



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Mrs. Bunny's Dinner Party

Anna E. Skinner

"Are you ready, my dear?" asked Mr. Bobtail, checking his large watch. "Mrs. Bunny will expect us in good time for her dinner party."

"Just a few more minutes, Mr. Bobtail. I wonder who else is invited. We always meet such fine company at Mrs. Bunny's."

Mrs. Bobtail fetched her little gray silk bonnet, and Mr. Bobtail's best birch cane.

"Come along," she said. "It's a good half hour's walk to Bramble Hollow. Shall we go round by Cabbage-Patch Lane?"

"Oh, no, my dear. Let's take the short cut through the meadow."

Off they went, arm in arm, across the sunlit fields.

"Look, there are Mr. and Mrs. Frisk, gathering nuts," said Mr. Bobtail. "Jack Frost shook the trees last night. There are plenty lying on the ground."

"Good morning!" called Mrs. Bobtail. "How are all the little Friskies?"

"Oh, how do you do! They're quite well, thank you," said Mrs. Frisk.

"The nuts are fine this fall, Mr. Frisk," said Mr. Bobtail, shaking his friend's hand.

"Yes, indeed. We've gathered a great many for our winter store. But we don't dare stay long out in this open field." Mr. Frisk dropped his voice and glanced all around. "It's hunting season, you know."

"What! You mean you're afraid of hunters?" asked Mr. Bobtail, surprised.

"We certainly are," said Mrs. Frisk, edging closer. "From our cosy home in the hollow of this tree, we saw two hunters crossing the field this morning. Their dogs sniffed about and barked up at our tree, and we held our breath."

"And a little while later we heard *bang! bang!*" added Mr. Frisk. "I tell you, we didn't dare come down to gather nuts for hours."

"How dreadful!" said Mrs. Bobtail, looking all around. "And we're on our way to Mrs. Bunny's dinner party. Do you think we ought to go on, my dear?"

"Of course! Of course! I've never had the least fear of a gun! Let the hunters bang away all they like. They'll never frighten *me*." Mr. Bobtail drew himself up

and tossed back his head. "Come, Mrs. Bobtail. Good day, my friends."

"Good day! We hope you have a lovely time," said Mr. Frisk.

"Isn't Mr. Bobtail wonderfully brave?" said Mrs. Frisk, watching them go.

As they neared Bramble Hollow, the Bobtails met other friends on the path: Mr. and Mrs. Pinkeye, Mr. and Mrs. Longears, Mr. and Mrs. Cottontail, all on their way to the same party.

Mr. and Mrs. Bunny were waiting to welcome their guests. The little Bunnies had been told exactly how to behave.

"Now, my dears," their mother had said, "you may play outside while we're at dinner. I'll call you when we've finished. And no matter how hungry you are, you are not to peep in at the windows. If anything frightens you, slip into the kitchen and wait there quietly until I come."

Away scampered four happy little Bunnies.

By noon all the guests had arrived. Mr. and Mrs. Bunny welcomed them in, and soon everyone was seated around the table, laughing and talking merrily.

"What a fine salad, Mrs. Bunny," said Mrs. Longears. "The cabbage hearts are especially sweet this fall."

Mrs. Bunny nodded happily. "Do have some lettuce, Mr. Bobtail. Your long walk must have made you hungry."

"I hope you'll like our carrots," said Mr. Bunny, helping himself to another. "Mrs. Cottontail, let me give you more turnip tops."

"Thank you, Mr. Bunny. What a pleasant home you have here in Bramble Hollow. Do hunters ever wander into this quiet corner?"

"Well, yes. They stroll through the hollow now and then."

"Dear me," said Mrs. Cottontail.

"Our friends the Frisks were just telling us they saw two hunters crossing the fields this morning," said Mrs. Bobtail.

"This *morning*?" cried several guests, ears shooting straight up.



"Come, come, my friends," said Mr. Bobtail with a laugh. "I'll have to calm you all down. I never could see why so many rabbits are afraid of a gun! Why, I've often sat quietly under a hedge while a hunter fired shots as near to me as—"

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Four little Bunnies came flying through the window and leaped right over the table, sending dishes everywhere.

In the very same instant, Mr. Bobtail shot out of his chair and dashed to a corner of the kitchen, where he crouched, shaking from head to toe.

The other guests did not move or speak for several long minutes. Then Mrs. Bunny spotted Mr. Bobtail in his corner.

"Come out, Mr. Bobtail," she called gently. "I'm quite sure the hunters have gone on into the next field."

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