

Bunnies

My compadre Cisco hands me a brown bag that moves. He says, “Hold them until Sunday”. In the bag are three baby rabbits, an Easter gift for his children. I sneak into my bedroom and find a shoe box to hide them in. Suddenly, Mari, my oldest, enters the living room holding the three small rabbits. “Papá, these bunnies called out to me from your bedroom; they have names. The black one is Bandit, the brown one is Bentley and the white one is Sara. they’re magic rabbits, and Bandit says, they belong to us.”

“Magic?” I think, “*Why shouldn’t the world have magic?*” Ever since my wife passed, Mari has been more inventive; I don’t question her, and I don’t explain the rabbits are not ours. Mari tells her little sister Rosa to empty the laundry basket and little David finds an old bath towel for bedding. Mari nestles the bunnies in the warmth of the towel. The children spend the rest of the day getting to know the little rabbits.

How do I explain to my children the rabbits are neither magic nor theirs? That some other daddy can afford to give his children what I cannot give mine—*I don’t*.

Late at night I return the rabbits to their owner, so they can become the cherished gift of someone else’s children.

I make my way home through the darkness; what to tell my children is the dilemma. Then I remember the hole in the floor, and how I saw the bunnies leap from the basket and into the hole, and as hard as I searched through the night I couldn’t find them. With my story cast, I find comfort in sleep.

Bright sunlight breaks through our shabby curtains. It’s Easter morning and my children are awake. I hear Mari cry out, “The bunnies are gone!” “Quieta Mari!” I say and begin to explain what I saw the night before, and how I spent the entire night searching under the house for the rabbits. “No Papá!” they cry out. Then they crowd around the small hole, and each calls

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out a name, Bandit, Bentley, Sara. They take turns staring into the dark hole hoping to catch a glimpse of their former guests. Their tears flow like tiny rivers as they try to will the bunnies back.

Then suddenly, from the hole, as if in flight, pop Bandit, then Bentley, and finally Sara, straight into the arms of my children. I'm speechless and pinch myself, because I don't remember waking—but magic, why can't the world have magic?