sterns  
was his name and  
he had this  
semi-retarded sister  
that used to  
scream  
on the  
tin bleachers  
all game long

(Julie Grace Sterns, called her by two names)

I think I even sold him weed

anyway  
he threw a high  
3-0 curve  
letter high  
and I hit that thing  
like two miles

I still don't think it has landed yet  
not the point  
the point is

I should have taken that pitch  
walked to first

and stole home  
off that fat bastard

...

---