

INSIDE AURORA: Hopping to It

By Scott Johnston

It was a fine day in late March and I was strolling along one of the trails near the Seniors' Centre.

I expected to run into the Easter Bunny, who I usually seemed to encounter this time of year. Often, he was in some state of stress or distress about preparations for his pending activities here in Town.

Sure enough, before long I spotted a small furry figure approaching, carrying a large wicker basket. But to my surprise, I quickly recognized it as Aurora Annie, our Town's weather forecasting groundhog.

"Annie, what are you doing here?" I asked, as she got closer.

I sat down on a nearby bench.

"What does it look like I'm doing?" she responded with a smile.

Hopping up beside me, she said, "I'm getting ready for the Town's big Easter celebration on Saturday at the Seniors' Centre."

"But that's the Easter Bunny's job."

"He can't make it this year. He's ... indisposed."

"But Brock just interviewed him for The Auroran last week. He sounded fine."

"Well, you know how things go sometimes." After a glance around to ensure no one else could hear our conversation, she whispered, "He was a bit nervous getting ready. He's never had to set up an inflatable before, and I think he accidentally punched a hole in it."

"It's fixed now," she added quickly, "but I think he may have compensated for the extra pressure by eating too much chocolate."

Having so much of it available this time of year is kind of an occupational hazard."

"So I'm filling in," she concluded.

"Like the alternate some towns other than Aurora have at Regional Council, if their representative can't make it?"

"Exactly," she agreed. "We seasonal characters take turns backing each other up. If one of us can't make it, someone else is ready to step in."

"Has this happened before?"

"Sure." Looking a little sheepish, she continued, "I remember one February I actually slept in, hibernation-wise, and wasn't available for my annual prediction. Santa Claus had to step in at the last minute to cover for me."

"Santa!"

"Yeah. He may be a wonderful altruist," she confided, "giving out all those toys and spreading good cheer, but he's a lousy weather prognosticator. After his prediction of an early spring, it snowed well into April that year. It was kind of embarrassing. But I appreciated the help," she added, quickly.

"So, you'll be doing the Easter events at the Seniors' Centre this year?"

"Yes. It should go fairly well. After all, the local Girl Guides and Town staff do most of the work. The Bunny's more of a figurehead."

"Besides," she added, "the Optimists will be serving pancakes there. That's an added incentive to attend. My usual job February 2nd never involves breakfast."

"But won't the children realize you're not a rabbit?"

"I'll wear fake ears, some whiskers, and a cotton tail. The kids will be so hyped up on chocolate and activities they'll never notice."

"Speaking of which," she concluded, "I'd better get going, so I can get outfitted."

"Have fun," I said, as she headed off towards the Seniors' Centre, making the odd practice hop along the way.

It wouldn't quite be a traditional Easter, but it was nice to know that someone was willing to help out on short notice to ensure the kids of Aurora weren't disappointed.

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