

SMART AND FINAL IRIS

Pentagon code
for end of world
is *rural paradise*,
if plan fails
it's *rural paradise*

For losses under
100 million, *a trip*
on the wayward bus

For a future of mutants,
bridal parties collide

World famine is
a plague of beatniks

First strike and
I sniff your nieces
I fall to pieces
Get hell out . . .

A madman comes,
one of those babies
the further you kick it
the bigger it gets.

I've been entranced by this poem since 1987, when I discovered it in Reckoner—one of Jim's darkest, oddest books. Both a breathtaking word-puzzle lyric and a blistering critique of America's insane imperialism, it sounds as true now as it did in the hellish depths of the Reagan era.

- Steve Healey