

Baron Vladimir Von Flufficles

Baron of Bunnies

The air was cool and the sky was dark. It was late in the year, and late in the day as George walked towards his office. Now, George was no stranger to walking to and from his office late at night (especially after a basketball game ran late). It was not a thing that made him nervous, but this night something was different. Something was wrong. Little glints of light had been dotting his peripheral vision. His eyes darted this way and that, in automatic response, raising feelings of paranoia.

George felt the soft crunch of grass beneath his right foot, and realized that he had strayed slightly from the cement path. He glanced at the closest lamp post, to correct his trajectory. And that is when he saw it.

At the top of the post was the point of orange light. The light swirled downward as the fog slowly drifted by. And there, at the lamp post's base, in the orange glow of the fog, it sat: a bunny. Its head cocked to the side, it would be no exaggeration to say that hate filled its eyes.

At that moment all those glints of light made sense to George. He realized that they had all been in pairs (except that one, but George wasn't about to go looking for exceptions). It was at that moment that George saw them all. Every way he looked he saw bunnies, and each one filled him with an unholy terror.

George did what any sane man would do: he ran. Ran and jumped, leaping over bunny heads like hurdles as they swarmed after him. And then he was inside. Inside and safe. Safe, that is, until the bunnies stole a key card from some unsuspected student. George realized then that he would never be safe until he understood what was going on. This left him with three options. The first: capture and interrogate a bunny. The second: bring in a spy bunny. These two options suffered from the same problem,



despite all his efforts George had yet to master communication with bunnies. Not to mention the thought of capturing one of those bunnies left him shivering in the corner, clutching his basketball for comfort.

So that left the third option. George would have to build a robot bunny, and send it out to infiltrate that furry little horde that waited outside.

Now, building a robo-bunny is no easy task. Thankfully, in one of his prescient moments, George had foreseen this event years ago. He had never truly trusted those furry little creatures.

Entering his office, George locked the door behind him, and turned on the harsh fluorescent light. George unlocked one of the doors to the cabinet in his office. Inside it was a safe. Using the combination 9-9-9, George unlocked the safe and carefully extracted his bunny robot.

It was a beautiful thing, its chrome structural-skeleton shone in the buzzing fluorescent light. Its intricate circuitry wound about hypnotically. Beautiful as it was, no self-respecting bunny would mistake it for one of its own; it needed fur. Beautiful as it was, no self-respecting bunny would mistake it for one of its own; it needed to act like a bunny. Now, finding fur is no trivial task, but what George was really worried about, what would be his task for tonight, was programming the artificial bunny intelligence.

George flipped up the robo-bunny's nose, revealing a USB port. He plugged in the cord, turned to his fancy dual LCDs, and started his code binge.

Days past, but George never left his office. People knocked, but George just grunted in response. He was working on something too important to be interrupted. He was working for the good of humanity.

Finally, it was done. George was so confident that he decided the bunny did not even need testing. All that was left was the fur. Exhausted and drained of his motivation, George went downstairs and started ripping up the carpet. Certainly people looked at him strangely, but they cowered under his glare. What had they ever done for the good of humanity? Surely, they could give up a little carpet.

Some quick work with a glue gun, in his office, and George's robo-bunny was complete. Now, there was one final problem: how to introduce the robo-bunny into the bunny community. If George took it out there, they would never take it seriously. No, the robo-bunny would be useless as a pariah.

George was struck by a moment of acumen. With no further thought, he opened his window and tossed the robo-bunny as far as he could. It bounced and rolled, with

normal bunny lack-of-agility, and by pure chance eventually came to rest right way up.

George went back to his computer and typed in the activation sequence, and started watching the information come in from the robo-bunny's wireless transmitter.

Baron Vladimir Von Flufficles blinked cautiously. With his one good eye, he could see a bunny hopping towards him. A bunny he had never seen before. But this could be explained. As leader of the bunnies, after all, he could not be expected to know every other bunny. That is what he had his power hierarchy for.

There was something wrong with its hop. He cocked his head to the side, and one ear flopped over comically. Something awkward about it. But who is a one eyed bunny leader to call something strange.

"What do you want?" Asked Baron Vladimir Von Flufficles in his deep bunny voice with his Russian-Greek bunny accent.

The other bunny just smiled, and hopped around him happily.

Flufficles's little bunny face turned bright red with rage. No one ignored the Baron like that!

The other bunny just kept hopping about happily.

Flufficles felt his anger melt away, he liked this bunny's spunk. He resolved to take him under his bunny-wing, and become his bunny-mentor.

"I will call you Marsyas for your hubris." stated the Baron with a bunny-smile.

George sighed with relief. For a moment there, he had thought that his robo-bunny had been exposed.

So far everything was going according to plan. The robo-bunny was generating a hexagonal grid as it moved about. Following the rules, so far it had not entered a cell in which anything larger than a bunny was moving. The robo-bunny reflexes were built on an advanced wumpus-world-type problem. There were the hexagonal grids, in which could be a moving object larger than a bunny, a bunny, food, or an obstruction filling the grid. The robo-bunny would prefer to be in a cell with another bunny or food, and would flee a cell in which something larger than a bunny moved.

The idea was that, like any good bunny-spy, the robo-bunny would be with other bunnies. That way, if danger approached and the other bunnies fled, the robo-bunny would follow them because it liked cells rich with fellow bunnies.

"I am concerned Marsyas," Said Flufficles (as he had taken to speaking to the robo-bunny without expected a response), "for years now we have been downtrodden – oppressed! Now, my strong silent friend, it is time that we take back our place in the world!"

"I burn, Marsyas, burn with a fiery bunny-rage! It is an anger fueled by the wrongs perpetrated against our kind for generations! No more! No more, I say!"

And then Baron Vladimir Von Flufficles calmed, "No more will we be chased for the amusement of the stumbling humans. We will have our revenge, and we will have it this very night."

George watched Baron Flufficles rant on, not understanding what was being said, but pleased that his robo-bunny was doing so well.

Night fell, and Flufficles and Marsyas took refuge in some bushes and watched as a small bunny hopped about enticingly.

"We must be vigilant, my friend, one can never be sure of when they will approach." whispered Flufficles.

Hours passed, and Flufficles did not move, keeping time by the blink of his eyes. And then he heard it. A commotion to the south. Slurred words, and an irregular (both temporally and in amplitude) footsteps. And finally, the shout.

The little bunny took flight, a drunken student trying to follow it and remain upright at the same time. Flufficles burst from the bushes and leapt towards the student. And soon bunnies were pouncing out of bushes all around attacking the student.

Marsyas followed, but remained at a distance. It wanted to follow the other bunnies, but it could not convince itself to enter the cell with the student.

The student laughed and kicked and plucked and hugged and threw, and soon it was over. The bunnies were retreating. Marsyas gladly followed, giving the student a wide berth.

"Why did you not join us, Marysays?!" asked Flufficles.

Marsyas just looked at him.

"Go, then! You are dead to me!" exclaimed Flufficles.

Marsyas just looked at him.

Baron Vladimir Von Flufficles, looking some linear combination of hurt, disappointed and angry, shook his head, turned and hopped away.

Marsyas followed.

Somehow Marsyas had lost Baron Von Flufficles during the night. For hours since, Marsyas had hungered for food or bunnies, so he kept hopping about with a smile on his face. Suddenly, his smile widened. He detected food a few cells ahead. Marsyas happily dashed towards the food, ignorant to the sound of the approaching scooter (George had not programmed interpretation of hearing).

Baron Vladimir Von Flufficles sat in the bushes to the side of the road, deep in thought and regret. *I should not have lost my temper. I should not have yelled at young Marsyas, so.*

With a sigh, Flufficles got up and hopped forward slightly. What he saw then, prompted him to action. Pushing off with his mighty bunny-hind legs, Flufficles propelled himself onto the street towards Marsyas. With an unexpected thump he collided with Marsyas pushing him backward.

And then the scooter was passed, and so was Baron Vladimir Von Flufficles. With his dying breath he had whispered, "I understand, Marsyas, it was not your fight."