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Ric Masten, Words & One-Liners, Take 2

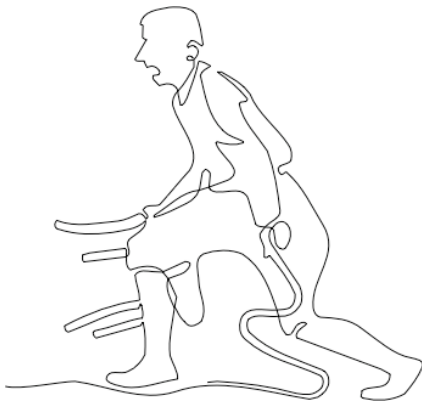
Carmel, CA: Sun-Ink Presentation 2005. 207 pp \$30

I like this, the second book by Ric Masten, even better than the first. What makes it more appealing to me are the arrangements of poems into groups, such as *Personals*, *I should have slept on it*, and *Words for survival*. I find it tastier to have a medley of poems about family relationships, writing and medical issues – rather than isolated poems in a salad.

Here are a few of my favorites:

THE LION TAMER

**ENTERS THE THESAURUS
AND ESCAPES WITH HIS LIFE**



I don't like to write!

words are nasty
uncooperative animals
stubborn unruly beasts
and I despise every minute
I put in with whip and chair
attempting to make them behave

sure, I take a bow
when I have them all lined up
in an impressive row
my vulnerable ego
having somehow escaped
critical analysis without
being clawed or bitten
but I don't like to write

I like having written

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WIDOWS OF THE NFL



during the season
do not arrange social engagements
unless you have checked with him first
all dates are in doubt
Sundays are sacred of course
but since Monday-night football
is often played on Thursday
rational thinking is out

and don't try to circumvent this
by inviting friends over
to watch the game with your spouse
if they root for the other city
the scene in the den will not be pretty
and probably end
with a SWAT team surrounding your
house
however
if the cheering section is compatible
do plan to serve snacks during the
action
not hor d'oeuvres — nothing fancy like
that
just be sure to include something
from the five major food groups
caffeine alcohol sugar salt and fat

and don't assume
he's enjoying himself in there
rabid football fans are perpetually
wretched
touchdowns ahead they still feel
defeated
convinced that they can't keep the lead
down by a point and it's hopeless
"we'll never score what we need!"

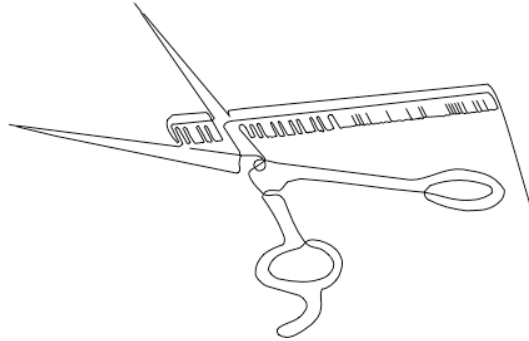
and it is really okay for a woman
to hate the game
better this than pretending to be a fan
a "sports buddy"
with a bright inquiring mind
trying to impress him with questions
about nickel-backs and point-spread
as he watches his team fall a field goal
behind

but most of all
after the opening whistle has blown
don't get sexy
studies have shown that football
renders a man impotent
at game time don't try to touch the
remote
besides you have your own hands off
policy
during Law & Order
and Murder She Wrote

keep in mind though
the road to the Super Bowl may seem
endless
but a frustrated maid must not lose
faith
as she lies alone in her bed
when the Pro Bowl is over
so is the season
and the couch potato will rise from the
dead

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REHABILITATION



in the driveway of a renovated apartment complex dwarfing a chair
 the continent of Africa sat getting a haircut
 the barber — a Latina wore soiled institutional whites
 I slowed to first gear "I'm looking for Genesis House" I said
 and the haircut said: "You're here. Visitors register over there."

I followed the motion of his head to a doorway marked "Office"
 a group of marginal looking people stood around it chain smoking
 eyeing me suspiciously — one of them approached
 "Hi Dad, I didn't think anyone would come." and why should he
 considering all the years of lies manipulation and denial
 "Neither did I." I said signing in

after that it was a minefield — father and son taking up positions
 at opposite ends of the dusty old couch that sat outside in the courtyard
 gingerly stepping around the dangerous ground
 avoiding the obvious trip wires — sticking to safe subjects
 I held my tongue determined not to set him off or blow up myself
 perhaps later in the recovery we can sweep the relationship clean
 digging up and disarming the booby traps
 but for now to survive the war for even a short visit
 would be more than enough

getting up to go I told him about how much we enjoyed taking care
 of his son Little Ricky and about waiting at the mailboxes each day
 to meet the car pool sadly adding the grim footnote that when he was a boy
 coming home from school I can't remember ever doing as much for him
 "Well you did today, Dad."
 as I left I looked back and was surprised to see the haircut
 and some of the other residents waving.....as if I were family

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PEACE PARADE



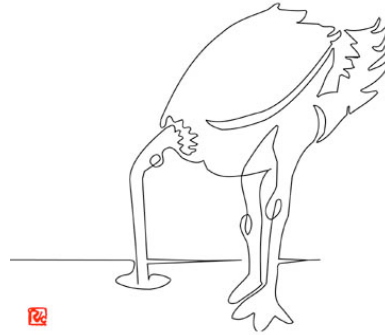
I ain't afraid to step in your bitter streets
 And walk away from war.
 I ain't afraid though the boulevard's full of heat
 And hate — an open sore.
 I ain't afraid, I ain't afraid
 Ain't afraid of the hate I see
 But when I see all the hate in me
 I'm afraid.

I ain't afraid to face the red-neck wrath
 And meet their savage need.
 I won't run, let 'em come and block the path
 I ain't afraid to bleed.
 I ain't afraid, I ain't afraid,
 Ain't afraid and that's a fact
 But when I find I want to hit 'em back
 I'm afraid

I ain't afraid of that hard mean-eyed cop
 With his hand carved billy-stick.
 Ain't afraid when the bull-horns buzz and pop
 "Liberals don't you try no tricks!"
 I ain't afraid, I ain't afraid,
 Ain't afraid of none of this
 But when I feel my hand become a fist
 I'm afraid.

I ain't afraid to march to a public park
 With peace symbols over my head.
 And join with a few to protest the dark,
 Call me yellow, call me red.
 I ain't afraid, I ain't afraid
 Ain't afraid of the hate in you
 But when I find that I can hate too
 I am afraid.

THE OSTRICH



after the original diagnosis and treatment
 I became the classic "ostrich"
 head thrust deep in the sand of denial
 I did my best
 to keep myself in the dark
 and during
 that blind unattended time
 my disease sneaks up on me
 morphing into the very aggressive
 dedifferentiated neuroendocrine carcinoma
 the label alone
 being a head's up eye opener!
 at long last I faced the fact
 that the ostrich cannot fly
 time to take an active roll
 in my fight for survival
 time to look the monster in the eye

so I go on line where dumb luck
 and a benevolent "search engine"
 find the Prostate Cancer Research Institute
 I dial the "helpline"
 and for more than an hour
 an anonymous Good Samaritan
 calmly slowed me down until
 my philosophy of life could catch up
 and begin to see me through.

once again I'm able to recall
 that only where the path of difficulty
 crosses the easy way
 can growth and change occur
 that the height of my highest high
 is in direct proportion
 to the depth of my deepest down"
 lessons I'd lost sight of
 when my butt was in the sky
 and my brains were under ground
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This book of poetry is warmly recommended for personal edification and heartwarming amusement, and makes an excellent gift.

See also

Ric Masten's weekly
WORDS & ONE-LINERS
<http://www.ric-masten.net>

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P.O. Box 502, Medford, NJ 08055
Phone (609) 714-1885 - Fax (609) 714-3553
Email: center@ijhc.org Web Site: <http://www.ijhc.org>
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