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Hummingbird

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“No. I’d rather have the truth. It’s the only thing that matters,” I replied, as I sat up straight and looked him in the eyes to show him I knew what I was talking about.

“What about when you were a child? Do you wish your parents told you there was no such thing as Santa Claus or the Easter Bunny?”

“It doesn’t matter if they would have told me then or let me find out on my own. The point is it’s all just an illusion. They brainwash us from the start with lies. They tell us it’s not good to lie, but they do it to us everyday. She always told me the truth was the only thing anyone needed, but she looked me right in the eyes and lied.” I had to turn away from his wrinkled face to fight back the tears. I could feel them on the rim of my eyes, sure to overflow at any moment.

“I have a feeling we’re not talking about magic anymore. So, what’s really bothering you, kid?” He could pry all he wanted; he wasn’t getting anything out of me.

“Oh come on, you can tell me. I don’t know you, or your family. Don’t hold back. What have you got to lose?” He was right.

“This morning I walked in and my parents were sitting at the kitchen table.”

“I don’t see what’s so unusual about that,” he interrupted.

“I noticed she wasn’t wearing her wedding ring. I don’t think I’ve ever seen her take it off. I could see the white outline on her otherwise tan finger. I asked them what was going on. The last time I had seen them with this kind of look on their face was in the principal’s office.”

“My mom just looked down at her hands. Her eyes were all red and swollen. They always told me how lucky I was to have two parents who loved each other. Damned liars!” I didn’t realize I was yelling. The few people left on the bus were all eyeing me, including the bus driver.

The old man sitting next to me put his hand on mine. When I looked up, I saw a look of compassion wash over his face. I don’t know why I told him. It figures that the first person I tell is some stranger on the bus. But then I was glad it was a stranger because then I didn’t have to worry about him gossiping to anyone about the day the family fell apart.

“It’ll be okay,” he said in almost a whisper. I knew he was right. It would be okay. He reached up and grabbed the cord hanging just below the top of the window and the brakes brought the bus to a halt.

“Well, this is my stop. Don’t stop believing, kid. If you take a closer look you’ll see that things aren’t always what they seem.” He walked off the bus and down the street.

I turned around to face a young boy sitting directly across the aisle from me, “Do you want to see a magic trick?”