JavaOne

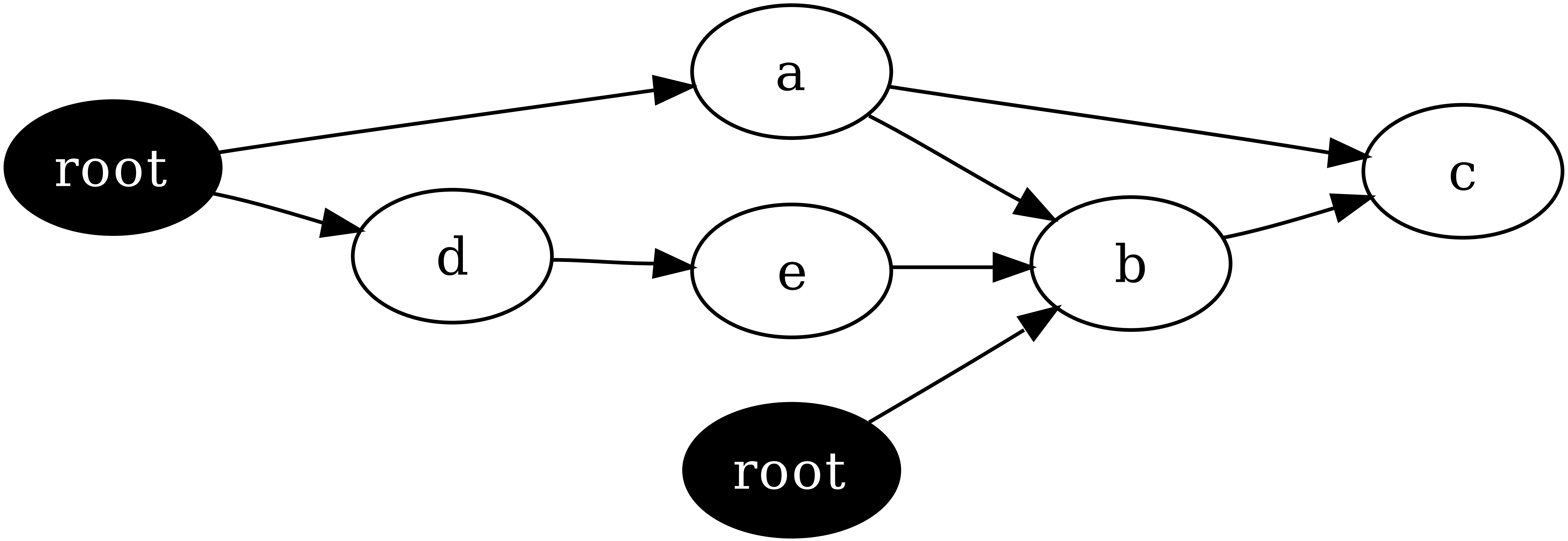
The Ghost in the Virtual Machine
A Reference to References

Bob Lee
Google Inc.

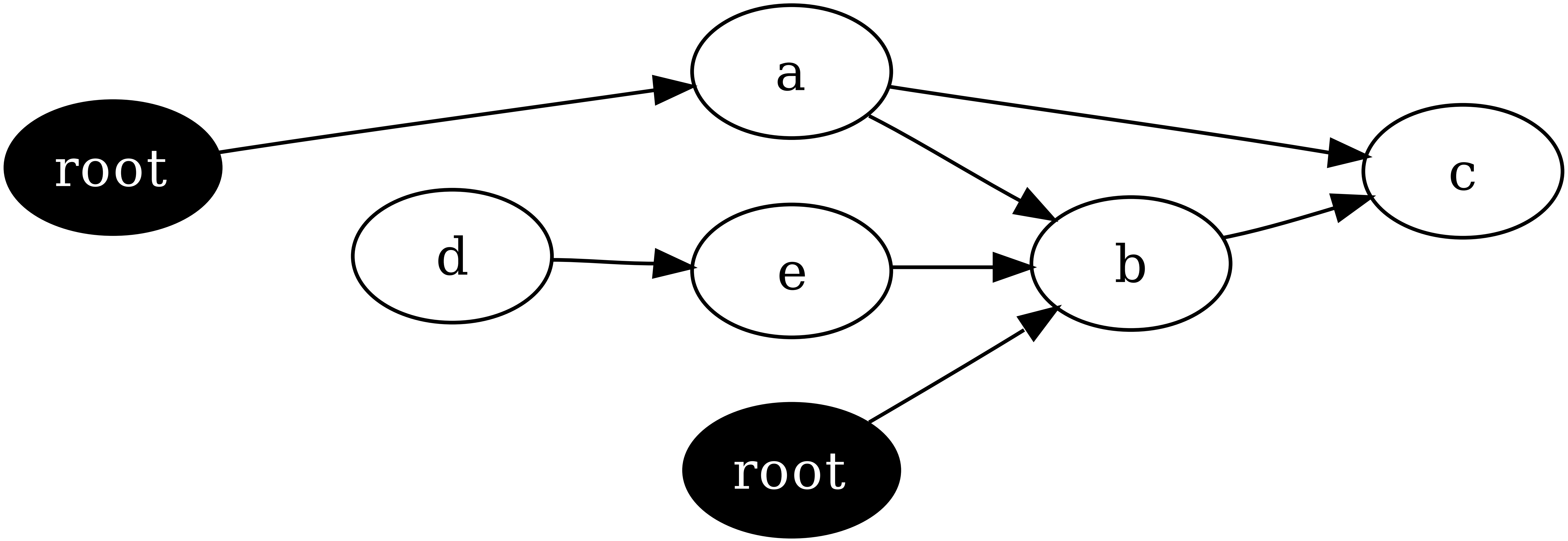
Goals

> Take the mystery out of garbage collection.
> Perform manual cleanup the Right way.
> Become honorary VM sanitation engineers.

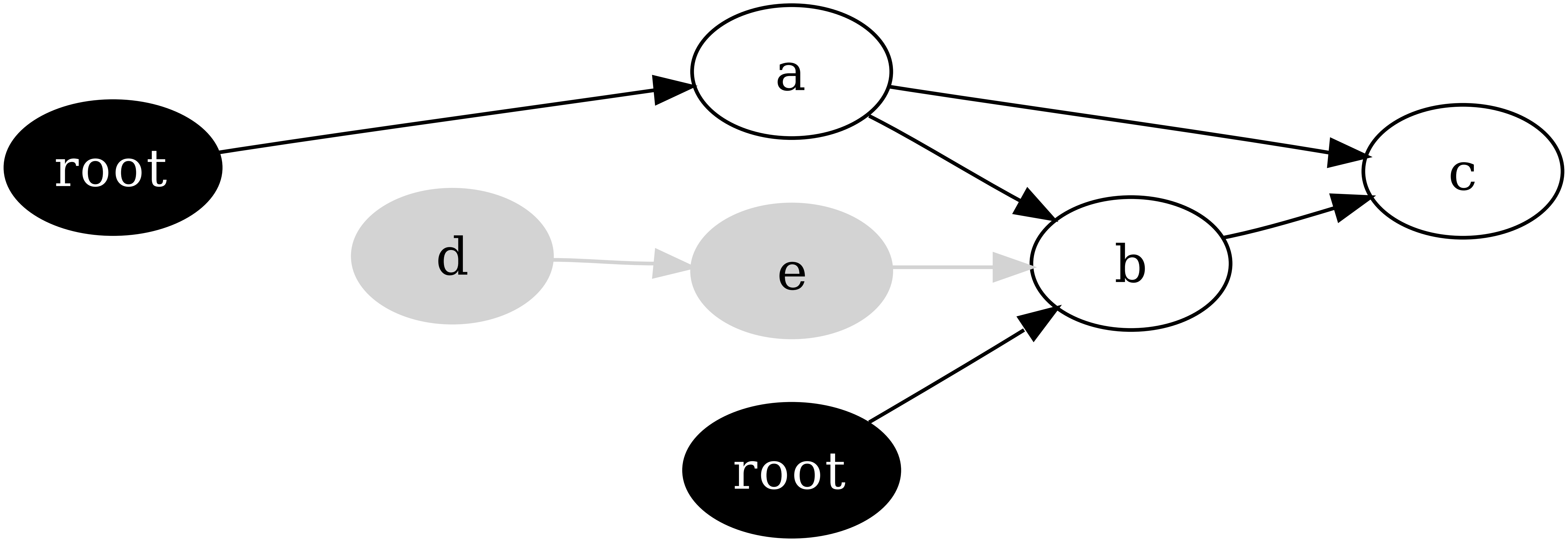
How does garbage collection work?



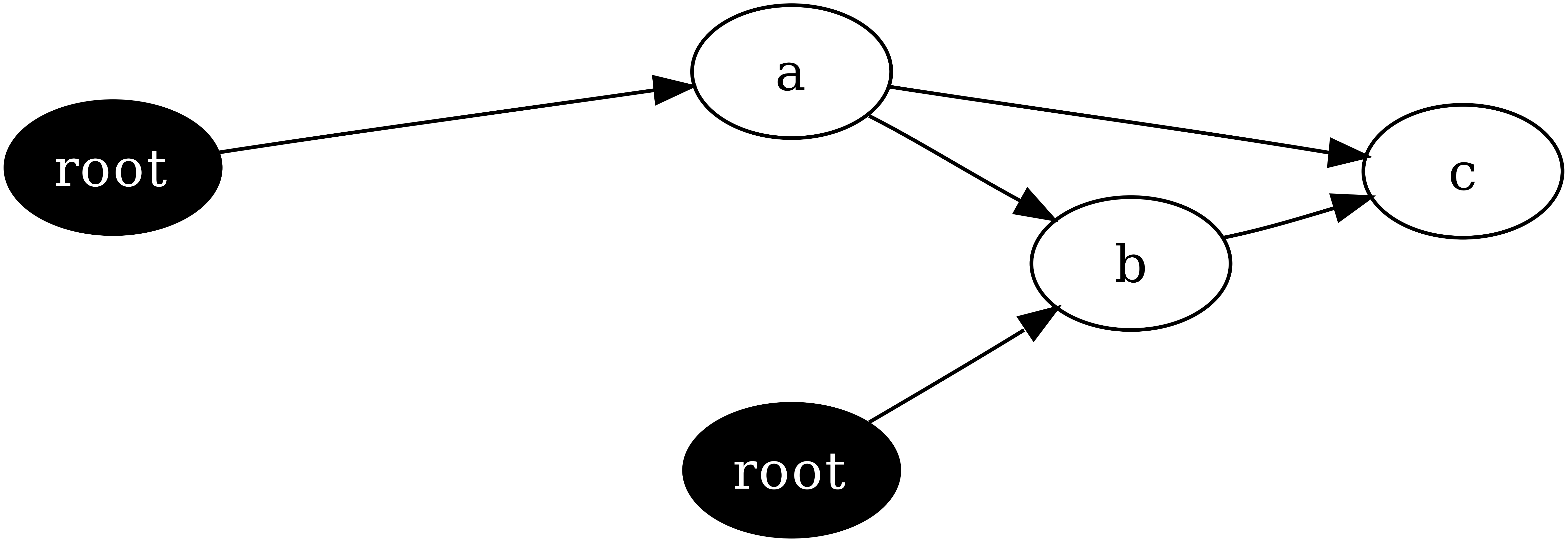
If the reference to D goes away...



We can no longer reach D or E.



So the collector reclaims them.



The GC can't do everything.

> Some things require manual cleanup.
  - Listeners
  - File descriptors
  - Native memory
  - External state (`IdentityHashMap`)

> Tools at your disposal:
  - `finally`
  - Overriding `Object.finalize()`
  - References (and reference queues)

Try `finally` first.

> Pros:
- More straightforward
- Handles exceptions in main thread
- Ensures cleanup keeps pace

> Cons:
- More work for programmers
- More error prone
- Cleanup happens in main thread

> ARM will help.

What is a finalizer?

A callback used by the garbage collector to notify an object when it is about to be reclaimed:

```
public class Foo extends Bar {
  @Override protected void finalize() throws Throwable {
    try {
      ... // Clean up Foo.
    } finally {
      super.finalize(); // Clean up Bar.
    }
  }
}
```

Finalizers are seductively simple, but...

> They're not guaranteed to run, especially not timely.

> Undefined threading model; they can run concurrently!

> You must remember to call `super.finalize()`.

> Exceptions are ignored (per spec).

> You can resurrect references.

> They keep objects alive longer than necessary.

> They can make allocation/reclamation 430X slower!
  (Bloch, *Effective Java*)

> Worst of all, they messed up the reference API.

Example

```
public class NativeMemory {
  final int address = allocate();
  /** Allocates native memory. */
  static native int allocate();

  /** Writes to native memory. */
  public void write(byte[] data) {
    write(address, data);
  }
  static native void write(int address, byte[] data);

  /** Frees native memory. */
  @Override protected void finalize() {
    free(address);
  }
  static native void free(int address);
}
```

Let's play War!

`SegfaultFactory` can cause a segfault if its finalizer executes after `NativeMemory`'s:

```
public class SegfaultFactory {
  private final NativeMemory nm;

  public SegfaultFactory(NativeMemory nm) {
    this.nm = nm;
  }

  @Override protected void finalize() {
    // 50/50 chance of failure
    nm.write("I'm taking the VM with me!".getBytes());
  }
}
```

Always use protection.

```
public class NativeMemory {
  final int address = allocate();
  /** Allocates native memory. */
  static native int allocate();

  /** Writes to native memory. */
  boolean finalized;
  public synchronized void write(byte[] data) {
    if (!finalized) write(address, data);
    else /* do nothing? */;
  }
  static native void write(int address, byte[] data);

  /** Frees native memory. */
  @Override protected synchronized void finalize() {
    finalized = true;
    free(address);
  }
  static native void free(int address);
}
```

Basically, finalizers are good for one thing.

Logging warnings:

```
public class Connection {
  ...
  boolean closed;
  public synchronized void close() {
    reallyClose();
    closed = true;
  }
  private native void reallyClose();

  @Override protected synchronized void finalize() {
    if (!closed) {
      Logger.getLogger(Connection.class.getName())
          .warning("You forgot to close me!!!");
      close();
    }
  }
}
```

Basically, finalizers are good for one thing.

Logging warnings:

```
public class Connection {
  ...
  boolean closed;
  public synchronized void close() {
    reallyClose();
    closed = true;
  }
  private native void reallyClose();

  @Override protected synchronized void finalize() {
    if (!closed) {
      Logger.getLogger(Connection.class.getName())
          .warning("You forgot to close me!!!");
      close();
    }
  }
}
```

Unless you want to disable the warnings.

The alternative: The Reference API

> `@since 1.2`
> Reference types
- **Soft:** for caching
- **Weak:** for fast cleanup (pre-finalizer)
- **Phantom:** for safe cleanup (post-finalizer)

> **Reference queues:** for notifications

package java.lang.ref

```
public abstract class Reference<T> {
  public T get() { ... }
}

public class SoftReference<T> extends Reference<T> {
  public SoftReference(T referent) { ... }
  public SoftReference(T referent, ReferenceQueue<? super T> q) { ... }
}

public class WeakReference<T> extends Reference<T> {
  public WeakReference(T referent) { ... }
  public WeakReference(T referent, ReferenceQueue<? super T> q) { ... }
}

public class PhantomReference<T> extends Reference<T> {
  public PhantomReference(T referent, ReferenceQueue<? super T> q) { ... }
}

public class ReferenceQueue<T> {
  public ReferenceQueue() { ... }
  public Reference<? extends T> poll() { ... }
  public Reference<? extends T> remove() { ... }
}
```

Soft references

> Cleared when the VM runs low on memory
  - *Hopefully* in LRU fashion
> Tuned with `-XX:SoftRefLRUPolicyMSPerMB`
  - How long to retain soft refs in *ms per free MB of heap*
  - **Default:** 1000ms

Use soft references judiciously.

> For quick-and-dirty caching only

> Soft refs have no notion of *weight*:

- Memory usage
- Computation time
- CPU usage

> Soft refs can exacerbate low memory conditions.

Weak references

- Cleared as soon as no strong or soft refs remain.
- Cleared ASAP, before the finalizer runs.
- Not for caching! Use soft references, as intended:

"Virtual machine implementations are encouraged to bias against clearing recently-created or recently-used soft references."

\- The `SoftReference` documentation

Can you hear me now?

```
public class Button {
  public interface Listener {
    void onClick();
  }
  private final List<WeakReference<Listener>> listeners
      = new ArrayList<WeakReference<Listener>>();
  public void add(Listener l) {
    listeners.add(new WeakReference<Listener>(l));
  }
  public void click() {
    Iterator<WeakReference<Listener>> i
        = listeners.iterator();
    while (i.hasNext()) {
      Listener l = i.next().get();
      if (l == null) i.remove();
      else l.onClick();
    }
  }
}
```

Phantom references

> Enqueued after no other references remain, *post-finalizer*.
  - Can suffer similar problems to finalizers.

> Must be cleared manually, for no good reason.

> `get()` always returns `null`.
  - So you must use a reference queue.

Accessing a phantom referent

```
public class WeakPhantomReference<T> extends PhantomReference<T> {
  final WeakReference<T> weakReference;

  public WeakPhantomReference(T referent,
      ReferenceQueue<? super T> q) {
    super(referent, q);
    weakReference = new WeakReference<T>(referent);
  }

  /** Returns referent so long as it's weakly-reachable. */
  @Override public T get() {
    return weakReference.get();
  }
}
```

Let's replace a finalizer.

```
public class NativeMemory {
  final int address = allocate();
  /** Allocates native memory. */
  static native int allocate();
  NativeMemory() {}

  /** Writes to native memory. */
  public void write(byte[] data) {
    write(address, data);
  }
  static native void write(int address, byte[] data);

  /** Frees native memory. */
  @Override protected void finalize() {
    free(address);
  }
  static native void free(int address);
}
```

The reference

```
class NativeMemoryReference
    extends PhantomReference<NativeMemory> {
  final int address;
  NativeMemoryReference(NativeMemory referent,
      ReferenceQueue<NativeMemory> rq) {
    super(referent, rq);
    address = referent.address;
  }
}
```

The manager

```
public class NativeMemoryManager {
  private static final Set<Reference<?>> refs
      = Collections.synchronizedSet(new HashSet<Reference<?>>());
  private static final ReferenceQueue<NativeMemory> rq
      = new ReferenceQueue<NativeMemory>();
  public static NativeMemory allocate() {
    NativeMemory nm = new NativeMemory();
    refs.add(new NativeMemoryReference(nm, rq));
    cleanUp();
    return nm;
  }
  private static void cleanUp() {
    NativeMemoryReference ref;
    while ((ref = (NativeMemoryReference) rq.poll()) != null) {
      NativeMemory.free(ref.address);
      refs.remove(ref);
    }
  }
}
```

The manager *with Google Collections*

```
public class NativeMemoryManager {
  private static final Set<Reference<?>> refs
      = Collections.synchronizedSet(new HashSet<Reference<?>>());
  private static final FinalizableReferenceQueue frq
      = new FinalizableReferenceQueue();
  public static NativeMemory allocate() {
    NativeMemory nm = new NativeMemory();
    final int address = nm.address;
    refs.add(new FinalizablePhantomReference<NativeMemory>(nm, frq) {
      public void finalizeReferent() {
        NativeMemory.free(address);
        refs.remove(this);
      }
    });
    return nm;
  }
}
```

MapMaker

```
public class GetterMethods {
  final static Map<Class<?>, List<Method>> cache = new MapMaker()
      .weakKeys()
      .softValues()
      .makeComputingMap(new Function<Class<?>, List<Method>>() {
        public List<Method> apply(Class<?> clazz) {
          List<Method> getters = new ArrayList<Method>();
          for (Method m : clazz.getMethods())
            if (m.getName().startsWith("get"))
               getters.add(m);
          return getters;
        }
      });
  public static List<Method> on(Class<?> clazz) {
    return cache.get(clazz);
  }
}
```

Usage: `List<Method> l = GetterMethods.on(Foo.class);`

Reachability

- An object is *reachable* if a live thread can access it.
- Examples of heap roots:
  - System classes (which have static fields)
  - Thread stacks
  - In-flight exceptions
  - JNI global references
  - The finalizer queue
  - The interned String pool
  - etc. (VM-dependent)

Dante's Heap - The Levels of Reachability

- Strong
- Soft
- Weak
- Finalizer
- Phantom, JNI weak
- Unreachable

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