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RICHARD MARTIN



SIDEWAYS

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**Richard
Martin**

SIDEWAYS

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Bow of Clean Windows

Living in the ark of my dream
I make another pot of coffee
Rain falls blue into curtains of itself
The animals love Bingo

Once I had some real estate
Could wander in ferns of loneliness
Wait for the birds to change into verbs
On a bed of kisses we tossed

Now the world is weather report
It will snow tonight in the tallest grass
Sirocco of moods followed by deluge
Umbrella sales brisk as wind

I love the bow of clean windows
The unknown port of waiting
Some of the animals snore
Ark traces the path of wet stars

In Just a Few Minutes

I could start with the symbol
Of crows – neighborhood ones, not those
From the pond or the highway –
As the sweater of black wings
I imagine wearing during
A season of lamps – intense
Blue ones, almost sky.
I want to fly.
Or perhaps just the other day –
In search of a transition
A connection for the gaps
In my mind, those holes
You know – that live there
In the mind as place holders
For the bit of metaphysics
Required of everyone
When things – the real objects
Of our lives – make sudden
Nonsense – laugh at us –
Get wavy with their own
Molecular uncertainty – whistle
To us, at us – like they were
Trying to get our attention
About their own loneliness
In the cosmology of being
Here in this setting called
World – I was in Burger King
(Of all places), as if pop-food had
The right – was entitled
To be part of a line – occupy
It with weight & foolishness.
A line now more concerned

With the image of a rainforest –
The canopy of talk – bird lingo
(Symbology again)
In a lingering rain – a rain
That started with intense purpose
And intention, pouring down –
Thundering – until the Amazon
Of the heart, swept into such
A bend of awareness that I
Woke up when handed
A senior coffee (a little cup of joe,
No more than 6 fluid ounces)
By a young, too young employee
Who read the age in my eyes – in my
Thoughts & face & made sure
To not over charge me & be responsible
For getting me wired on something
I could no longer handle
In the sputtering sound of raindrops.

Sideways

Language moves to stillness.
We have the details: old pond
In the ancestor's neighborhood.
Your fear of barns and tall grass.
The snake outside the cabin door
Waiting for grandfather's pitchfork.
Unbelievable stars in black-sneaker night –
False vocabulary for tomorrow.

Can you hear the bongos of narrative
In crystals of world? Flannel clouds, you said
Once. The way the first girlfriend
Required a pasture of kisses.
The train of city arrives.
It squeaks and rumbles.
The keen of electricity sparks whiskey.
Mystery of home and where you're going.

Once a mountain symphony of snowflakes
Beckoned journey. Good friends
You've lost to ice storms. The
People in convenience stores wondering
If you're a misplaced person.
The text of blossoms memorized:
Dogwood, magnolia, rhododendron
In the yard yapping purple.

* * *

This is your world and it's OK
To say hello to it.
The salutation of speed runs in your veins.
The polis of remark (how often
We place everything)
Is about love
In and out you go with it.
Name it responsibility or revert to myth.

Worried faces all around you in the brilliant light.
Play with the sun.
It's on your fingertips.
It colors – highlights thought
As thoughts coursing through you.
Make it personal.
Ignored secretaries welcome letters.
Forge gap into the absence of politics.

Forms of Inspiration

I'm told to write a book
Without clouds or business days.
The characters must be figures sitting
On gold rocks like ailing gods.
All have problems that turn into fish
And bread – useful paraphernalia.

My name is Franz.
My mother is a Hollywood starlet.
She owns an ark that sits on a high bluff
Overlooking the sparkling Pacific.
I don't like white food, sundials,
Or information off the AP newswire.

I know I'm on a train
Moving through the south of France.
My companion sleeps on my shoulder –
A notebook in her ivory hands.
She has been told to write that we are in love.
There's not a cloud in the sky.

Safe

Lines ache for eyes of freedom.
Before the story of examples we kissed
Through the magnificence of clouds.
I used to guard writing with a frown
And a strong left hand.
In the machine of consciousness
We toil in sentences of regret.
In the dream we were one
And found the scent of vowels on breath
Evoked memory:
I rode a two-wheel bike with
Orange fenders through
A broken timepiece.
The paint in your hair went fantastic.

I've transferred what I know
Into cryptic messages.
We imbibed the given absolutes
Then sunned our bodies on smooth rocks.
I'm an old lizard;
Your passion for technology
Sheds mirrors into star-fed waters.
Hawk in tree feasted on twilight.
Strong verbs gone amuck muck coherence.
There is much to talk about:
Red laces in your black boots
Fragments melancholy.
Let's count something.
Achievement called.

* * *

The sketch of shadows in place
Warns conglomerate.
Each of us, each element in us
Flutes improvisation.
Under a dark lamp we fell in love.
I waited in a cosmic field
For a bus, some mode of transportation
That transcended assignment.
Remember freedom;
Remember sculptures of sand
And wave hysteria.
How big are we really?
Release confusion into maps.
I'm here with you.

Swish

Under the umbrella of words
It's a gray day – not without
Laughter.
Switch on the rain.
Rain: it pours off your face
Defining beauty.

I'm far away.
Through the pipes and cranes
Rebuilding the city
Grows the grass of subdued motion.
Walk this field of time:
Speak azalea and hearty rose.

The coffee of luck invades
Our precious conversation.
There's a pen in my hand.
The eye of description filters
A rogue sky. Recite for me
The commandments of nonsense.

Stalled forest, thin beak, muddy shoes –
I love the reality of naming.
Let's climb a leafless tree.
Listen: a cardinal sings.
Articulate cars on access roads
Flip on their wipers.

And Kiss

Horns and beautiful women
Own the streets.
So many of them.
Which one now toots
(Cute)
That I'm hungry –
Have clipped a segment of sky
Into my wallet.
Spirit does not resist sky
& other slogans
In the display windows
Of what everyone needs.

2

The Gallup poll on one more
War is in:
Refuse to tie thoughts
Into knots
Of chemical skin.
Feel the whirling sun.
Spy forsythia in the park.
(Commands...2,3,4)
You enjoy being here.
So do others.
The time to live is now
Expresses being.

3

Put away those smart bombs
And buy a fedora or small cigar.
Rehearse Freud (fugue of him)
Ease into the mother love
Left in your brain.
Click on the show of being
Fed by breast.
Discard reptile, oh Federalist!
There is something to protect.
There is something to free.
It's time to walk into a library
& give history a good shake.

4

Expunge the petty need to control
What you control.
Why not if green fish wiggle through you
Whim-wild in delicate hairs of light?
Open up (for Christ sakes) and smell
The cosmic rose(s)
Bouquet bouquet of fever man.
Each star has a fix on us.
Fix on them.
We all have problems with being.
Some of us – scared and hungry.
Some of us – rich and fat.

5

We all die:
Expecting virgins/
Convinced of light.
Some commit to darkness
& the earth blooms
In the great time it has.
It comes up through the cracks
In sidewalks –
Sneaks birds and whales into memory.
Counting was fun once.
We used to sort and match
Giggle and kiss.

Statement

I talk about getting old or hug

A tree

It's not raining the page

Of words you sent me lingers

But will not reveal

I've reveled once in the street

With balloons & mermaids

In love with the ocean *of course*

Back to the canopy of leaves

Filed humid & jeweled above my

Head

Huge insect holes the light

Of the sun intense

Aging then on the top floor

Of evolution

Without shawl or cane

Time smirks beginning

It's not an engine

An alphabet of molecules takes chance

I just love trees

Sweet Love

1

Big thick text
Crowding the absent
Trees of page

Blue syntax rain
Gear in the lovely grass
Of yesterday

Go into the majestic clouds
In a tailspin
Of wristwatch thunderstorms

Like the time
We had the time to discuss
The meaning of time

Everything perfectly rose
Awareness of morning
Bare feet & top hats zooming

Because the story we could tell
Evades us in a parade
Of parking tickets

Because we slump
Under the duties of windshield
& false heavens

2

Let's not walk like ducks
Into the maw of criticism
The logic of senselessness

Plant huge and powerful
Stately and charmed rocks in the thoughts
We have about things

This is a world of small boats
Jewelry socked in opaque pillowcases
Of sweet love

Build variety
Space – gaps (you know) – with adjectives
That mimic a plum or jasmine goddess

O the wind of it all
Yawning & sweeping through
Steepled conversations

Everywhere the gods of brick
& sultry hang in the gardens
Of broken sidewalks

Plead with presence & pretense
Salt the eggs
Of textured perceptions

Decision

It starts to rain on a city of bricks.
The next line is imported from Italy.
It's a long and famous line.
Umbrellas open and a man without one
Revisits his childhood.

He plays first base.
He rides on a carousel of painted horses.
He hops from roof to roof
In his neighborhood.
He whispers "symmetry" and rolls in the grass.

He's in love:
A woman rides towards him on a unicycle.
She hands him a line from the next century.
It's about clouds in the sky
Calling his name.

"Over here whale," they say.
"Come quickly parrot," they say.
It is an odd and obscure line.
A little girl laughs.
She loves him and hands him a paper rainbow.

The man thinks:
I'm revisiting my childhood.
I am a child.
His mind is quick and forgiving.
The rain on his lips tastes like licorice.

* * *

Out for a drive in their Ford Fairlane
His parents yell out the window at him:
“Blossom,” they scream.
Over and over again: “BLOSSOM!”
He wants to very much.

Go to Oregon

My heels are hot with sand from a Gulf beach.
At night women gamble off beautiful clothes –

Brocades, print dress sunflowers, tads of nothing.
Now is not the time which is an excuse

To mention banana leaf & bougainvillea.
Welcome to the line

& the space after the line.
Experience is past fragmentation.

It's not a partially cloudy sky or even a mix
Of sun & clouds; it's the correct use

Of a semicolon when an angry husband
Calls for a downpour.

Quantum rules if you let it.
So do unnamed insects & aspects of memory.

You were married to an impersonal pronoun.
Regret failed the audition.

You could walk down the street
With an encyclopedia for a friend.

Requisition

I need to buy a pair of skies.
My glasses broke
& yesterday I cried alone
Into the bark of a fat tree.
I love flowers.
The antics of wild fish calm
Submerged highways.
This is a journey of fees and regulations.

The acoustics of the situation remains problematic.
Singers croon in the background of the noisy bar;
The tickle of piano keys tickles apprehensive matrons.
I need to buy a corner lot of your time
To explain my situation.
I didn't get the prophet role.
My investment in burning bushes
Triggered sentence fragments.

I could go on.
My membership in light & the production
Of light is up to date.
I sense the fire in things;
The history of lost time burns like everything else.
I need to buy the essence of emerald
Enjoy a sapphire kiss
Ride the elephant of dawn through screens of consciousness.

* * *

This much I know:
The tent of dreams has collapsed;
Clouds are failed actors;
The physics of the situation fizzes
Like antacids in a glass.
I need to buy some comfort, baby!
Come here like you used to
& revive my purchasing power.

Entertainment

Each line has a beauty or humor to it.
Ursula juggled avocados in a dream.

The procession of sentences looks serious.
As a congressman I'd be in a permanent state of ellipsis.

Thank god for lyrical rain.
The old woman slumps through the twilight.

Nothing seems to work.
Acorns bounce off the shed out back.

Out of periods the grammar teacher smiled.
The mind waits sometimes.

Form is a trip.
The Cool Whip is on the door of the refrigerator.

Remember the autumn of knees.
Gold light on the bicycle seat.

Once I brushed my teeth with Ben-Gay.
It was a time of potholes and pot roasts.

Theories govern the thoughts of the governed.
The red damselfly rose from behind the garbage can.

My neck creaks.
I'll watch the show on giraffes if you do.

Variations on a Field

It's a small space
Like Texas
Or Cupid

You've already written
Your biography
Mom and Dad were pretty

It is dangerous
Someone invented religion
Paths to take

It's OK to fall in love
With a line
Contradict

That outside is inside
Is phenomenally proud
The skein of chair or dilemma

Every move reminds ocean
The horizon of ordinary sings
Death is sacred

We are not lost
In an endless stream
Of mistakes

Composed as chickens
Wheelbarrow collects
Rainwater message

Salutation

Dear friends I'm leaving you for another set of problems.
It was a tough day and the words inside my head
On the nature of reality didn't match yours.
There was the issue of trees; how many salami sandwiches
One could eat during a cloudburst; whether lower case
Letters were upper case ones; were we actually here or not.
We used to have fun: when the ocean was cold and bitter,
When the sun withdrew into dark shadow (refusing dialogue),
We were ready with names, calling names, and swear words
Delivered with such passion – intensity – we surprised ourselves.

Dear friends we were made for sunshine and whim, to walk
Into a convention of lilacs, or along a cliff of popped azaleas
(I'm fond of salmon) with nothing in our heads but praise.
We used to run barefoot in the park of romantic inclination.
(You're not hallucinating.) O the kisses we recorded
And shaped into vinyl icons to play like wind in leaves
On the creaky porches of our old age when *kiss*
Had turned to dust in our poor memories and fine complaints.
We had our priorities and called them visions.
For a time we were the rivers, trees, and sky.

Tilt

So you're exhausted!

 The past you knew
Left on a train called
Horizon.

 The sun blazed –
 Assured of the emptiness

It proclaims.

(A thought) The
Treasure you want
Evades thought. Shines

 Like a full-grown tree –

A child smiling
After a cloud hides a bird
In full flight.
(obnubilation)

 Kingfisher you

Saw in a salt marsh
On a bird walk.
It had a nice haircut.
Claimed it knew Olson –
Hung with him.

At postmodern parades.

Signs are events:

Big and looming.

At times

Obscuring something

In you:

 Good time

You had with jukebox
And standard religion
Long ago.

Confusion Satori

The bouquet of words in your mind checks for lovers.
You're hurt like the rest of us but refuse to switch to oatmeal in the morning.
A couplet of roses is not the same or about the same as a couple of roses.
There are metaphysical questions. Concerns!

Now the narratives of our lives are stored in storage facilities.
Maybe there are a few wild rivers left in syllable or two.
Proclaim something.
The banjo is waiting for you.

We soar through banal insights into the cabbage of dreams.
Admit to the artwork a good bath permits.
Once you've asked personal pronouns to behave like people you're in trouble.
Most mechanics refuse to work on misconceptions.

Plead with spontaneity before your pockets fill up with sky.
Fly your hat down the Avenue of Hats.
You could be James Brown.
Uniformity is not the final frontier.

Insight after Dinner at the Diner

I'm not into plot. I hate plot. Give me a sunset any day –
One with lemons, salmon, purple crayons, and aquamarine
Wading pools hidden behind one very long strip-mall.
Anything but plot. So here's what happened.

I was trapped in Sequence B. It was a small town full of
Closed shoe and cigar factories. Each house composed of
Feathers was blowing away. I yelled to Heloise. "Hey,
Helly, the feather houses are blowing away." "So let them,"
She replied.

I heard the clink of dishes, glasses, and plastic silverware.
A dull clank reminding me of romantic macaroni. Hash in a can.
I picked up my cigar from the end table. Recited constellations.
Grew impatient. And recalled the last letter sent to me by
My father.

Dear Son,

I'm heading out to sea. It's infinite out there
You know.

Love,
Sailor Jack

"The pea pod," I said to myself. "The pea pod!" – once or twice more
In a manner imitating dawn.

Roof and Sky

1

Bird wings and banana trees
In the courtyard of green umbrellas
Word impressions
Throw a dollar bill into the cigar humidior
I'm a fragment
You're a big sack of something:
Wheat flour pasta hurricane
The mind balms its injuries
Sunshine hat – you fool

2

Take that the fountain sings through frogmouth
Cracked slate &
The haircut cost 18 bucks
Further not farther into the dilemmas of TV
Information fat cats take holiday on sunken boat
On the weathervane of charm –
A nickel's worth of attention
Kiss me with your *shoo* hand
Music we like

3

In the alphabet corner of common sense
Leroy plays his trombone
Agent X arrives from Honolulu
Metallic planes shiver in the metal rain
Again another report of IQ plumbers in the paper
Out of tissues
Lost keys
Rhythm of disjunction flows through feathered brain
Wait time back in ten minutes

4

Imitation harmony distorts the vowel concert
We talked in a complicated way about complex things
Freedom turned into Proposition Secret
Count the votes *damn it* formed government
Exhaust pipes in every pot
Chicken hysteria in the streets
Barkers for sex Dream
Animal sound asleep
In this way I caught your eye

5

Por Favor
On a rooftop of turistas in the sun
Chewing gum
The shadow of my head on a white page
Blue thunder memory lines somehow
The world in a block highway of words
Cranes build other skies
And the piano player ain't my dad
Honky-tonk stride fingers of pure spirit

6

Contagious text in the heat of false argument
Then a collection of gray buildings for sale
Cars inside radio curlers crawl the streets
Much happiness
& hot sauce to boot on variegated oysters
In time with the tempo
A hat full of Z Stopwatch
Perceptions near the finish line
So grows the melon of awareness: Iron lace

7

The mystery of each syllable explodes praise
Austrian crystals on a brass string
A shack for consciousness and complaint
Just the other night at the Carousel Bar
We all got dizzy
We must sing
Interstellar message declares the answer
Is a question
Wind across rooftop – gusting beautiful forms

RICHARD MARTIN is the author of *Dream of Long Head-dresses: Poems from a Thousand Hospitals*, *White Man Appears on Southern California Beach*, *Negation of Beautiful Words*, *Modulations*, and *Marks*. His poems have appeared in the anthologies: *Aloud: Voices from the Nuyorican Cafe* and *American Poets Say Goodbye to the 20th Century* and the magazines: *Fell Swoop*, *ACM*, *unarmed*, *Estuaries*, and *Skanky Possum*. Awards for his poetry include an NEA fellowship. He lives in Boston.

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