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The Princess in Black and the hungry bunny horde **by Shannon Hale and Dean Hale, illustrated by LeUyen Pham**

Publisher: Candlewick Press

RRP \$22.99

This is the latest title in the series for young readers who like stories about princesses, unicorns, and magic. As an added bonus, the heroine of these chapter books is always on a mission.

On the surface, Princess Magnolia and her unicorn, Frimplepants, live a privileged life of parties, scrumptious food, and fine clothes. However, when duty calls, they transform into an undercover pair of valiant fighters who battle pesky monsters.

Whenever Magnolia's glitter-stone ring alerts her to trouble, she sheds her frilly dress and becomes the masked Princess in Black. At the same time, Frimplepants morphs into her sleek and speedy pony, Blacky. It's difficult to keep their true identities secret, especially from the suspicious Princess Sneezewort who wonders about Magnolia's sudden disappearances.

After a horde of hungry rabbits invades a goat paddock the daring duo are called to stop the bunnies from eating everything in sight, including grass, trees, and the goats! New Zealand children will recognise the environmental disaster that can be caused by voracious, multiplying rabbits.

Numerous full and part-page watercolour and ink illustrations are helpful for children transitioning from picture books. The charming characters are likeable - even the monsters are cute. Large type and plenty of white space framed by attractive borders will hold the attention of early readers.

Published in hardback with a dust-jacket, the Princess in Black series will appeal to young children who appreciate a princess with attitude.

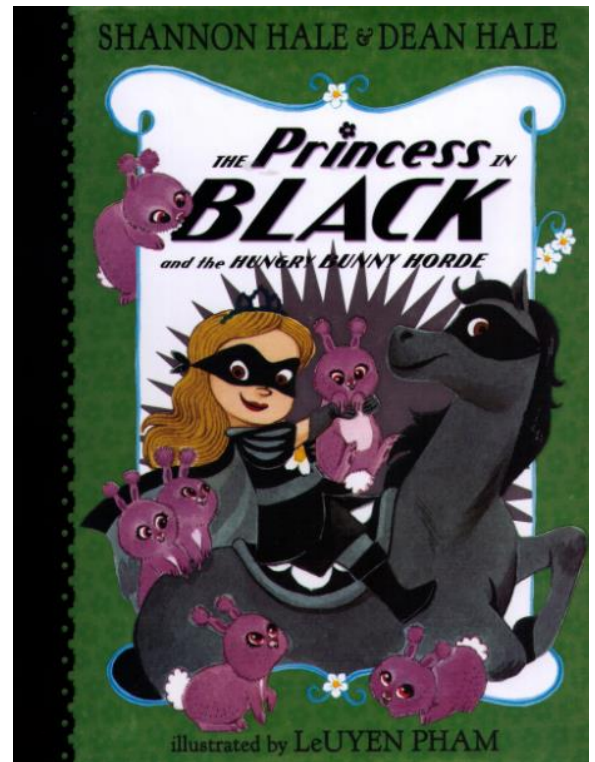
Author's website:

<http://www.squeetus.com/stage/main.html>

Illustrator's website:

<http://www.leuyenpham.com/>

Reviewed by children's book author, Jean Bennett



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