

Bandini's Disco Usufruct



a collection of poems
by Dennis Mahagin

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Biography & Acknowledgments



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Dennis Mahagin is a poet and musician from the Pacific Northwest. His work has appeared in *Absinthe Literary Review*, *Stirring*, *42opus*, *3 A.M.*, *Frigg Magazine*, *Thieves Jargon*, *Underground Voices*, *Unlikely Stories*, *Word Riot*, and *Hiss Quarterly*, among other publications. A first full-length collection of his poetry, entitled Grand Mal, is forthcoming in '09 from Suspect Thoughts Press.

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Pantoum In My Room – first appeared in “Hiss Quarterly”
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Porn Star’s Sunday Song – first appeared in “Juked”
Proverbs Of Quenapril – first appeared in “SpokenWar”
Quenapril’s 24-Hour Bug – first appeared in “Frigg Magazine”
When Advertising Slogans Go Horribly Wrong – first appeared in “Thieves Jargon”

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If this is Juneau, then how far to get to Nome, mi H o m i e ?

Are you mercenary?

Do you spike
your morning mouthwash with marmalade, sneering
into vanity mirror when the sweet peachy clumps
dapple your incisors—like Geronimo sucking
salmon roe for sustenance?

Would you allow that a little
alliteration is like two lovers licking linguine from both
ends and then meeting smack dab in bubbly center
where the succulent shoals of Satori meet
Sexual Alfredo?

Do you drive a Hybrid
automobile looks like Fred Flintstone fastback
alabaster claw foot Tub, with twinkle toes for wheels,
and can you lift that bad girl up like a Debutante's
bustle when you peel out and burn absolute rubber
through the muscular bowels of uptown Bedrock?

Let me tell you
something.

In the back of my mind
is a 10 speed reflector disk that constantly changes
colors like a mood ring obelisk, it fits so nifty like
optometrist's monocles in the little rotating
Slits:

*Now, do you prefer this... Or
T h i s ? —It sits*

like a cookie cutter in reams of cream
cheese, divinity fudge and medulla
oblongata, with a little Gene Simmons
tongue trill that goes:

*Oooooohh lotta oooooh lotta lotta lotta
ooooh lotta – oooooh lotta o o o o o h...*

Listen; I want you
to put your sweet mouth
a quarter inch or so above
this mirror o' mine, marry
that pucker of pout I've heard
so much about

to the honeyed spout of my right

cerebral hemisphere; then blow it
all out, hot and slow huffs on thumbnail
cameo soothsayer's locket, I want to see
hundreds of tiny thunderheads in purple
condensation, I want to smell corn silk,
musk, meringue on a moist middle

finger, I wish to hear the rattle, hum
and snake-bite hiss that comes from
forty four bushels of Independence
Day sparklers tossed into a shuddering
Maytag Dryer—until that poor
repairman ain't no kind of
lonely any more.

Aural Sex

Home from the pawn shop at last after
an itchy hiatus lying untouched for months
on a hot, dusty shelf sandwiched between
archery sets and mink coats,
my sunburst Fender Precision fretless
is petulant at first, going in and out of tune
as I slide my left hand lovingly from the nut
to the twelfth fret, and listen to her vent.

“I know baby,” I whisper into her
thrumming front pickup, “I know...”

So I coax her, pinching the sweet harmonics
as so many sweat drops from stiff nipples under
painful baby callus buds, and she responds
at last, then—opening up
the dark, rich and heady overtones. So I pluck, hard
insistent rhythm with the first two fingers walking a
riffle of yellow pages, double stops and slurs.

When I’ve got her
going good, I bite my lip, and launch
a frenetic Jaco Pastorius bass line, picturing
Joni Mitchell’s face contorted in the throes
of climax.

I slap my palm on the swelling
crimson cutaway, and bang her
whole body against my hip,

squeezing out every last drop
of feedback...

She’s beside herself by then,
and starts to moan like my good girl, the sounds coming
out of the amp causing all the neighbors to blink, and cock
their ears, involuntary as a blush spasm: a note bent
outside the root chord in vibrato-hum
until you can’t hardly
stand it.

Gilded Cage Smacks Of Sanctuary

A fine
fine line
indeed—knots
on the nylons

binding wrists
to bedposts,

musky blindfold of thong
and pasties—like swimmers'
goggles, and her hot mouth,
inches from my ear:

“What makes you think I’d
ever let you leave, darling?”

She pulls back the tangy
panty gag from my lips—just long
enough to let me gasp in reply:

“What makes you think
I would ever... want to?”

There is a smattering of ecstatic
applause from the mockingbirds
and grackles in the birch branches
just outside our window,

then her fingers dig
into the drenched nest
of hair on my heaving
chest, and it starts up

all over again.

This Poem Has Not Been Rated

I want to write blue movies
for *Lifetime for Women*,
torrid scripts with 30-something Tori Spellings in 'em,
champagne flutes, plunging necklines, and bad actors
wearing wine-dark sharkskin suits.

My heroine shall be out of her depth at Vanderbilt
Law School, awash in blue pools of torchlight, torch-
light carried for Sensitive Dude with alpine scent,
Fabio locks and Alan Jackson accent; when my
torrid Tori is two thirds done

in by the blood-red Hedge Fund
Sharks, she makes a run
for it—in cigarette speedboat chase down the flank of
Gulf Coast, her long blond tresses windblown, lashing
her ghostly face, rooster tails, sea spray, roseate remains
of the day... Oh, I so want to write these blue light

movies—it's never too late
for the turning, roiling white water roundabout, 360
degrees and Sensitive Dude's done hooked all crimson
sharks safely in a heroine's barrel, crow-hitched like
Rickshaw to a Slow Boat...

At the absolute end
of her rainbow, Tori is a tort lawyer, she's got
Sensitive Boy scissored in her marble foyer,
ah, the long tresses of Tori, 29 kinds
of new cool whip, from corded neck to writhing
hips, arched backs, flash cut, and grind, meeting
of the minds – lobe-biting, nail-raking trip-
hammer tandem, mysterious, this writing,
comes randy, and at random.

Happy endings
are just niches, brimming
with ambition, I wish to
write these movies for
a lifetime, for women,
for women.

Porn Star's Sunday Song

Porn Star drives a Jaguar car, steers with hands under-lapped at six and six thirty o' clock—as if cupping his Payday Package.

Porn Star got him some Onstar, and Smart MP-3 on the dashboard plays Johnny Cash when he whistles through gold tooth inlays—and ahhhh, the sweet fire engine red leather seats, Porn Star controls the heat, any damned way he may desire.

*

Porn Star gobbles B-12 and energy bars between sessions, chewing over Friday morning Money Shot, wherein Producer got into the choreography a bit too heavy like a Lee Strasberg guru, as if together they created hard art, and not pornography:

“THAT’S IT...COME ON HER TITS!... COME ON HER
WRISTS OR QUICK-BITTEN LIPS, COME IN HER
JASMINE-SCENTED HAIR—SHOOT YOUR
QUICKSILVER LOAD ANYWHERE!”

Porn Star weathered the drip of Key Grips’ derisive laughter, shrugged, flossed and popped a cinnamon Altoid-coated steroid, after.

*

Porn Star knows the Score, been socking away Rainy Day Bread for a decade or more, sometimes he winces when thinking of the Frat guys who blink and curse on the cusp of auto-erotic climax when camera has happenstance to zoom in on his eyes: “Oh fuck, not HIM!” they cry, “that’s GAY, get the Camera back on that hot bucking slut and let it STAY!”

*

Porn Star arrives at Starbucks on Rodeo Drive—sometimes the people glare, or beg for camera phone High Fives... Porn Star stares out the window, past his next Mandatory STD test, and ED Wonder Drug spokesperson requests, he dreams of misty grape arbors, the bliss of unscripted ardor, icebergs arriving at lunchtime on Alaskan Carnival Cruise Line... — “*maybe a love shack in Adirondacks, nothing but hers and mine*”... Porn Star pines for the fizz of pop rocks in the hot spring, beach walks, pillow talk—a dozen wistful things like wedding rings and Salton Sea honeymoon sand spars.

Not every body in this world is lonely, but some of your
Porn Stars are.

Pop Song

There's a blue note in my bloodstream
that won't respond to anti-toxin macro-
biotics or positive affirmations,

its sound, a little hard to pin down, halfway
between a bullet ricochet on spaghetti western,
and the glissando screech
of a starving gull, set to go dumpster diving
in my guts,
and maybe never come back up, again.

These mood swings, like Telecaster strings
wrapped an octave too tight, with clothes pins
for tuning pegs on femoral arteries, shaky,
shaky sea legs, it's bound to be
the death of me

yet not necessarily in the key
of Nasty Nell with nails on chalkboard,
or Clint Eastwood in hounds tooth
jacket, snarling: *Make ... My ... Day...*

but rather the stone cold
phlegm rattle in Mailman's
esophagus – one fat bubble
of an Adam's apple piston-pumping
in a welter of gulps

as he hands over my test results
by certified parcel post, ruddy Mister
Mailman standing there amidst porch top hoarfrost
like a mortuary sentry with clipboard at crotch
level—waiting for me
to sign, while right down
the hall in my laundry nook
an overloaded dryer humps
and thumps, saying only:

TOLD YOU SO I TOLD YOU SO I
TOLD YOU SO I TOLD YOU...SO I TOLD YOU
SO I TOLD YOU SO I TOLD YOU SO I TOLD...

Oh, Red Rubber
Dirge Ball, floating in whirlpool of minor thirds
like a Limbo Banshee across the spider cracks
and accents in my Fake Book, your
devilish tri-tone chorus does take

sweet wind from my sails, so I rest
awhile, dreaming

of a brand new sand box—just ripe for the banging
of beach pails and sea shells by pewter mallets lined
with silver—and all around ring the effervescent sounds
of playground kiddie squall and ice cream truck ditties,
the standard gamut of calliope bells and whistles for
different drummers of every stripe—suckers and sticklers
lost on onomatopoeia soap bubbles and monocle milkweed
spores zippered wide open on a warm summer
day, and what
would you say if I, say, conjured
a lemon sun to wash it all down?—to smash
these lousy thunderheads as metastasized blastocytes
into harmless particle gas... yes, that's right—if you
want me to
I'll surely dream a diva who
can flat shatter glass... now,

listen!
—and she just
might.

Pantoum In My Room

Obsessively clutch-counting the crescents in my chain-link fence,
meticulously frightened of what I might do next, and when you drop
a gawker's panty gauntlet on my choppy train-of-thought, you ought
not let it land—on second-to-last sidewalk crack swashed in sewer gas.

For I'm downright frightened of what I might do next
—a stomp-and-buck dance on spillway of fire ants?... Yet my
scruffy red Keds don't touch the white-hot sidewalk cracks,
not a chance dear—not ever a chance...

Do-Si-Do and Allemande Left, I'll make the right
light switches flip-trip like Pez candy levers put a
grape tang on the tongue, you take a big chance—
tapping into my trance, dear, I'm afraid of what I

might do next a Tourettes Tic directs
you straight to my stick,

in the sweet dark I'll drop my sweat pants
anywhere.

Mr. And Mrs. Hughes Make Up And Wake The Dead

Sunday morning, and Sylvia
works the crossword puzzle with a
race track pencil stub bitten to the quick
like a cocktail swizzle stick.

Sylvia says: “Hmmm... Fauntelroy. As in
Little Lord. Or is it Fauntleroy? With an ‘l... e...’
in the second syllable?... As in *fondle*?”

Ted shakes his head: “Must we start
again now sweetheart?”

“Oh Teddy you know I’m so reminded of that clever cartoon
on the Telly, wherein a stuttering sailor sucks greasy spinach
strands through his lung scars as salve for a wilted stalk.”

Sylvia blithely flicks her fingernail at Ted’s pale-blue boxer
shorts hanging on the handle of the bedside Hoover, and regards
the croissant crumbs on his chest as a swash of nascent gray
hairs which, like ashes from a flue, she rightly blows
away, and then Sylvia continues:

“And this skinny hysterical bitch with tits the size of olive pits is
terrorized again and again by Uncouth Lumberjack—only to find
sweet succor in the arms of her sailor chattering back the night
like a rabid ground squirrel!”

Ted bangs
the Op Ed page against his naked thigh,
stifling a sigh. “The work,” he replies. “Darling how
many more times shall I tell you—that our work
is the only important thing?”

“Oh yes, but then Mister Puffer Fish and that rakish bitch
they seed a spawn. And it will be... such a sweet child. As
will ours.” Plath peels back the satin sheets. Her forefinger
feels the flutter-pulse on her husband’s member—stiffening
like the ribbon spine on a dog-eared collection by Keats.

She whispers:

“Such a beautiful baby boy, yes. I can see
his pewter eyes pin wheeling like mercury pellets
in a Petri dish, my darling. And that solitary lock
of hair on his shiny pate—quivering so, like Cupid’s
bow when he’s held his aim for far too long.”

Comes the blitzkrieg siren
in Ted’s flaming red ears again,

together with Call and Response
of thin-air muses gathered like blue
theater gadflies on a Best Boy's
gaffer plank:

*"Her talent is so very
delightful to watch unfurl."*

*"Oh yes, and this girl will
get the upper hand yet. See...
How she inflames him!"*

Tricky tip-of-tongue memories seed a cloud-poem
Mr. Hughes will write tomorrow about Rage, and
Revenge, wherein the head of some unlucky beloved
is wind-lopped like an amber sucker shoot on tap root
drooling slivers of white-hot sap.

Through gritted teeth Ted growls,
trying in vain to hush the voices:

"NOT NOW!" he shouts
above Sylvia's own throat-
choked moans, pulling her

hair harder and
harder with both hands—yet
knowing full well this marriage
of heaven and hell
can't last.

When Advertising Slogans Go Horribly Wrong

Part I — Choosy Mothers Choose Jif

... which is wholly unfortunate
for Skippy, who must watch
Choosy Mother

conduct her obscene finger-licking trysts
in the shadows of the pantry with her panties
in a sopping bunch about her bended knees,
leaving poor pitiful hubby Skip to hang
and trip, in such a painfully awkward
sucker's niche—on musty shelf sandwiched
twixt a bitter sauerkraut jar and jumbo box of
Ritz crackers mottled with Kelly green mold ...

“SKIPPY IS A CUCKOLD!” screams kitchen Cuckoo
Clock every hour on the hour, until Skip he just can't

take it no more, he goes down to the Condiment Shop,
gets his Forty-Four out of hock, Skip he lies in wait
for Choosy Mother to slickly lick her way between
two diaphanous sheets of Wonder Bread, bobbing up
and down—giving Jif the absolute best head of his
whole sorry shelf life, and Skippy he rolls out

from behind the hummer of a fridge like Robert
Mitchum—he empties the whole chamber of smoking lead
into Mom's snaggly spinal cord—then reloads, finishes off
the sandwich nice and slow, before heading downtown to turn
himself in at the Trader Joes – Slash – Psych Ward, where
Skippy continues to live out his days, Pea-Nuttier than a
Holiday Fruitcake.

Part II — Red Bull Gives You Wings

...and these wings they
ever so slowly,

slowly
rip through your Latissimus Dorsi
like angry pink Thalidomide stumps
slick with amniotic fluid congealing on
shark fin shoulder blade slits where these
ungodly twitchy fetal wings sprout

a millimeter per month
or thereabouts, with a sound like tin strips ripped
from a tar paper shack by legions of illegal mongoloid

hunchbacks wielding crow bars, drywall trowels
and splintered step ladders, but
the only thing to keep
in mind that really matters is

Red Bull Gives You Wings!—

and when the Indian Summer finally bleeds
out, you somehow summon the requisite courage
to inspect the hideous appendages using quadruple
mirror refraction from the bathroom of the Motel 6
on Powell Boulevard in Southeast Portland, Oregon;

and these embryonic lipstick-red
bull wings appear reflected as wads of chewed-up
Bazooka Joe bubble gum on warped and buckling
flesh colored church pew planks.

“THEY BURN! OH, THEY BURN SO!!” you shriek
at the very top of your flapping lungs
with at least an eon and perhaps
even two more
to go—

before your purgatorial
Red Bull wings stretch
to their true and absolute
natural span, and

you can’t help but wonder
what manner of monstrosity
perpetual and recursive

errands the pitiless Gods will reap
out of you then.

Never Shove Things In Your Ear Unless They Cut You A Paycheck For It

Awful fat
nagging dollop of caustic ear wax and a
crystal meth addict named Mindy of Kansas
City Kansas went at it w/ firm new toothpick
in lieu of Q Tip,

on that strip of kiddie park
by the gushing fountains on First Street,

and at the exact instant
the diminished minor-major earthquake hit it
made poor Mindy pop her savaged cochlea
like a ripe red zit, all that shaky quaky
junkie equilibrium going off
when Mindy landed on the undulating bluegrass,
something so nasty like ancient tree sap poured
from the gnarled knot hole between ear lobe
and clavicle, while fifteen hundred

miles away, a husky producer's voice purred
in Katie Couric's Miracle Ear: "Sorry doll,
lousy four point two on the Richter and
nobody dead so far as we can tell.."

Mindy is hurt, her scarred fingers claw at the rich
red dirt, but nobody on the quad wants to hear
her, now — at six seconds to Air when
superstar Katie Couric sucks
those famous chipmunk
cheeks, nodding her head so imperceptibly the Dow
Jones falls eight tenths of a point by proxy, Katie's
sweet anchor voice, it's bound

to ring out
like a trail cook's tubular triangle bell
at dusk, for 25 million of us trusting souls
— we'll listen to the sound by God we'll all
listen then, like our lives depend upon it.

Bob Ross The PBS Painter Patiently Walks Us Through The Peace Sign

Well now,
this week I think we'll start out
swashing our numbered canvas
with an itty bitty burnt
umber stick figure—

give him
a smiley sunspot for
pie hole,
red rooster ruff on beatific
brow, just ...

so,
and next?—
heck why not go
ahead and blow off
both his clown feet

with a rusty half-moon
Kandahar or perhaps Anbar
Provincial Claymore swathed
in creamy, wavy sand
swale disguise ... Okay-zee-
way-zee? ... Now, I think
we're ready for the upraised
Popeye-sized evangelistic arms
to come clean

detached thanks to sizzling white-hot shrapnel
spittle tracers from a Jihad dirt clod IED, until

Matchstick Boy, he
starts duck-walking
figure eights as though
dazed in the aftermath
of an awful Plains wheat
thresher mishap ...

Oh, I do think he's
starting to take shape

—look there!—

now he's spurting crimson geysers
from a neck that's lost its loose-strung
head in a cartoon balloon feud with Connie
Chung over the most arousing, yet
self-effacing

way to phrase a Nightly News
body count.

Okay-zee,
what say we
go ahead and
give him his
arms back?

That's the kind of civic
generosity PBS is famous for!

Then if he
hugs himself
real tight, we'll
protract a
perfect circle

'round the Chop-A-
Block torso, and he'll be

just right for
lapel pins, Volvo bumper stickers
and retro black light posters to adorn
the bedroom walls of deeply-troubled
adolescent boys.

Billy, Ray, And Melvin Have Their Say

Booted from the chat room, again,
Melvin464 sighs over stacks
of Montgomery Ward bra-and-panty
circulars, measuring his manhood
against the notched, splintered
yardstick he keeps in the closet.

Oh, the anagrams
and acronyms in those
discussion threads! — cliff note emotion
tags jury-rigged out of asterisks, semi-
colons, dashes and brackets
sperm-swimming across the browser bar
and did they expect him to get it all
through osmosis, or what?

One day he'll do
no wrong yes sir, snappy sharp
interface on My Space like Snoopy
with his typer on the doghouse roof
until he finally starts to fit in ...

*

Ray makes his way
past the Amtrak platform,
ducking quick down cement
stairwell emptying on Spring
Street in Seattle—
sixth city in as many weeks, in flight
from the federal men got him pegged an
Enemy Combatant since he threatened
the life of senator's daughter
phone sex girl, who'd cut him off, having lost
all patience with his deadbeat ass behind
on the credit card bill for the last time
he was going
to pay her ... he was.

He imagines the patina of sweat
on the pinched faces of his pursuers'
John Walsh clones in Hefner hunting
jackets— who would backslap, bump
and grind, shaking GPS cell phones
aloft like Zulu spears, closer

and closer each passing second
to striking distance, and Raymond
is weary now, so weary indeed.

*

Billy is a character, been tossing back
a few tequila birthday shooters at the strip
club, where his good buddies have pitched in
to buy him a lap dance from the best dancer
in the state—Baby of the angel face and
jet black ringlets bubbling down to mango
ass cheeks,

body of a ballerina draped over Billy's bone
like a rock climber on a cliff face, sweet Baby's
breath in his ear as she keeps her eye glued
on his reaction.

His friends are watching too,
bright-eyed and avuncular, but a mite
wary: Billy's a character, liable at
any moment to pull something:
maybe just a tug on that
gold nipple ring in Baby's left
breast, as an envelope test for
the Samoan bouncer brothers
glowering at the bar—more
than ready to put it
back on him

now in the alley,
up against the strippers' backstage trailer
and Billy is spraying black bowel blood in geyser arcs,
spitting teeth like ivory beads popped from the long
wavy crimson chin strings;

Billy gap-grinning and breathing
hard, bracing for another blow, shouting across
the cul-de-sac at the propped casement window
beneath the canopy porch of the dressing room
where Baby crouches,
watching...

“What say, baby doll!
Hey you know one day we're all
GONNA LOOK BACK ON THIS AND—”

skinny, pale penlight of moon
skittering across an ash-gray
gravel-patch,

turquoise and topaz
on fat flashing fists,

a sound,
like the stutter of a sprinkler head
periscope-peeking from the earth,

another groan,

a window slamming shut.

Quenapril's 24-Hour Bug

Dorothy Parker, she said it so very well—what “Fresh Hell” indeed?—this sneak attack on upper G.I. tract, your churning guts in a serious uproar no Purple Pill nor half-pint of Pink Stuff can touch.

Coming up on dusk now,
and you've an idea the gastro-viral culprit that ails you
hails from the nether regions of a government cheese brick
with mold spots mistaken for pepper jack pimientos, perfect
for wolfing down with hot crossed buns during *Jim Lehrer's
News Hour*, and oh what ungodly fun!—to watch Deadpan Jim
putting down sound bytes might double over a man of weaker
intestinal constitution.

On tonight's menu—Memorial Day Sniper Carnage in a
Pensacola shopping mall, shrapnel-speckled Kabul Capons
toasted black with entrails marmalade on bumper grille of
explosive roadside Volvo, and a father in Baghdad,
Florida—sky-high on methamphetamine, who thought
it might be a gas to fry his newborn baby for twenty
two seconds in a Kenmore Deluxe microwave.

Yet it isn't until the very hour *American Idol* kicks in,
that you begin to hear your Fair Weather Friend again—a flatly
cynical cricket who's improvised a bachelor's bungalow amongst
your apartment rafters, insistent little critter, this one, with no ax
to grind, save for the stunning acoustical feat he brings off with lyre
of elytra, and very little sympathy for your abject gastric plight—
in dovetail with semi-agoraphobic night fright.

“Ah, the Human Appetites!” this bug trills, “Always your
own worst enemy, makes for a long hot vigil for the tortured
soul, notwithstanding your rash-red, burnt-raw porthole!”

“Oh yeah?” you retort, “Squeaky wheel gets the grease, yet
returns me no peace? My ceiling, being as it were your sanctuary?
Surely the Back 40 saw grass can't be half as scary! Go, make
sport with your strident cohorts!”

“You don't get out much, yourself ... All too plain,
and I see ... I SEE!”

When the next diarrhea wave hits,
you take a steady palm and press it into peritoneum mound
beneath waist band going off as so many insurgents'
mortar rounds: “I'm broke ... And sick, to boot ... GOT IT?”

“Ah, yes!... Cheap-cheap. Cheap-cheap, sheepish, plus peaked—
but mostly CHEAP! And how very *con-veeen-ient*, for you!”

By 3 A.M., it's way past time
for another Milk of Magnesia run, and you're wondering
when the Southland Corporation might develop a Drive Through
Window for their 7-11 stores—oh, your poor head is where the fear
resides!—but not that hard, really, to abide the bright-eyed young
brunette graveyard clerk, with her wide hips and gap-toothed
smile—why, sometimes she even rolls her eyes the other way
while you cherry-pick from the empty penny candy aisle, rubbing
quick sardonic half-moons into a lean green cashier's apron, as
her thumbnail surreptitiously shoves down on the button
that turns off all the surveillance cameras mounted
in every corner of the damned store.

“Nonetheless,” you press upon the bug, “You best be gone by
the time I get back... and count your lucky stars this cross I carry
is a rung at least beneath dysentery, and not some newfangled
terrorist attack carried out with Sarin in the HVAC, or a ripe river
of designer E. Coli coursing through our municipal water pipes!”

Yet halfway down the front steps, you very nearly double
back. Could it be that you're missing him already?— that
despite what our guts are telling us, these really are the Salad
Days? Carly Simon said it better than anyone, it's all about
the Anticipation—until the corporate boys turned her best poem
into a commercial for Heinz ketchup, and she faded right back
into the woodwork. At the front gate, you wait up
for one long, lingering second—and it's then that you hear him,
muttering a slew of last words through an open dormer in your den,
just like you wanted him to, all along:

“Right, Friend! Because when the Bad Blood Cousin Locusts
finally descend, you'll wish to God I was still around, to make
your life absolutely miserable—if only for one more tincture
of Time.”

Proverbs Of Quenapril

I wouldn't care to venture Guess One about good
Intentions, but the road to Hell is most definitely
Paved with Christopher Reeve cervical columns
As so many serpentine cobblestones lacquered
With pitch-black cerebro spinal fluid; A bird

In the hand, Early or not, is either pecking away
At your sweaty, blood-flecked knuckles, trying
Desperately to fly the fuck out of there, or else
It's already suffocated, twisted and stock-still
As a Steinbeck Retard Pet. Necessity is a mother

Of many awesome addictions— who leaves a jumbo
Bag of Bisquick and rusty tin of tap water for her
Four children to fend for themselves, while she hits
Those mean streets, in search of Mr. Clean's most
Primo batch of methamphetamine; You can fool

All of the people most of the time, yet cease
Fooling yourself for an instant and get swallowed
Whole by a carcinogenic Fault line— meanwhile Absolute
Power is busy, busy always corrupting like rat tail blisters
On the talons of an insatiable Dominatrix priestess who
Shrieks like seventy two banshees, carrying you away
Across the scorched Earth;

The Meek
With ash-reeking tear streaks on torn cheeks, shall inherit
A mountainous High Definition Plasma Screen as a drive-in
Theater on a blissfully uninhabited inter-galactic outpost,
And when the last Holo-Graphic image is sandblasted
By a thousand mile per hour solar wind, these Meek

Lie down
In clean red stalagmite beds, wiping
Lapis Lazuli tears that pool and cool
In the very nipple cleft of diaphragmatic
Plexi—and then they cry and
Cry, over an eternity of
Wasted Lactation.

Euphemistic Triptych

Oh, fat red mnemonic
rubber band wrapped
tight 'round the wrist
of a witless recidivist;
and when it's
snapped

— “Owww, That Smarts To The Max ! !” —

paradoxically translates to
Keystone Cut Up, dumb as fuck
with bubble buttocks and chewing
gum stuck to crack makes one major
dingle berry, look

he's gone
and left car keys
in his truck again!
— with high

beams on all night
like to burn down Sears Die
Hard by degrees, burning
and dying so hard
by degrees ...

*

“Hey baby,
have you
seen my
Slim Jim?...
all I need is
infinitesimal
crack, like
how we hung
our speakers
back at Zip's
Drive In for
the flicks!...”

*

As last Resort, pour out
some Vegas sunset in mid-
April, break your heart
like hard tack
biscuit for sopping up
Cherry Slurpee from

upturned apple cart,

a twisted fish bone
lifted from steaming shank
of Alaskan salmon, slathered
in diced purple Crayolas
with garnish

of lipstick tips and grapefruit
gristle, never mind those wolf

whistles for a long cool
and lonely hooker with spaghetti
straps on the Strip, licking
her forefinger on MGM corner,
holding it

up to the impossibly dry
western sky

like a washed-up mime got
just one more clever skit
to try,

oh mama, why
not shake it out?
— a clean sucker
punch spiked with
stiletto, just one
squeeze,

make me taste
what you forgot

to have for lunch.

Spill

In my sweetest dream,
you are tattooing my trussed white ass
as flour-dusted pizza dough on a heart-shaped
cutting board,

while your twin sister stands under
the birthday pinata pony lactating Milk
Duds, Red Hots and
Candy Corn—

the pony, lactating, that is, not your
sister, and then you softly whisper:

“Aren’t you forgetting something mister?”—
pushing the bolus button at the base of my testicles
like a toaster lever, ‘till that prodigious penis it

pops right up,
and Sis is able to toss her lime green hula hoop
as a horseshoe bulls eye smack dab on the pulsating
purple head, while clapping out the funky rhythm
for first verse of *Mickey* the cheerleader song.

I’ve told you already
about the eye patch and permanent
palm prints on my pasty forehead, that came from playing
Patty Cake and Rock-Paper-Scissors with a paranoid
schizophrenic Three Stooges fan in Washington Park;

I let you know about our previous life together
as Appalachian flower children riding astral planes
made from my magic carpet tongue sparks
flogging your flint rock nipples.

I’ve given you the password to my heart
in all its anagrammatic permutations; but you seem
to insist this is nothing but a start; so herewith, at
last comes the story of my first puppy—
an Airedale named Chipper

who could jump
five feet into the air
to kiss my cheek, and then spin
and spin, like Brian Boitano,
all the way back down
to the ground.

Bandini's Disco Usufruct

At the end of the world, every jukebox — stuck
with only one selection left, so they punch it in, this boy
and girl, the very last lovers in an abandoned bowling
alley on Venice Boulevard.

A cherry-colored vinyl disc drops
in the stylus slot, and out comes an echo shot of chamber
strings and muted Strat — my God it's Barry White!
— and he begins to sing:

“My darling I ... can't get enough of your love ...”

Nothing amiss here, really, at the end
of the world, our boy and his girl show
no fear — in fact shortly they get busy
tossing a bright-blue Frisbee back and
forth across the abandoned bowling alley,
with strobe lights splashing on all the walls
like paint balls, and the mechanical Pin
Sweeper — Slash — Spotters in high gear,
chomping at the bit for those pins, retracting
and then attacking like prurient skeleton jaws
with freshly grinning dentition every fourteen
seconds, plus all the hand dryers going off
at once, heavy, heavy breath, and big black
bowling balls coughed from the Return Chutes
like lurid tongues ...

The boy grins, and spits
in his palm, then tosses the Frisbee — it arcs like a knuckleball
across ten lanes, buffeted on some mysterious pocket of convection;
he watches his girl skirt gutter ball troughs with long loping
deer strides and bunny hops, her eyes locked on the bright
blue prize, and when she hauls it in, she lets out
a little squeal, while Barry White cries:

*“I don't know I don't know — I don't know
why —”*

This boy, he's damned
well aware he'll never get it quite like
this, ever again, after all it's the end of
the world, those slanted skylights that frame
the bowling alley are all stained purple and
rust-red from the blood mist contagion,

not to mention those creatures out of doors who
look like Jan-Michael Vincent in *Buffalo 66*, goner guys
with tarnished steely eyes like pin balls and wheezing

breath, they're dying to tell the whole world about their
still-fervent needs and wants, if their forebrain fonts
weren't dried up like L.A. river in December, with synapses
that yet somehow retain squatters' rights in the cranium
—stubborn as a diapered John Fante in front of AMX
Mar Vista Bowl on Venice Boulevard, John

Fante the Scrivener, absolute idol of Hank Chinaski, utterly
blind and limb-less from the diabetes, dictating another Bandini
novel that grows in his mind while some flesh-eating bacteria
climbs the bridge of his nose—John Fante with bowling shoes
strapped to his weeping stumps, tin beggar's cup nudged
and humped by a darkly-stained crotch that's spreading ...

“Listen,” the girl breathes, hard, at
her boy's back, snaking her silken hands
beneath his shirt, sliding them up to cup
his pectorals, “you've never even told me
your hat size ...”

The boy grins
again, and goes: “Hey, I realize that, baby but
CHECK THIS OUT!” ... He breaks free
of her embrace, he aims his Frisbee
at a fresh set of pins on Lane Ten, then whips
that disc hard as he can, it whistles on a low line, striking
the head pin dead on the stripe, as if to decapitate a
honking-ripe Mallard duck. This pin spins, it totters, and
wobbles a bit, then after nearly half a minute
topples to the hardwood!—monkey-wrenching
the mechanical pin sweeper device in mid-rake; it lurches
there, stuttering, agape and then not—in the mouth
of the alley at the end of the world ... Outside

the wind begins to howl, while a lone jukebox
breaks it down—one more time how it's “*not
enough, it's just not enough*” ...

Our boy kisses
his girl's ear lobe, whispers her name ... *My
darling I*—and the scars hiss
and crackle in the vinyl,
as flame.