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The Magician's Wife

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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