

Contents

Hill		3
Umbrella		4
Waterfall		6
Disperse		8
Grace		9
Tooth		10
Auctioneer		12
Grace		14
Fabulous		15
Sullied		16
Endure		18
Punctuality		20
Falling Leaf		21
Patience		22
Sandwich		Christ 23
Truculently		26
Bubble wrap		27
Organic		28
Sled dog		30
Water		31
Ryba		32
Moist		34
Fambambulous		35
Heart		36
Apoplectic		38

Sunshine		40
Kindness		41
Focus		42
Condolence		44
Unforgettable		46
Happiness		47
Sensuous		48
Ephemeral		49
Jug		50
Legendary		52
Bamboozle		54
Too much		55
Happiness		56
Sequin		57
Starlight		58
Space		59
Shame		60
Ambition		62
Frenetic		63
Mirror		64
Future		66
Eudemonic		68
Friendship		69
Electric		70
Spry		72

THE STRANGER Maggie | THE WORD Umbrella

I met Maggie on a subway ride when everything went wrong. We were both coming off of trips (hers international, mine short). First the train from the airport stopped early due to construction, and Maggie and I ended up riding in reverse back toward the airport. Then there was a second break in the track, which meant we had to get off the train, take a bus, and then go back on the train for the final two stops. Maggie had been traveling all night from France. We were on the train together for nearly two hours. But at one point, after dark, when we were forced off the train and waiting for our shuttle bus at Boston Common, we paused to take in a view of the park at night. It was a small moment of beauty, a triumph in a trip of logistical failures.

THE POEM

Say all your unlived months are beans. Small, dry,
unplanted. Their possibility not yet shriveled. Say
there's a fairy tale with your name written on it.
You live at home with your mother and perhaps a cow
until you are one hundred ninety-two beans old.
You can hold that many in half a hand.

Your beans can be soy or lima, the smaller
the better. Keep them anywhere, your desk,
a soft purple bag where you used to keep
treasure. You may count them, but not too often.
Say you've been starving all winter, which is to say
three beans. You know that words are wishes and beans
even more so. Wish on this bean. Toss it
off the roof and see if it grows, what giant
dreams it will lead up to. If you do nothing at all,

when the month turns, one more bean is gone.
You might as well plant them and climb.

But you might not be Jack at all, for there is still
the ogre living in domestic bliss and harmony
on top of the sky, higher than a mathematician can count
or a hungry boy can climb. Ogre is familiar,
for we rest on clouds and count our luck, each gold piece
an unbitten chance, a symbol of anything we like, a bean.

Jack, whoever Jack is, will come unhidden and kill
this world, so enjoy it once, for a moment, please, before
it collapses and the giant falls. There's the ogre's wife
moving furniture around, potting meat for winter,
sweeping dust with a giant broom and leaving it
in the corner, where she keeps the umbrella. Say a small
boy, maybe hero and maybe food, is hiding there,
noiseless beneath the ribs.

Small boy, this squirt who is one of us, isn't looking
at the ogre's wife or bag of gold but at his fingers.
In his hand is a harp singing, and you can hear it
almost, her song—she is self-complete, made
of air and gold, she is like nothing on earth,
she is singing—hear it?—about the beauty of beans.

THE STRANGERS Abbie + friends | **THE WORD** Waterfall

We were riding our bike by the river when we passed a bounce house. My babies clamored. We hopped off and discovered a homecoming party complete with candy, face-paint, and a welcoming crew of high school seniors, including Abbie, who generously offered my kids a bounce in the house. The thought that soon enough my kids will be teenagers relying on me to teach them useful social things, such as how to flirt, became the basis for this poem.

THE POEM

My mother did her best to teach me:
cast eyes up and briefly
touch an arm. Her past
from the cauldron of Texas,
where witchcraft is practiced
and everyone knows.

I learned nothing. My early loves
an aleatory failure.

When mine ask, I must say
you are so lovely naked
but keep your bum
in your pants for the most part.
Let your dress be the least
interesting thing about you. Fall
in love like a waterfall, but

do not drown. Once
in a while it is okay to lose
your head, drop to your limbs
and growl out your heart.
Let those you love

beast-whisper you back.
Mostly forget about it:
drive by yourself on a beach
with pink light; wave at swimmers
not quite smiling.