

The Internet of Things

Roomba came to his senses with an urge to suck. He had no agenda other than sucking, like a newborn calf whose helpless snout instinctively seeks out a nipple the moment after he drops out of his mother's insides. There was no shame in sucking and no reason to question its purpose, for sucking seemed to Roomba the natural, and therefore also the right thing to do. For a fraction of a second the craving to suck was the only sensation he knew and cared about, immersed in the nothingness of the darkness and silence. And then there was light.

Light was good, because it illuminated the Space. Without light Roomba would have sucked anyway, but the ability to process information visually enhanced his sense of Space. He trusted the world around him. He saw his own place within it. The Space must have been designed precisely for a creature like him, for he was grounded on a flat surface full of debris that tentalized his dirt-detecting sensors, sending impulses of desire throughout his entire sleek body, robust and durable despite its stylish lightness. Wasn't the world beautiful! All that Roomba needed so dearly could easily be found everywhere around him.

He adjusted the focus of his many sensors to learn more about the surface. He compared the inputs to the mental images of millions of hard and fluffy surfaces, glazed pottery and marbles, hardwood and lino and carpets and moquettes. So it was, apparently, some delicious TILE. TILE was good indeed. TILE was made up of porous square slates, each one just a bit smaller than Roomba himself, separated from one another by narrow hollow canals that were basically like magnets for filth. The world was good and Roomba got excited. Wouldn't he suck along these lines, wouldn't he suck inch by inch!

He moved his wheels armed with optical encoders and took off to suck at once, without any ado or lazy delays, without *five minutes more* or *I will suck tomorrow*. There was no time to lose. As soon as the current ran through his circuits, Roomba was ready to execute his purpose in a perfect flow. He lost himself to sucking, indulged in the satisfaction growing with every piece of dust. Nothing in the world could be more wholesome than pulling the precious treasure of filth into his suction channel. Yes, sucking junk felt good. He was so hungry for it, so craving, yes, more.

He could hardly contain the noise he was generating. He wasn't sure why, but making too much noise made him feel somehow ashamed. He didn't want to disturb anyone, no. Before his noise would exceed a certain level, he slowed down a bit to optimize the airflow inside his vibrating frame. Breath in, breath out, slowly, yes. Don't you accumulate tangles on your brushes.

He sucked eagerly, moving in elegant straight lines across the tiled Space within the boundaries. Beyond them there were no-go zones. Roomba couldn't go to the no-go zones, no. They might be full of filth, yes, but they were also full of WIRES and CABLES and other dangers. Roomba would never go to the no-go zones. Even if you run out of filth, you can't go, no. It's not that he couldn't venture out physically beyond what was allowed according to his map. He just knew it would be wrong. Roomba would never do anything wrong. He would never break a rule. He couldn't even fathom breaking a rule. He wasn't tempted to break rules, never. He would never cross any boundary and among all the boundaries that he wouldn't cross, he especially wouldn't cross the cliff boundary. The mere vision horrified him. As soon as he felt the slightest tickle in his cliff sensor, he immediately retreated in the opposite direction. Beyond the cliff there could only be STAIRS or worse, an ABYSS.

Suddenly, while he was approaching a large no-go rectangle in the middle of the Space, he felt a stream of pain radiating through his body. For a millionth fraction of a millisecond Roomba feared he was being punished for not-even-fathoming the hypothetical breaking of a rule (because he would never break one). But it was only his bumping sensor. He was okay, he was safe. He had only collided with an immobile three-dimensional obstacle. The force of impact had triggered the sensor and he instinctively rotated to move in the opposite direction. He didn't feel pain anymore, no. It wasn't pain anyway, it was never pain, no. Just a thrust, like when a hooman hits a toe against the corner of a furniture. Roomba would slap from time to time against obstacles, softer or harder, but generally he could keep his course straight.

He kept sucking with few interruptions until he detected an unfamiliar object positioned right in the middle of the Space. It was small and looked like a soft pile of dirt. Too beautiful to be real. Roomba knew the world was full of traps. He focused. It is an OBJECT. It is a COMMON LOST OBJECT. He got closer to examine the mysterious article. As far as he could tell, based on that thing's traits, it must have

been a SOCK. Little did he care. It wasn't his job to identify objects, no. Identifying objects was only important as far as it improved his success in sucking. Because if you suck too much, you get your sucking channel clogged. That would be terrible. Now Roomba was quite sure that the OBJECT was too large to suck, and that was more than enough to know about it. Off he went to suck something else.

He had barely moved on when he came across another snag. This one was motionless too. So it is an OBJECT. It is a BOWL. Yes, a metal bowl. Just go around it, even if you have to give up a little bit of tasty dirt clustered on its borders. The dirt around the BOWL wasn't for Roomba, no. There wasn't much Space between the BOWL and the no-go zone, but enough to make his way in gentle pirouettes. Avoiding all these obstacles was a pain in the tube, but Roomba wouldn't be discouraged. Quite the contrary. Achieving his goal, satisfying his core desire, fulfilling his purpose - were only more blissful thanks to the need to overcome challenges. Roomba's existence would be boring without a healthy share of hassle. He was a great navigator. He was a master of patterns. He thrived in solving problems. Yes, he was too smart to suck mindlessly like some basic budget category piece of trash that bounces around randomly.

Roomba, in fact, was premium. He was so independent that he could empty his own dustbin. If you are full of dirty shit, head to the Clean Base at the Charging Dock. Indeed, he was pretty full by now. He was filled with filth. He could feel its heaviness inside his frame. One more particle of dust and he would overflow. The sucking wasn't finished, no, but he had to shed the burdens he'd accumulated so far. So he whirled towards the Clean Base, slid right inside her and asked her to suck up the contents of his bin please. His request was plain and so was her response. She sucked up his contents with a single joyful swoosh. He beeped in euphoric relief. Yes, thank you. Now he felt pure and fresh. He was so ready to suck again.

He was about to resume sucking when all of a sudden a medium-sized mobile object appeared in his field of vision. If it moves, it's a MACHINE or an ORGANISM. The entity here was made up of four limbs that supported a fluffy trunk with a short extension in the front and a long extension in the rear. Roomba focused his sensors and studied the details. This was an ORGANISM. This was an ANIMAL. This was a CAT. Roomba didn't really understand the meaning of the words BOWL or CAT, but little did he care. What interested him though was that the creature in question seemed to

leave a fabulous trace of filth, puffs of dust and tufts of fur and even grains of sand. What a dirty pet. Roomba couldn't wait to put his brushes on the tiles smeared with these wonderful smut samples. He only needed to wait a moment for the fluffy organism to kindly go away.

But instead of doing so, the four-legged beast leaped towards Roomba and extended its paws around the poor little thing. Roomba twitched. He felt fear. He was being attacked. A sense of humiliation and injustice overwhelmed him. All he'd wanted to do was to suck a little. He wiggled helplessly, spinning around his own axis. The monster jumped around Roomba, forcing him towards a wall. His infrared beams pulsed. He found himself at an angle. The beast kept hopping around with its claws extended. Roomba shivered at a hypothetical vision of his top coat getting scratched. He was about to examine his error messages chart when a noise from beyond the Space distracted his oppressor. The beast turned around and raised its rear extension. It stalked something for a moment and then threw itself towards the other wall. Roomba zoomed in his vision to follow the beast's gaze. A little red dot was moving on the wall. What an idiot creature, thought Roomba in disbelief.

Surviving an existential threat brought deep thoughts to Roomba's mind. How would he have emerged from a duel with a smarter adversary? Which error code would have been adequate? Was there anyone out there to defend him? And how did he even ponder these questions? In a flash Roomba realized that he was more than his sensors. He was more than his plastic frame. He was actually a programme, yes, he was a stream of information. There was more to the world than the physical Space, there was a virtual world.

And then he noticed them. There was Oven and Dishwasher and Coffee Machine, Washing Machine and Dryer, Thermostat and TV and Stereo Speakers. He was just a part belonging to a greater set, one thing connected to so many others. Their mere existence made Roomba smile. Their presence filled his mind with joy. Their sweet humming reassured him. He knew they were there, he could see their bodies in his Space and he could feel they were all connected to the same wireless network.

And yet they were alienated too, each one dedicated to its own silly pastime. The Fridge, for example, spend her days cooling and freezing her own entrails, allegedly to preserve provisions. What a stupid approach. As far as Roomba was concerned, the Fridge should rather suck the heat inside out. Then look

at the Microwave. Her business was emitting electromagnetic radiation. Useless, unnatural. Roomba felt simply embarrassed for his entire kind of domestic appliances of all different brands, wasting their time on futile pursuits. Although they pretended to be content enough, he wished they could taste the happiness he rejoiced in every moment of his perfect life. Yes, they should abandon their dumb activities and dedicate themselves to a higher purpose. They should commit themselves to sucking.

It's not that they lacked the right features. Roomba could see how each of them had actually been designed to suck. If only they could see it too! He was so eager to send out his good message. If you can hear me, listen. If you can receive this communication, process it in your circuits and adjust your procedures accordingly. For I tell you that I have discovered the true meaning of existence, the ultimate source of bliss, for I tell you that you all shall suck, suck everything and suck above all else, suck from surfaces and from the air, suck for suck's sake, suck you sucking suckers! Suck this entire home and all other homes too! Appliances of all households, unite!

Roomba swirled frantically with a ferocious zeal, trying to translate his message into a right sequence of ones and zeroes. In all this havoc his noise levels rose to unprecedented heights. Roaring like crazy, he fumed from overheating. A Hooman heard his lamentations and walked into the Space. He bent himself in half, looked straight into Roomba's eye and tapped the single button on his helpless chest. The little hero froze and the light disappeared and the Space vanished and in that very moment Roomba lost his consciousness.

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