RICHARD BLANCO

The Perfect City Code

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.