

DEBORAH *and* JAMES HOWE

BUNNICULA

A RABBIT-TALE OF MYSTERY

*Today vegetables ...
tomorrow the world!*



The Arrival

I SHALL never forget the first time I laid these now tired old eyes on our visitor. I had been left home by the family with the admonition to take care of the house until they returned. That's something they always say to me when they go out: "Take care of the house, Harold. You're the watchdog." I think it's their way of making up for not taking me with them. As if I *wanted* to go anyway. You can't lie down at the movies and still see the screen. And people think you're being impolite if you fall asleep and start to snore, or scratch yourself in public. No thank you, I'd rather be stretched out on my favorite rug in front of a nice, whistling radiator.

But I digress. I was talking about that first night. Well, it was cold, the rain was pelting the windows, the wind was howling, and it felt pretty good to be indoors. I was lying on the rug with my head on my paws just staring absently at the front door. My friend Chester was curled up on the brown velvet armchair, which years ago he'd staked out as his own. I saw that once again he'd covered the whole seat with his cat hair, and I chuckled to myself, picturing the scene tomorrow. (Next to grasshoppers, there is nothing that frightens Chester more than the vacuum cleaner.)

In the midst of this reverie, I heard a car pull into the driveway. I didn't even bother to get up and see who it was. I knew it had to be my family—the Monroes—since it was just about time for the movie to be over. After a moment, the front door flew open. There they stood in the doorway: Toby and Pete and Mom and Dad Monroe. There was a flash of lightning, and in its glare I noticed that Mr. Monroe was carrying a little bundle—a bundle with tiny glistening eyes.

Pete and Toby bounded into the room, both

talking at the top of their lungs. Toby shouted, "Put him over here, Dad."

"Take your boots off. You're soaking wet," replied his mother, somewhat calmly I thought, under the circumstances.

"But Mom, what about the—"

"First, stop dripping on the carpet."

"Would somebody like to take this?" asked Mr. Monroe, indicating the bundle with the eyes.

"I'd like to remove my coat."

"I will," Pete yelled.

"No, I will," said Toby "I found him."

"You'll drop him."

"I will not."

"You will too."

"Mom, Pete punched me!"

"I'll take him," said Mrs. Monroe. "Take off your coats this minute!" But she became so involved in helping the boys out of their coats that she didn't take him at all.

My tranquil evening had been destroyed and no one had even said hello to me. I whimpered to remind them that I was there.

"Harold!" cried Toby, "guess what happened

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Before it's too late, Harold the dog and Chester the cat must find out the truth about the newest pet in the Monroe household—a suspicious-looking bunny with unusual habits . . . and fangs!

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—NEIL GAIMAN

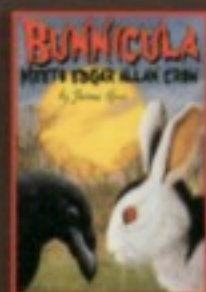
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
—J. GORDON MELTON, author of *The Vampire Book*

"Move over, Dracula! This mystery-comedy is sure to delight."

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Simon & Schuster, New York

Cover designed by Russell Gordon

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Ages 8–12

www.SimonSaysKids.com

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US \$5.99 / \$6.99 CAN

ISBN-13: 978-1-4169-2817-1

ISBN-10: 1-4169-2817-0

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