



## ***Watership Down in a Dustpan***

I was going to straighten up the house this weekend, but my vacuum cleaner attachment broke (the one that grips the handle and pushes it across the carpet). Meanwhile, in the corners of my rambling Victorian house, the dust bunnies were breeding. They began as cute little cottontails composed of laundry lint and dog hairs, but over time, through some unnatural selection sparked by enduring the hardships of living at my place, they made evolutionary adaptations.

The tiny angora bunnies downy with cashmere fibers have become huge surefooted desert jackrabbits bustling with human head hairs and used tissues. They are aggressive in their mass and numbers. A few have even sprouted horns like the mythical jackalope or some creature cobbled together in the devil's workshop borne of idle hands.

It's like *Watership Down* behind the bathroom door. A warren of angry dust rabbits crouch in the corner waiting for me to make my move. They are red-eyed in the dark, yarn-sized balls of unidentifiable debris poised to spring. A broom just makes them scatter, disintegrating wispily, and reconfiguring into something stronger and more powerful.

Just by sweeping, I become Sarah Connor from *Terminator II* attacking the liquid alloy android T-1000 that simply explodes apart into balls of lolling mercury, only to morph back into an increasingly deadly adversary. Slap some bunny ears on that robot and that's what I've got living under the stove.

Sometimes I wrestle the vacuum cleaner into the living room. I plug it in and empty the collection cup filled with ground clutter. A fine fluff of anonymous dirt puffs into the trashcan releasing a mushroom cloud of microscopic particles for me to inhale. Once ingested, the spores stay with me, lining my lungs, nestling in the cilia and tickling my nostrils for the rest of the day. I sneeze. I cough. I take allergy pills that make narcoleptics out of snufflers. I nap. The dust bunnies roam while I sleep. They move

with silent stealth, collecting notebook shavings, dead skin cells, and iridescent insect wings for their burrows beneath the bed.

At other times I graze a feather-duster over surfaces to lift the white sands of inertia and watch them pirouette in a ray of sunlight, swirling like the cosmos in a magical way that momentarily reminds me how everything is connected. The litter tossed by teenagers on Main Street mixes with the sawdust of the ancient Oshkosh lumber barons. Each miniscule fragment of something long since decayed, this little collection of atoms covering the coffee table, is the substance of which physical objects are composed. It is the ash of things and people who disintegrate and blow away. It is the matter of domesticity. Every item in my house is sugared with a fine film of the observable Universe.

At the end of the hall a draft of air sends a dust bunny scampering towards its mother, a huge hare who has gathered herself into a tumbleweed of dry leaves and stray threads. They nestle into a corner and become still. It is a moment both private and serene. I release my finger from the trigger of a can of Pledge and slowly back away from the scene. I draw a heart in the dust on the dining room table.