

Ellipsis

Volume 44

Article 1

2017

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Recommended Citation

Castell, Leonel M. (2017) "Bunyan The Action Rabbit," *Ellipsis*: Vol. 44 , Article 1.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.uno.edu/ellipsis/vol44/iss1/1>

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Bunyan the Action Rabbit

Leo Castell

Did you know rabbits can create up to four times their weight in poop every day? Probably not, because I just made that up in order to emphasize how much shit rabbits are capable of producing if they're having a particularly crappy day. Seriously it's absurd, at least when it comes to my rabbit. Give my rabbit an apple and he'll create four apples worth of fecal matter in 24 hours. That's right, my rabbit is capable of defying the laws of conservation of mass which technically makes him a mad scientist.

My rabbit's name is Bunyan (full name: Bunyan the Action Rabbit, because he is 100% rabbit-shaped action). I was originally going to name him Peppy after Peppy Hare from the Star Fox video games, but the fact that Peppy was technically a hare and not a rabbit bothered me, so I instead chose Bunyan because being almost named after a foot infection bothered me less. When I tell people I have a rabbit and they inevitably ask what his name is I always respond with, "His name is Bunyan, like Paul Bunyan, not the foot infection," because I don't want people to think I'm some weirdo who names his pets after medical problems. This response usually elicits a chuckle from people which is an ancillary benefit to also no longer thinking I'm a weirdo, but on one occasion someone actually corrected me and stated that bunions are not, in fact, foot infections, but instead foot deformities, which I thought was interesting. I still say "foot infection" when I do that little introduction, however, because like my rabbit I am a creature of habit.

Bunyan is a four-year-old white rabbit that looks like a painter started coloring his ears brown before getting bored and flicking the paintbrush until about 30% of his body was covered in dark spots. His eyes look like dark brown marbles and he weighs a little more than a gallon of milk. He's a rex rabbit which is a breed defined by their cat-like personalities and plush, velvety coats that feel slightly softer than what a cloud might feel like. My favorite way anyone's ever described him is when my mother said he looks like a small rabbit-shaped cow. His front-right paw is noticeably crooked because he somehow managed to sprain it when I wasn't looking. I ended up spending around \$600 at the vet getting his paw fixed so he could put his weight on it again which was the best they could do besides amputation. He can't run as fast or stick his landings like he used to, but the paw is still totally useable and doesn't hurt which is all I could really hope for. It's his ultra-lucky rabbit's foot—even luckier because it's still attached.

Bunyan wasn't my first pet or even my first rabbit, but he was the first animal whose needs have fell squarely on myself. My first pet was a black rabbit my uncle gave me when I was four. I never got the chance to name it because it died the night we brought it home. We didn't have a cage for it, you see, and my father had the brilliant idea of keeping it inside a fenced-off area of the backyard wherein a cat ate it. Guilt-ridden, my father decided to take me to the pet store that weekend and buy a new rabbit with an actual cage that was 100% cat-proof. I named this rabbit Peter because I wasn't a terribly creative four-year-old. Peter was my rabbit in the same way your parents' house might technically also be your house growing up, even though you don't really do anything for it. I'd pet him or play with him, but the person who really took care of him was my mother. About a decade later when my parents divorced and I moved in with

my grandmother, my mother was the one who took Peter in. Bu this point he was, for all intents and purposes, her rabbit. Peter lived to the ripe old age of thirteen and his lifetime accomplishments include living through Hurricane Katrina alone in our house for a month and pissing a hole through the metal floor of his cage. While Peter was still alive, one of my uncles gave us another rabbit that ended up dying within a week from heat stroke because it turns out my father didn't know being exposed directly to harsh sunlight all the time was extremely unhealthy. She was a really plain-looking brown rabbit that I named Glit for some reason. It was around this time that my father got uninvolved in the caretaking of my (my mother's) rabbits for their own sake.

Like the previous three rabbits, I didn't actually plan on getting Bunyan when I got him. I was coming home late from work one night and saw him in my neighbor's front yard, but didn't really pay him any mind. When my grandmother greeted me at the door I decided to point him out to her just for the sake of showing her a rabbit since we lived on a busy street in the city and don't exactly see rabbits very often, like ever. I was going to leave it at that, but to my surprise she told me to go get him. I didn't think too much about it; I just did. I was seventeen at the time and didn't have any other pets nor was I planning on getting one anytime soon. He spent his first night with us inside a dog kennel we had lying around and the next day I went around the block to see if anyone had lost a rabbit, since he was clearly not wild. Nobody claimed him, and since I wasn't about to leave him outside to die, I went to Petco and bought a rabbit owners' starter kit for about ninety dollars.

Over time, I learned just how exciting of a lagomorph Bunyan actually is. He has access to hay at all times, but only gets pellets every other day to keep him from getting too fat. You'd think I was starving him by how excited he gets on pellet day. On one occasion, when I forgot to do the pellet thing, he jumped through the opening on top of his cage (which I did not know he could do), jumped from the roof of his cage to the table with the pellets, and knocked over the bag, spilling pellets everywhere and reminding me never to forget pellet day ever, ever again. His favorite toy to hate is this large, blue, plastic clip that came with a fan I bought for him. I had no use for the clip and just left it in his area, where he frequently bites, head-butts, and tosses it around as if to demonstrate his dominance over an inanimate object. I have to take it away from him at night because it makes a lot of noise when it hits the floor. He can smell his strawberry yogurt treats from across the house and if you hide one in the middle of a long paper towel roll, he'll try (and fail) to stick his head in it to reach the treat before resorting to violence (i.e. throwing the paper towel roll several feet, launching the treat in a random direction). My sister has a Pomeranian that is less like a dog and more like a small, hairy tornado of noise that reflexively shits itself or launches urine at whoever tries to tell it to shut up. She brought it over while Bunyan was out and about once and it immediately ran to inspect my rabbit whereupon it was promptly kicked in the face by Bunyan's powerful hind legs. The dog is now terrified of Bunyan and doesn't like visiting my grandmother's house anymore. I've heard Bunyan make noises on his own less than ten times. The most common is the odd sneeze, which sounds slightly quieter than breathing out your nose. Once time at the vet, Bunyan was getting his nails clipped and growled, which sounds like someone angrily, but quietly, humming at you.

At this point, I've realized Bunyan is actually the greatest thing to exist in the universe. Better than air conditioning, stuffed-crust pizza, and lava lamps, he is the single greatest thing to ever be. Bunyan is a precious and noble creature that I would defend at all costs because his very existence vindicates the rest of existence. He proves that the universe is capable of producing a

permutation of biology that is unquestionably perfect. I can come up with a list of things I dislike about everyone and everything I have ever experienced except for Bunyan because Bunyan defies critique. All that's to say that as I've gotten older I've become more cynical with my views on life, which is a sentiment most people my age and older seem to share. It's like this is just a part of becoming an adult that you're better off getting used to. Some people distract/comfort themselves from this idea by turning towards substances, religion, artistic escapism, or some other thing, which is fine if it works, but I couldn't really ask for anything better than being able to share my life with the best thing to have ever happened.