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The Magician's Wife

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The Magician's Wife

DERK WYNAND

from his collapsible hat the magician draws the traditional
white rabbit from your mouth he extracts two silver dollars
which truly must have lain on your tongue for you taste the
bitter metal you value much less than the albino rabbit its
eyes blinking in the harsh light that singles it out as the
magician jingles the coins in his palm and stuffs them deep
into his secret pockets he has pigeons up his sleeve he has
cards pistols metal hoops and a magic wand he waves through
the bright air to ease the bitter taste in your mouth which
instantly begins to water for the magician's young wife has
appeared in a puff of red smoke on the stage she doubles as
his assistant for the magician is poor despite his magic is
full of tricks despite his age his wife is young is artless
you love her for the natural way she pulls autumnal flowers
out of the smoke-filled air how she smiles as the blindfold
covers her eyes then how she tells you correctly what locks
the keys in your pockets will open she identifies the queen
of diamonds in your hands and the four coins in your wallet
one counterfeit the rest minted in nineteen sixty-seven and
though you trust her completely you check the dates and she
tells you exactly what is written on your heart defying her
open nature by using circumlocutions to spare your feelings

and the magician her husband's for he knows better than she
does that you choose the same seat year after year to watch

her pull the same fat doves from her skin-tight costume and
send them fluttering and cooing toward you a secret message

in their beaks and each year the aging magician her husband
intercepts them he is old but full of tricks and suspicions

he turns the doves into silver coins one minted in nineteen
sixty-eight at this rate you will never be rich with a wave

of his wand he turns his wife in mid-sentence into a rabbit
he thrusts into his hat which before your eyes he collapses