

Bunny Ears

by Diane D. Gillette

Word traveled fast at school on Monday. Emma Jakowski had actually captured him. He was being held in her dad's tool shed. Anyone who wanted to see him had to be in the Jakowski's backyard by 3:15 that afternoon, chocolate bunny ears in hand.

It was no secret that Emma loved chocolate bunny ears better than any other form of Easter candy. She immediately ate the ears off of her chocolate Easter Bunny every year and discarded the rest. It just didn't taste the same without the ears. She also woke up early every Easter and ate the ears off of all five of her younger siblings' bunnies. Her siblings had never even tasted chocolate Easter Bunny ears. They always complained to their mother, of course, but Mrs. Jakowski could do nothing to get their bunny ears back. She could only take away the rest of Emma's candy and divide it between the siblings. This was really no great punishment since Emma didn't have any interest in jelly beans or marshmallow chicks or even goo-filled chocolate eggs. It was bunny ears or nothing.

Somewhere around her eleventh birthday, Emma finally decided she could no longer live with having bunny ears only once a year. She wanted bunny ears every day. Of course that meant she was going to have to go to the source. She would take him by force, if necessary.

There was much speculation about how she actually intended to capture the Easter Bunny, but Emma refused to reveal her plan. When pressed, she pointed out that the Easter Bunny probably had spies everywhere and she didn't want word getting back to him. She spent much time up in the Jakowski tree house building some sort of trap. The rest of the Jakowski clan was strictly forbidden to even so much as peek in the tree house and not one of them dared to cross Emma. They knew she would make good on her threat to cut them off of all Easter candy for the rest of their lives once she had the Easter Bunny as her prisoner. Only JoJo had been let into the tree

house and given a very special job to do, so the rumors said. But he wasn't talking.

One part of the plan was clear. Anyone who wanted to see the Easter Bunny had to pay with a set of solid chocolate bunny ears. Hollow ears would not be accepted. Only solid chocolate bunny ears were worth a glimpse of the Rabbit himself.

That Easter, all across the neighborhood, chocolate bunny ears were lopped off and stashed away in sandwich baggies or wrapped in tissue or aluminum foil. They were hidden away in backpacks so they wouldn't be forgotten Monday morning. There were those who received hollow bunnies and burst into tears, much to their parents' distress. There were others who really didn't believe Emma could do it and so ate their bunny ears. Bunny ears were traded or stolen as needed. Having a ticket to see the Easter Bunny was worth making an enemy or three.

JoJo stood at the back gate and held a huge Easter basket while a line formed. Under Emma's watchful eye, JoJo examined every set of bunny ears before they were accepted. Any ears that were deemed faulty, whether they were too small, hollow, or had markings suspiciously similar to bite marks, were tossed into a smaller basket and that unfortunate kid was asked to leave. Once all the worthy ears were deposited in the big basket and the chosen children were allowed in the yard, Emma signaled JoJo. He handed the smaller basket to the younger Jakowski siblings to dispose of as they saw fit and disappeared into the house with the large basket. He came back out into the yard and gave Emma the thumbs up sign. She cleared her throat and silence fell over the back yard.

"I won't lie to you," she began. "Capturing the Easter Bunny wasn't easy. I appreciate your generous donations while we're in the process of negotiating."

She paused a moment and the crowd inched closer to the shed.

"I promise that as soon as the Easter Bunny and I come to terms, you will all be paid back with all the chocolate you can eat."

A cheer arose from the crowd and Emma allowed the noise to continue for a moment before she held up her hands. As the

crowded quieted down, she waved JoJo forward and asked him to open the shed door. He was painstakingly slow.

When the door was finally open, the children frantically searched the darkness for the Easter Bunny. Finally someone spotted movement in the far corner and as all eyes followed that person's finger, a small brown bunny took a couple of hops towards the door.

"JoJo," Emma hissed, "You were supposed to put him in the cage!"

JoJo looked wide-eyed at his sister and stuttered a little, unable to respond. All eyes were on the bunny. The air was thick with wonderment and the bunny seemed paralyzed with fear. Finally, with no warning, the bunny leapt to life and zigzagged through the crowd before anyone realized what happened.

"After him!" Emma shouted. Instantly the crowd of children took off through the neighborhood after the Easter Bunny. Emma and JoJo followed the crowd to the end of their driveway. They came to a slow stop and watched the crowd of children follow the bunny into the park down the street where they veered out of sight.

Emma turned towards JoJo. Both were grinning. She gave her brother a high five and turned back towards the shed where her youngest siblings stood waiting. They wore chocolate smeared smiles and already held the huge basket of bunny ears between them.

"I told you they were the best, didn't I?" she asked as she helped herself to a pair of chocolate bunny ears.

