

A complex collage of images and text. The top portion features a blue sky with a yellowish-orange horizon. Below this, there are various elements: a landscape with a river and mountains, a person in a blue shirt, and several fragments of text. The text includes "id", "er.", "which determ", "cow ca", "loc", and "reduc".

Reykjavik

Dennis Mahagin



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Cover collage by Mark Mahagin



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Gambol w/ Pocket Rocket

There's a 2-drink minimum
in this sad, sad continuum; one sits up
next to the stage, and listen to me
bomb. Oh, I'll give you
a sadder one, too, how about
we're all young once?
Tip your server, she's as good as long
gone. Caution tossed, a cat call—the tall
cool shades of summer. Reykjavik, your fiords
cum prawn, ice bucket, and when a seafood
memory arrives, via platter, *we aim to get it
back*, solace or sweet repose; pretend the weighty
matters, one of those long rolling ladders or
stone-cold pyres they employ in public libraries,
seaside funerals. Memorex shatters a note that goes
higher, in through the outdoor Ella of the kitchen
heat, call it flint sparks of dearest Michigan
after dark. Couldn't fool you even if I wanted
to, and yet when that thing vibrates, try to hang,
groan, countless hours of ring tones, pipe dreams,
T storms and sufferings. You would-be hecklers,
I've got to take this, my opening, come a little
closer to the stage: whisper *we can get it
back*—if you've something to say,
best be done in strangest ways:
my first bit's a wish I get
to act your age.

What He Tried To Say @ the New NA

My name is Benzo and I'm a
half past it. By the way, who'd give a name
like that? Then squat
on a curb, with pager puree, Chicago blues?
All dressed down holding hands fused
by blame? Can you understand, it's really
Benzo, oh what does a Q Tip, dirty filter mean
to you? I don't want to get off on the
wrong ... here, listen, I don't want to get
off, don't want to get off
at all, those days so long
gone now the sanctuary of plate glass
is what we can't fall into.
Oh look, so prescient my cigarette
and it's shaking, orange tip sparks as a nebulae
gone sober. Sharpie magic, when they take your
plan, your pain away, power is higher than staying
clean, Buddha; and the diminishing will return
as a trillion shards of glass, glitter, smashed
crack pipes, redemption. I mean steam wisps rising
from a composition or crenellated roof the color
of fire trucks, napalm in the mourning, sweet
bloody asphalt. I mean, what I mean is it's nobody's
fault, unwavering rainbow: take it down with
white flag, -- finally sheets getting over
in the East: This is love, God above, this is
love, this is Love, my name is
Benzo and I'm so
not a drug.

Eulogy is an Indigo Sheep is a Streak is a Nite Crawler

At the grave, the wind was warm. A coffin
got winched into its trench.

Soon would come dusk, the anti-dew, groan
of a backhoe.

“We were hoping you might say a few?” Devan’s little brother Tim said to Uncle Lem, who was 86, with a withered claw and half-wishing to be down there, too. “Me?” said Lemuel, “ah hell, son, leave it be ...” Yet looking at the faces of the few mourners, he knew the real numb in this wake wouldn’t come from a simple warm wind, or tree limbs waving as feeling, as conductors’ wands: it fell on him, instead: “Why are you looking at me?” said Lem. “You all ... oh, alright then... My nephew, D, he...you all ... awww, you know? Had his demons not very well hid, but some kind of a soul, too. Kind, I mean, no kid... a man. He told me once, he craved the smell of paving tar... and quick pump diesel fuel islands, on account he said it reminded him of other lives.” A sob rose up from twenty yards east: it sounded like a jilted lover, hard duty, or a bad streetcar. “Lot of love in him,” said Lem, “when he wasn’t high...” One sob from nearby, it stilled the warm wind for the eighteenth of a second it took to die. A crow strafed the low-slung sky, it’s raking caw cry, going away, seeming to sense respect. “But it’s no secret I didn’t like him for other things he...you all ... oh, I dunno” ... Lem waved weakly at the sky: “I dunno, I dunno, I dunno ...” The wind, swallowing the rest of what he said, and couldn’t, a simple translation for the sobbing, and the dead. Lemuel, weeping like a spring by then, was a surprise not the least to himself as the light up there, cut by leaf smoke, horizon’s rim; a backhoe’s roar, warm, warm wind.

A claw pitched forth,
and the earth poured in.

Aubergine Was Snail’s Blood Before Parmesan

Oh Abalone, lightened his load to come out of that shell.
Then got to feeling ... better, maybe... and well, for a while,
been some aftermath of acne, or a scene
down at Walmart stacking the Corning Ware plates
of Kelly green, click, click, into the cart for the pot luck.
For any kind of luck, really.
Then Abalone hits me up, on Facebook Chat, open
invitation to the shore, says look man, when you be
down? ... Poor Abalone, I can hear his heart, his rant,
opening credits narration
for Outer Limits, packing light, for the In Flight, concentric
layers like onion control the Vertical. Thanksgiving in a ward
of some sort; lads, loads of crab cracking up; and his insistence
of a proper mode of pronunciation: “Look, not A Baloney, man
it’s Abalone, not Brian Dennehy, but Sly Stallone. Alone, got it?” ...
Carry on, and wonder: whether he still wears those
eggplant-colored cut offs, so tight, canvas straps, no socks,

greasy Go Vision glasses, and floppy Birkenstocks? Lemon
effervescent pomade, duck brim, easy for him, I suppose,
to spit in the face of change,

yet time will, yes time will
out ... it
will, yes, yes, happy trails, Ab.
Alone. Got a fishing shack up in
Bangor, but dreams mainly
of Reykjavik, crawling with
and always within his corkscrew,
ice augur, melted butter perpetual.
Ain't been laid nigh unto a couple
few decades. This life
will put a sweet hurt
on your ass.

Squeaky Wheel Gets The Nitrous Oxide Once Only in Reykjavik

Carry on
wisdom, as if eye teeth
depended,
floss, floss:
Do not let them fit you
for insane.

Lips make a purse
you may spit
the Jolly Rancher,
get on your bike again.
Pump the pedals past the rows
of randomly rotten molars,
a hail of bullets.
My hygienist is buying
an assault rifle on time.

"Help yourself
to a magazine," she calls out, so calm
one Hello in the waiting room where all

conscience goes, a pure cane stew
in a spout of nougat,
to be cured, the Indian way
the unclean
bicuspid, the well-insured
or self
Pay.

It's what you've got to take,
while we can, extra
flask of fluoride for the entropy
in the jockey box
sans cupcake
frosting: You've got to talk
to the voice at the Drive Through
like an old uncle who's very, very fond of you
yet worried, with nervous smile. A check-up
would ease the mind, as crack

on a sidewalk, numbing
the gums ...
come on, hummer; hurry
twelve speed, live the youth
before they yank it

indeed, sit up, sit up and spit
the wind for what it does to fears, rippling
tall grasses in summer, the distant rumble
of helios, frogs and
choppers. I say, hang

a hard left here
at the light, you begin
to understand, aight, too
much, aight

fruit smoothie
on such a beautiful day :
countenance bright
as any dime, a little bell on

the handlebar, you work it
like a Water Pic: it's a laugh,
it's a gas,
and it's going away.

Incandescently Lighthearted, Icelandic & Fortuitously Untitled

At any rate, in all-night
diners, alleys, arroyos, and ICU's:

Street fighters palm their shiners over steam,
or wait, worse: bad dreams demon, inner city
aneurysm, spider-cracked test tube. Waitress
o' nurse, their ho ho's and best dough boy bandage.

Squeaky clean triage,
bottomless lube.

Morphine drip,
TV trees; the suspended
IV's, a carousel of cakes.
The moon silvered, slivered on yonder
gooey shale ... coyotes and

corpsmen, running
out of time, out of luck.
Running out of room.

Flat lines bleep, in pain's glass, shimmer pale streetlight face.
Muzak and sirens bleeding fireflies at the scalded roof of the
mouth of the tooth called the world.

In roiling space, yes yes, resurrection Iceland, only
better: it takes place.

It takes
place.

Kahuna's Note

maybe not so brave
as we thought; now "big wave" got twin
meanings;
not to mention "pacific" ; yah, shoulda
have lightened up, I guess
more bra, stopped
to talk, especially
among the shattered homeless guys
on boardwalk, when dusk came, tide got out,
to ask their names, shout
AT FIREFLIES ! SHOUT AT FIREFLIES !
... coulda been a bettah
brudda, what I say, not hang
ten, or let the melancholy win,
strung out, pier one, per se, pooka shells upon puffed-up
pecs: every bad thing I spat at howlies clutching life
vests, the sodden red and jumpy heart shaped
cloth stuffing things, stuffing
things instead of
opening, pouring
out Love ... now,
sea bra, the sea comes in, as sunlight incubating tubular
din, white water arc, chunnel for a scarf dog so weary
of mist, at first; curl the purple-painted toes one by
one, aborted checklist: boogie board
of obliterated Pergalite, pineapple, assorted
fish barbs blown
utterly to sunder, and bubbles
bubbles' bubbles' on the water; calm
there, so calm, and it don't take that long:
I ain't a scared to meet the Father.

30 Year Reykjavikian Mickey

And remembering a particular liqueur
called Frangelico. No angel, mixed with 151, pineapple Julius.
Crushed ice in a Big Gulp. It tasted of sorrow then, rainbow
Ohhh motor oil and swirly, swirly blue lights, addiction.

And no reason to think it ain't working now, as then on two
Men of Cross, walk of the ambulance. No reason to curl the tiny
Widow's Peek, hairs of Raymond Carver. Or go there. No complaint,
fate accomplished, couple fingers, shaken, resigned, word no reason.
And some folks shot coke with dirty rum, streaks called bedlam
running down their arms as thorny crown, grenadine; never gave
another thought. But it was the worst sorrow, the worst I ever got,
that taste in my mouth as I tried to be awake. Some specter
of a tall girl, still haunting, still sucking venom from lemon head,
paper cut: Upchuck the worst dream something happens at the lake,
now, the whole arm numb, and you sit up, bolt straight,
for the feeling to ever come back. Walk around in the dark,
bumping into sticks of things, cursing, and crying, quick shaking it off.

FB This Cannot Be the Verse

Dear Zuckerberg,
Phillip Larkin's dead, we're
all suffering children here.
Some get close before
they metamorphose once
in late summer,
larvae be numbered, clear eye
of the Ouija, web cam, fish bait.
Social network? never had
any myself ... Listen
to the Cockney birthday wish,
a child's bated cry over every
buzz, Guvnuh, oh common
housefly ...
I will most likely outlive it, Phil,
Markie Pie: but I'm turning
into my Father, turning into my
father, the more I
Like, abide and
lie here.

Standard Zuckerbergian Status Update Through Icelandic Glass Lightly

Predatory lending, the cottonwood spores, oh talk, static
Trending on Twitter, tumble, the middle of the June street;
finger licking all over, swirly, sticky lint snow—in the eighty
degree unending Light, heat, light heat
of June Twenty, twenty First ... if you're not broke
Jesus spoke it, said you might kick
down, help the poor and their
thirst, you could do worse, after
all, Jesus said you might kick
down, or
then again, horde, separate,
gulp, retreat ... He said believe, and no such thing
as "death" either, but I haven't had
the heart to accept it yet, only that it ought
to stay here, on the air, those clockwork clumps of spores
of lint, the summer snow, and what's more, neither to vet
this post (status update) as a happy ending, the thought that
counts, take about twenty six seconds, honestly got
nothing to do with Time, with ending, in the simple instant
before translation, the sending.

The Next to Final Facebook Verse of an Unlikely Icelandic Laureate

rain smacks
these roofs, again,
again, again,
ten thousand horses drumming
one hoof into brains replete with perfect loneliness:
some morning that ate up
May: oh repeating
dream of Indian wars
in the tiny skulls of fiords
and streets, and moles, crack fault line, concrete. . . I'm afraid

but that
I'll try, try to find what
I say is so freaking trite, inescapable
pain on status
UPDATE with straight clone, shunned
face --- ... -- ,
--- ... -- ,
we're all drowning
in Likes.

America

Ventura highway,
you eluded me, pale blue horse
on a shoulder, a shudder, lit up, Alligator
Lizards in the Air, sort of rearing, sort of
veering. As far from any Iceland as the 70s to a new
millennium, Lenten moon, you silver cup
sucked up
my horse, those
prescient effervescent
rivulets of luck
eluded me too, splashed across the ether, or other
desert proscenium. I've been to, but not of you, not
really: what I wanted was a name, Key West, New
York, Champagne: our singer slash song
writers, so strange how in the
end Dylanesque, Byrds endangered,
glasses by staid ornithologists out of Cleveland, San
Pedro, Bastrop, Zachary:
America, a dirty old van's
been shadowing me too, straddling
the shoulder as any stripe of
bullet, zag for an age,
oh America, my left arm hangs
from an open window of a side
of the road they take into you,
into mirrors and for granted, reality shows the band
what I won't reveal
about this road,
mainly a feeling and long gone, not like any song I may

have known ... when the bridge
comes America, I pay
the toll.

Captain Melvin Scarbino's Fortune Cookie for Jet Lag

You are going now, to ascend,
over the snow fall
and flurries, over all
the worldly cares
of the towns and tombs
there below;
go on, and make your
boarding gate at Heathrow,
Dulles, good souls on a red eye
coming home the old
fashioned way,
by a plane
boss, and life
is briefly sane, or
at the least
fair:

and you are so
going to be there, going
somewhere, oh as we say, the people
sway, so many inevitable
passengers, Stevie Wonders with aisle seats
kick back, beaded dreadlocks, ear buds pop
a kind of mangled angel shakes you
awake, drops you off
with a smile
of yellow taxi for half a mile
of tarmac, sun glint on chrome
in this bright morning sun . . .
You're the blessed one, a thousand
mistakes turning
now, in your favor,
bank right, barrel roll, the sudden rudder
flaps, beauty nap defies every iteration
of roar, and pain, and care,

for you
are the Rocket Person:
we bask

in your glare.

Harlem Nocturne

Nothing but standard jazz, pouring
from a TV; pretty penetrating, I say: it teaches
the saxophone to play mainly alone. Above a mild confusion, noir
at happy hour, or how a Mickey got slipped into Spenser for Hire,
old Stacy Keach, dead ringer for writer Robert B. Parker. Comes
that melody again, never fails to reach me, verse one is naught
but a streetlight, stained by rain, acetone, nicotine, half
steps climbing, then circling again, into alleys as echoes of dark,
a bottle that clanks, but won't shatter; tank but don't clatter . . .
and from the shadows, another hard case, a strange
Muldoon nobody knows, in rose-colored fedora, says
buddy I've been out here all night, you looking?
Are you looking for a light? ... He, the melody born
from diminished scale and sworn to uphold the blues:
harelip of Stacy, Robert Urich on chemo,
baritone laughter of Avery Brooks, tragedy only a bit, at first,
of mist, rising off the Hudson, off the Charles . . . and now, major
wrinkle, in thirds, snap happy, the octaves hit the bridge
of a standard Massachusetts jazz track ... no worries
ever, for a Hawk has your back.

Intermittent Icelandic Wipers on the Outskirts of Anacortes

It just goes to show how no coil
is immortal, he said, chuckling and rattling
things around under there ... it either fits
or we're out of luck, he said, his head under
the dash, trying to repair their broken starter. Stuck on a coastal
highway shoulder sinking in wet sand, and mist, reminding one
of Iceland, every thing that a life has gone and missed...

Not ever, now hand me the wire snips, he said, the clit-shaped pair,
to her in the passenger seat who was so beautiful, bare, and young,
her chin cupped in palm, as she stared at the still scenery, skinny
elbow digging for the door lock. She replied, don't know
what to do, baby, should we get out and walk?
Something's wrong, for damn sure, now put the pressure on,
he said, ducking back down, under the dash, I know it, I know
I know, he said, so many suicides are spur
of the moment, one bad run succumbing to weather; they could
have tried, to resist: now they're nothing; face down
in the sand. ... Get us out, baby doll, she said, and that sound,
tiny tin pan grind, weak hum of a bum starter, punky
growl slash whine, a baby gar returning to sand flats
Diminishing... to die? no body wants to learn that, minutiae sound,
despair rattling around under there... But the radio was back,
he said, a second ago, I swear, buck up baby, cut some
for him, and the light high enough in that coastal sky: he was handy
and knew the little spokes and wheels and wires and nuts
and needles, capacitors by infinite feel, by heart, they
looked so good in the rearview, youth full of fix, after
fix, after fix... a centrifugal, which I watched, from the back seat
yes, I heard him, a volt at last, muffled by whatever tresses draped
a dash ... Because you are beautiful, shouldn't never worry, dear,
he told her. Just hand me Allen's wrench, and the other crescent,
he hummed as an ocean you haven't seen yet, but right over
the next rise ... Go head, she said, my baby, ripping loose
all the buttons from her cut offs -- they popped and rattled
off the dash; she took her braid in her fist, tugged it,
as the light bit the windshield for air,
undercarriage shook: in an instant before
he might throw his hands up, succumb
to despair, came the music, a key
in a slot, then the engine roar. Eddie Vedder sang
where oh where ... can my baby ... she was going
down on him, even as it tore into fourth, oh fishtail
north, through tornadoes abating, receding
sink holes of sand; I watched
from the middle of a back seat, high
as black tar bubbling on a dog star, phosphorescence over
the guttural lodes of that coastal road, all that scenery, and
still, I would go again, along for the ride, for the fix after
fix after fix after a certain length, a way she leaned, she took

his cock, she took his kiss: to this day, can't even dream
of all that I missed, maybe Iceland, yes, sure, but more likely
only Marysville, Washington, kicking dust, sand, and mist,
all brine flat-stinging spectral as he steered with bitten lip
and mind, tempered the pistons of unclad hips
drapes on a dash, where she hummed and bumped
her brow, so young. Forty miles from rehab
and the ocean, I could hear the swells
crash after crash after
crash.

Icelandic Traffic Cop w/ End Stage Parkinsons

Don't think I'd rather be deep
asleep, dreaming on my second shift
where the old street corner looms:
Wet cobblestones do trip
me up: I try to slip on

my thin white gloves, as if threading two needles
on turntable grooves, through surf static, seaweed
tresses of Medusa, all trembles
in a baleen rip.
And the pills
they've given me, never done
shit, oh I know it's time, just let it come
down; knock them all
back, I swallow it
with some evil swill they call Smart Water.

And yet, so much to be said for the nerves
on a logger's roll, cloggers in a buck dance
keep the thing afloat; or doing what you love

every day, any human cop is better than stop
lights; strange rhythm kept the death, kept the
Death at bay, oh talk to the hand, palms up

quaver, and they say Hey man, you, yield
the way, right; amalgam of anachronistic,

Boulevard of the Maelstrom,
central, nervous gone ballistic.

Don't ever think I'd rather relax
at the feet, instead of being astride
a jackhammer,
Pop and fresh, all shook up on this corner
of the street : funky Chicken, think I'd rather
be laying down in the arms of women?

May be right, tell me which foray, which hard
left, which wet, tight cleft? I hunch back, palms
up the old palsied shrug. Let it come, Mister
downtown is that way,
no more submarine pitchers whipping
screw balls for strikes, Pentecostals waving
writhing verdant serpents aloft
in four game sweep.

Had to be born, this way, dirty faced angel razed
by tsk tsk, sputter cum stutter of sprinkler heads
in round blight, such sore wonder is a night
called summer.

I'm driven to it, can't you see, what you
love, save a life that could have been
texting? To stop a man in the middle
of the worst mistake, palms out, God's
sake, they shake, they shake, they
shake;

you drive through
alive, pedestrian, each proscription
has exceptions,

save this pinwheel tentacle, anemone
outreaching signs:

white gloves on a human

being is better than the light.

Peppermint Patti Escapes A Life of Pornography

For the blow job scenes of mid November, I survived on Ecstasy
and chin ups, dissociate my slew of freckles from constellation.

One is free as all Hell then, to "X-rate."

If not for Chuck Brown, I woulda lived this mess stone cold
until an early death, an early death that one gets so familiar with,
like the piles of leaves we dove into— Age of innocence between
Halloween and Thanksgiving. Called them Wheaties, Kindly mister
Schulz up a wizard's sleeve, shelled nuts, pale green seahorses
embossed on freshly-laundered PJs, etcetera.

The Creator never prepares anyone, for the way of world, that a girl
in her sweetness can be shot up, turned into a cushion, any kind
of prey, but the day I broke and ran, dearest Chuck Brown slipped
me the keys to a Corsica, fat roll of lucre, address of the holy
Rehab... I was thinking of the hands of Schroeder, sweetly
contrapuntal on the white keys, his mop of blonde hair and
eyes that closed, involuntary: the only man/child I'd ever let near
my soul, my rose hips, as opposed to those ass hole fists
they stuffed into my glory, my sex, has been through enough
parts, enough roles, and Chuck said baby don't ever lose heart,
don't you ever lose heart.

The bad actors who did me, did me in a stench of Clorox and
Sue Bee honey notwithstanding, I'm here to tell the world
of the one that comes After, chaste, milk and no money, milk,
and no money, where sex remains as mystery, close to the breast,
a far off country or song one longs to visit, but never land, despite
itineraries and rafts, and rafts of plans: we're all cartoons,
palimpsests in pile upon pile of erasure.

I'll see you in a bit at the covenant, we'll sip
the steaming Miso soup—your mantra
is my novena, oh Geronimo,
they let me
go.

