

# Bunnies for Scrunge

Elmer Scrunge was in the best of moods when he hurried home from his last Chemistry lab on Holy Thursday. He whistled a little tune as he took long strides over puddles of melted snow, and swung his briefcase in long, graceful arcs.

As he walked he thought, "What a joy to be alive! The sun is shining, the birds are singing, the leaves are turning green . . ." He looked up at the branch of a big elm tree just above his head and saw a robin. "Hello Robin! Hello tree! Hello sun!" Ah, yes, Scrunge was a happy man.

He turned into the walk of his own house and noticed his landlady sweeping away slush from the front porch. He gave her an ear-to-ear smile, touched his cap, and said, "Good afternoon, Mrs. Schwartz! Isn't it a lovely day?"

Mrs. Schwartz very nearly fell off the porch, but she managed to control her fright so that all she did was drop her broom into a large pile of slush. She stared at the figure of Scrunge, who was disappearing around the side of the house—never had she seen him in such a good mood. Normally he returned from class with a scowl on his face, hustled right by her without saying a word, and hurried to his downstairs room to spend the evening in study.

But, Easter was in the offing—Easter, the season of joy and rebirth. Scrunge could not help but be happy. He descended the stairs to his little room, put the key in the door, and opened it—and suddenly the smile vanished from his face.

Seated in his best easy chair, right by the gas fireplace, was a rabbit. A large rabbit. A rabbit at least four feet tall, and wearing Levi's and a U of A sweatshirt.

The rabbit turned to see Elmer, rose, took the pipe (it was Elmer's best) from its mouth, and smiled.

"How do you, do, Mr. Scrunge. Allow me to introduce myself—Rabbit, Easter C. Rabbit. Sorry to have barged in like this, but I had no idea when you'd get home, and I thought I might as well wait."

Elmer was just a little taken aback. He couldn't understand how the rabbit could have known his name. It took him a moment to find his tongue (which proved to be lodged comfortably between two upper molars), but finally he stammered out a few words.

"Pleased to meet you, Mr. Rabbit. I'm sure. Er . . . to what do I owe this honour?"

"Oh, strictly a business trip, Mr. Scrunge", replied the rabbit, resuming his seat and motioning Elmer to sit down, "strictly business. It's that time of year again this Sunday, you know—I mean, the Easter Egg thing and all that. It's the busiest time of the year for us . . . er, bunnies, if I may use that word."

"Yes, of course," said Elmer, his good humour fading fast as the rabbit drawled along, "but where do I come into this?"

The rabbit looked a little surprised. "Why, you don't come into it at all, old man. Not at all!" He looked at Elmer as if he suspected him of insanity, then turned toward the fireplace. For a moment there was silence.

"But—" began Elmer, not quite knowing what to say, "—but—why are you here?"

"Why, I have to be somewhere, now don't I?" asked the rabbit. "I must live somewhere

during my trip, mustn't I?" He was obviously annoyed.

Elmer sighed and said no more. Rabbits, as everyone knows, can be perfectly obstinate when they have made up their minds about something. To Elmer's cold, rational human mind, there was no reason why the rabbit should be permitted to stay; but according to rabbit-logic there was no reason why he should not.

"Well, he's not likely to bother me", said Elmer to himself, rising and going to his desk in the next room. He turned on the desk lamp, opened a book, and began studying.

The evening wore on uneventually. Finally, about ten o'clock, there was a timid knock at the front door; the rabbit shouted "I'll get it" and Elmer turned back to his books. Suddenly he looked up and thought, "What will my guests think if they're greeted by a blasted rabbit?" He jumped up and headed for the front room, and just as he entered it a whole troop of rabbits tumbled in from the landing.

Five, ten, twenty . . . Elmer lost count. All he could do was stand there with his mouth hanging open as hordes and hordes of rabbits poured into his living room, thousands of rabbits in raincoats and rubber boots and mohair sweaters, rabbits with glasses and rabbits with contacts, white rabbits, black rabbits, blue rabbits, brown rabbits, big ones, little ones. . . .

The front room was in an uproar. The rabbits milled around, admiring their new quarters, occasionally coming up to Elmer and slapping him on the back, telling off-colour rabbit-jokes to him and breathing their stinking breath into his face. It was a nightmare for the poor student. He bolted for the bedroom, forcibly evicted two or three rabbits who had found their way there, and sat down panting.

What was happening? This was like a scene from the last art film Elmer had seen. Were the forces of modern-day mythology out to get him? He buried his head in his hands and groaned.

Easter used to be such a pleasant time. He had made the best of the four-day holiday in studying, preparing for those imminent final exams. But now he found himself mobbed by thousands of bunny-rabbits, apparently sent from Up There to dispense the traditional goodies to the kiddies of Garneau. And they had chosen his house, his miserable forty-dollars-a-month basement suite, as their living quarters.

Elmer gasped at the thought of the clean-up job that would be involved. He had had a pet rabbit once, before he had realized the uselessness of such time-wasting hobbies, and now he remembered what the cage looked like when he had to clean up the . . . The thought was too horrible. The had to get rid of those rabbits somehow.

Armed with new courage, he stepped into the front room and raised his voice. "Attention, everyone" he shouted above the din. "Attention!" The rabbits stopped chattering, one by one, and looked at him. Finally there was complete silence, all eyes were turned towards Scrunge.

"You're all going to have to leave." Silence. "I can't have any rabbits, Easter or not, in this house!" More silence. Elmer looked wildly at the staring faces. "Get out!" he screamed.

A few faces broke into smiles. Some rabbits near the back began chuckling. Peals of rabbit-laughter broke out. They looked, and laughed, and pointed at poor Elmer, who had lost all control and was dashing around trying to hit rabbits with a candlestick. They easily avoided him.

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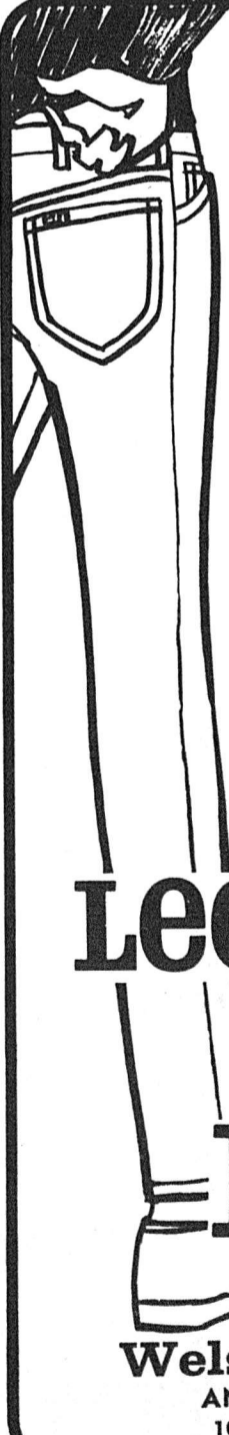


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