



Dear Reader, The guy who usually writes these letters asked me to do it instead. Maybe he was having a bad writing day. Maybe he wanted me to play the sap for him. Or maybe he ran into Trouble with a capital T. Well, Trouble's my business. I'm a dog. I'm a detective. The name's Bud Barkin. And this book is about a case I had involving a dame named Delilah Gorbish, whom I would call Trouble with a capital T except I've used that metaphor already, and a clown named Crusty Carmady whose calling card is a teakettle that he heaves through windows. Nice pair of birds. The mystery deepens with another character called the Big Fish, who isn't really a fish and who's addicted to the Home Shopping Network. Hey, I don't write 'em -- I just solve 'em. If you're interested you might want to come along for the ride, which is wilder than a bunch of English teachers at a grammar fair. Just remember: I do all the similes. Yours truly, Bud Barkin, P.E.

From School Library Journal Grade 3-5-Howie, the irrepressible dachshund, tries his hand-er, paw-at writing detective fiction. He imagines himself as Barkin, a hardboiled shamus with a nose for crime and an eye for the dames. The detective is working late when a beautiful blonde tumbles through the door of his office-"trouble with a capital T." Delilah claims she's being followed, and Barkin suspects Crusty Carmady, an old enemy who's just been sprung from Sing Sing. But, is Delilah on the run from Carmady-or in cahoots with him? The whodunit action alternates with selections from Howie's writing journal in which he ponders the craft of writing and the editorial suggestions of Uncle Harold (the sheepdog "author" of the "Bunnacula" stories). The narration is an affectionate parody of the gumshoe genre, filled with the kind of mock tough-guy similes that would make Mickey Spillane proud. ("She looked me over like I was a used car she was thinking of buying if the price was right.") Howie's journal observations provide an amusing demonstration of the creative process and the challenges of authorship. The last chapter is a bit frantic as Howie attempts to tie up all the plot threads at once-explaining any remaining inconsistencies as "red herrings." While this title has little relationship to the original "Bunnacula" stories, it should appeal to mystery fans who like their crime spiced with chuckles.Elaine E. Knight, Lincoln Elementary Schools, IL Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist Gr. 2-4. Although Dachshund and aspiring writer Howie Monroe still hasn't won a Newbery Award, that doesn't stop him from trying to write a mystery. Unfortunately, the confident pooch finds the task harder than he expected. Creating doggie PI Bud Barkin, tough, handsome, and smart, is easy; after all, as Howie says, Bud's based on himself. The tricky part is writing a plot that makes sense. With input and encouragement from Uncle Harold, a professional writer, Howie manages to create something he likes--and, hardly pausing to bark, starts planning his next book. As with the previous Howie book, the dog's lively, first-person, handwritten journal, which details his writing dilemmas, alternates with his version of the classic, hardboiled detective story he creates. The story-within-a-story is both easy to read and funny, and its canine twist offers plenty of goofy plot developments, puns, and silly similes for an entertaining spoof. Kids will also come away with a simple, witty introduction to the elements of mystery writing. Illustrations not seen. Shelle Rosenfeld Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved. About the Author James Howe is the author of more than ninety books for young readers, including the modern classic Bunnacula and its highly popular sequels. In 2001, Howe published The Misfits, the story of four outcast seventh-graders who try to end name-calling in their school. The Misfits is now widely read and studied in middle schools throughout the country, and was the inspiration for the national movement known as No Name-Calling Week (NoNameCallingWeek.org), an event observed by thousands of middle and elementary schools annually. There are three companion novels to The Misfits: Totally Joe (2005), Addie on the Inside (2011), and Also Known as Elvis (2014). Howe's many other books for children from preschool through teens frequently deal with the acceptance of difference and being true to oneself. Visit him online at JamesHowe.com.