

RICHARD BLANCO

The Perfect City Code



Illustration by Shonagh Rae

For M. C.

- 1(a) Streets shall be designed *Euro-Style* with 300-ft right-of-ways, benches, and flowered traffic circles, to provide a distinct sense of beauty, regardless of cost.
- 1(b) There shall be a canopy of trees; these shall be your favorite: *Giant Royal Palms*, 25-ft high, whereas their fronds shall meet in cathedral-like arches with a continuous breeze that shall slip in our sleeves and flutter against our bodies so as to produce angel-like sensations of eternity.

- 1(c) There shall be bushes; these shall also be your favorite: *Tea Roses* @2-ft o.c to provide enough blooms for casual picking; whereas said blooms shall spy on us from crystal glasses set next to the stove, over coffee-table books, or in front of mirrors.
- 2(a) Sidewalks shall be crack-proof and 15-ft wide for continuous, side-by-side conversations; painted either a) *Sunflower-Brown*, b) *Mango Blush*, or c) *Rosemont Henna*; whereas such colors shall evoke, respectively: the color of your eyelashes, of your palms, the shadows on your skin.
- 3(a) There shall be an average of one (1) Parisian-style café per city block, where I shall meet your eyes, dark as espresso, above the rim of your demitasse, and hold your hand like a music box underneath the table; where we shall exercise all those romantic, cliché gestures we were always too smart for.
- 3(b) There shall be one (1) open-air market per city block to facilitate the purchase of tulips, raspberries, white chocolate baci, and other gourmet items to lavish our lives; whereas every night I shall watch you through a glass of brandy as you dice fresh cilantro and dill, disappearing into the scent steaming around you.
- 4(a) Utility poles or structures that obstruct our view shall not be permitted. At all times we shall have one of the following vistas: birds messaging across the sky, a profile of mountains asleep on their backs, or a needle-point of stars.
- 5(a) There shall be an *Artist's District* and we shall float through gallery rooms on Saturday afternoons perplexed by the pain or conflict we can't feel in a line or a splatter of color; works that glorify or romanticize tragedy shall not be allowed.
- 5(b) There shall also be a *Historic District* to provide residents with a distinct sense of another time. We shall live there, in a loft with oak floors, a rose-marble mantle where our photos will gather; our years together will compete with the age of the brick walls and cobble stones below our vine-threaded balcony.
- (*) Without exception, there shall be a central square with a water fountain where we shall sit every evening by the pageantry of cherubs; where we shall listen to the trickle of their coral mouths; where I shall trust the unspoken; where you shall never again tell me there's nothing here for you, nothing to keep you, nothing to change your mind.

From *Directions to the Beach of the Dead* (Tuscon, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 2005).

Richard Blanco is the author of nine books of poetry and two memoirs. He is also a professional civil engineer and was honored as the 5th Presidential Inaugural Poet for Barack Obama's 2013 inauguration ceremony.