

Without a human in tow, it didn't take long for the squirrels to cover the distance around the lake. Along the way, they briefed Mustard on what had transpired and Curtis' theory on what had happened to Aldin. At Mustard's order, they lay down a line to make it easy to find their way out should they have to flee separately. Oakhurst and Pine Tassel quickly lead Mustard and the techsquirrel through the old bunny lab's labyrinth of tunnels and into the power control room as they dubbed the space. Mustard looked about from one set of gauges to another. He gazed through the window into the other room, his tail twitching back and forth.

"Any way into the reactor room?"

"Possibly," Oakhurst replied. "But we haven't explored the other side tunnels yet."

Mustard gazed at the gauges. "It doesn't look like we've got enough time for that." He pointed to some gauges nearing the far right in the pink range. "Whatever that is in there, Cuton™ reactor or something else, it is starting to overheat. I'll just have to try and find a way to shut it down from here." He sat down at an 80's vintage pink bunny computer terminal. He pointed to Oakhurst and Pine Tassel. "I want you two back by the entrance to this room. Be prepared to bolt if things go wrong." He pushed the button for the monitor and, surprisingly, it powered up. He waved the small paw-sized mouse on the pad next to the keyboard a couple times and again to his surprise, the terminal woke-up. On the pink background screen in lime green text, devilbunny symbols read:

NAHMAKANTA POWER
PASSWORD: (blinking cursor)

Mustard drooped his tail. "Great." He looked about, including under the keyboard and tipped the monitor. Nothing. Whatever bun had been in charge actually knew a little bit about standard password security. He read out loud the devilbunny symbols in the upper right corner, "Running on Bunix™ 2.7. Have a Fluffy Day!"

"Easy to hack," the tech squirrel stated as he unslung the smartphone from his back. It took him a few minutes to produce a cord from a small backpack that would hook the newer device to the antique terminal. Being a 30 year old operating system, the squirrels at Nahamakanta and their Fudd allies had long learned all the backdoors into the devilbunny OS, Bunix™ 2.7. After another five minutes, the tech squirrel wrote some symbols on a piece of paper and pawed it to Mustard. He then held up the phone to confirm he had written the symbols correctly as Mustard questioned it. Mustard shook his head and (gigglechittered).

The others looked at him and he pointed to the password. "This is Bunnyspeak for 1234567890." After entering the password and being allowed through, Mustard used the mouse to look about on the system as the others looked on. His tail twitching several times as he clicked through screens.

(chittersqueak)

The others looked at him as his tail thrashed about. “It is a Cuton™ Reactor. It’s been putting out 1 megawatt steadily,” (click, click) “Except during the accident. Then it surged off the scale, which goes to 1,000 megawatts. It’s currently rising upward again.” (click, click) The lights dimmed, turning pink and started flashing. “That’s not good.” (click, click) “It is increasing in output quickly. I’m going to try and shut it down. I want all of you to leave for safety’s sake. Good thing you strung that line as I instructed.”

“But Mentat,” Oakhurst started to protest.

“Don’t give me any buts. I outrank all of you. And I use to be a devilbunny. If it blows, I should be able to tolerate the Cuton™ burst. My orders. And none of you can read this. Now get going.”

The techsquirrel packed-up the smartphone and departed with Oakhurst and Pine Tassel.

It took clicking through several screens to find the ‘Emergency shut-down’ program. Mustard clicked ‘Start’.

ARE YOU SURE? (CURIOUSFLUFF)

Mustard typed in ‘YES’.

PASSWORD:

He entered the password again.

BEGINNING EMERGENCY SHUTDOWN PROCEDURES
HAVE A FLUFFY DAY!

An alarm klaxon sounded in time to the blinking pink lights. In the room beyond, the glow dimmed. Mustard bolted out of the room. He scrambled up the passageways following the string left behind by the others.

Fifteen minutes later, as he was less than half-way back up to the surface, the power source spiked. In the power monitor room, dials flipped well past their maximum. On the terminal scrolled:

CRITICAL FAILURE (WARNFLUFF)
EMERGENCY SHUT DOWN FAILURE
CRITICAL FAILURE (WARNFLUFF)
EMERGENCY SHUT DOWN FAILURE

CRITICAL FAILURE (WARNFLUFF) EMERGENCY SHUT DOWN FAILURE

In the other room, beyond the Cuton Reactor out of sight of the observation windows, another device was operating with several different lighted indicators on it. Several turned bright pink. Throughout the complex, in rooms both accessible from the remaining tunnels and those not, spheres popped into existence. As these ‘doorways’ opened simultaneously, it created a vacuum towards them. Mustard was sucked backwards down the corridor. Debris slapped at his muzzle as he scrabbled at the walls and floor trying to get a clawhold.

On the “alternative” Earth, a sphere appeared briefly in the same spot as where Aldin passed through and vanished with a clap of thunder. No one was nearby to witness it.

At that same moment, another sphere formed around the reactor, imploding the observation windows, sending the power source and window debris elsewhere, cutting power to the lab, and causing it and all the other ‘doorways’ to slam shut at once with a loud clap like thunder, causing the ground to shake briefly. Somewhere in space, where ever that ‘doorway’ opened, the reactor and the other debris popped into existence. A moment later, it exploded providing a psychedelic light show to anything that may have been nearby to witness it. Of course, in the vacuum of space, there was no sound to accompany the bright light.

Just as suddenly as it had begun, the sucking action ceased and everything was still and quiet around Mustard. He shook his muzzle to shake dust and dirt loose from it. Apparently, he was still alive. He scrambled the rest of the way out, much to the relief of the others. The sun was beginning to set.

“We felt it let go or whatever it did,” Oakleaf said. He pointed to the north. “It caused another landslide too.”

“We’ll go back down in the morning and make sure it is now safe,” Mustard stated. “However, I don’t think it exploded. I’m not using bunnyspeak at you.” He looked to the north. “You can’t see it yet, but I can feel it. I think it leaked a little before it shut down. There might be a nice light show tonight.”

That evening, an impressive aurora borealis flashed across the sky over the lake. The humans at the camps watching swore it seemed to originate from Nesuntabunt Mountain. Dr. Devon assured them, it was just a trick of the lights and explained what created the aurora for those who didn’t know. Most of them had forgiven him for introducing them to the bitter soft drink, Moxie™. A couple actually liked it.