

The day had started out in the ordinary manner. Uncle Squeaky got up, made his bed, fished his shoes out from under his bed, grabbed his roll of clothes that he had set out the night before and went to take a shower. He showered, then shaved in the ordinary way, halfway looking into the mirror. He then remembered that maybe his glasses would help him see the fuzzy stuff that he seemed to be missing with the razor. On his way to get his glasses, he saw his phone, and noticed that it was blinking, indicating a message. He put on his glasses and proceeded to answer an email from work. When he was finished, he was surprised to find that he was wearing a towel and not his work clothes. Uncle Squeaky put on a fresh set of clothes because he couldn't find the ones that he remembered laying out the night before. His mind was on the email that he had just sent.

Mr. McKilheny had wanted the final corporate report information for the latest account that they had won. Mr. McKilheny was in the office and was sifting through the neatly organized papers on Uncle Squeaky's desk for the copy of the report. Uncle Squeaky told him where to look on the computer to see the information, and where the hard copy of the report could be found. While Uncle Squeaky was talking on the phone, an alarm went off, also on his phone. "Oh, dear, not again!", exclaimed Uncle Squeaky to himself. That alarm was a warning. Uncle Squeaky silently looked at the warning and verified the information he saw. He pushed some buttons, all of the time talking to Mr. McKilheny. At the end of the conversation, he said good bye to Mr. McKilheny, who grunted before hanging up.

Uncle Squeaky went downstairs and got himself a bowl of cereal and slid two pieces of bread into the toaster. When they popped up, he spread margarine and some mashed avocado on the toast, sprinkled a little sea salt on them, and sat down. He ate his breakfast in silence, rinsed his dishes and put them into the automatic dishwasher. He found his briefcase and his umbrella and went to the garage to pull his car out. On his way to work, Uncle Squeaky noticed that his feet were sticking to his shoes. Somehow, he had forgotten to wear socks again. Back at work, things were as bad as he feared. Mr. McKilheny had found the report but destroyed Uncle Squeaky's tidy desk in the process. However, the alarm system that Uncle Squeaky had set up was working fine. He sat down and went to work. So far, it had been just another ordinary day. At noon, Nellie came by as usual. She followed her regular routine, waving at people in the outer cubicles from behind her barricade of takeout lunches, and proceeding into Mr. McKilheny's private office with a bouncy little swaying walk that did not match her age.

"Hi there, Mr. McKilheny". She said, smiling her big toothy smile, which was partially hidden behind her armful of lunch bags. "I have your chicken and pastrami sandwich and that potato salad that you asked for." Mr. McKilheny looked up from his computer. "I thought that I got TWO side dishes with my sandwich", he said rudely.

"Oh no, you only get TWO side dishes if you order a deluxe roast beef sandwich or a world famous Reuben. With those you get your choice of two sides, and a pickle, and your choice of a complimentary cheese danish or strudel." "Hmmp", said Mr. McKilheny.

"I'll put that on your tab for the end of the month, shall I?", inquired Nellie.

She swayed into the main room where the other employees were seated at their desks. Cut Throat Jim was eating a bologna sandwich out of a paper bag. Nellie hurried off and delivered most of the rest of the lunch bags to the appreciative staff. When she headed towards his desk, Uncle Squeaky smiled broadly, and cleared off some space in front of him. Nellie placed two huge brown take out bags in front of him. "It's Wednesday", she said brightly. "Reuben, macaroni salad, frog's eye salad, a pickle, and a cherry strudel."

"My favorite!", said Uncle Squeaky. Nellie laughed. "That's what you say every day, even though I bring you something different every day!"

"They are all my favorites," he replied. "I'll put that on your tab, shall I?" said Nellie, and skipped out.

Uncle Squeaky had just popped the last bite of cherry strudel into his mouth when he heard a roar from the inner office. "Squeaky, get in here!"

Uncle Squeaky looked surprised. All of the other workers looked up in surprise as well. Uncle Squeaky shrugged his shoulders and looked apologetic. He shuffled his sweaty feet into the inner office and stood in front of Mr. McKilheny's desk. "What is it that you need, Mr. McKilheny?" he asked.

"The chair to my desk just broke. I can't sit upright."

At that moment, Mr. McKilheny's chair lurched forward, as if attempting to prove the point. "Squeaky, I need to borrow your chair. I need you to go to the furniture store and replace my executive chair with the best top of the line model that they have. Try it out first to see if it is comfortable. I can't wait for one to be delivered. I can't work this way. I need a replacement immediately." Uncle Squeaky had some important work waiting for him back in his cubicle, but he could see Mr. McKilheny's dilemma. "I'd be happy to do that," he replied, and left.

Uncle Squeaky knew exactly where to go, having had a long history with furniture stores. He pulled into the multiplex and drove around to the loading dock. "Lance, can I park here for a few minutes?", he said to the man who came out to check for a delivery.

"My boss needs a new chair, pronto, so I'll be delivering it myself. Which floor..." Uncle Squeaky didn't get a chance to finish. "Third," said Lance and hooked his thumb over his shoulder, indicating that Uncle Squeaky should use the delivery entrance.

Once inside, Uncle Squeaky took the escalator to the third floor. When he stepped out, he found himself in the household goods aisle. He craned his neck around until he spotted what looked like the furniture showroom at the far side of the store. As he headed in that direction, a large man brushed passed him carrying a dog crate. Uncle Squeaky hopped out of the way, nearly crashing into a display of vacuum cleaners. One of them vacuum cleaners brushed against the back of his leg. Uncle Squeaky reached down to brushed off his pant leg, where it had made contact with the display. Something felt wrong. He lifted his slightly sticky foot, encased in a sock-less shoe, and put it back down on the ground. Something still felt wrong. There was a weight against the back of his leg where there shouldn't be. Somehow, something in the vacuum cleaner display had gotten stuck on his pant leg. Uncle Squeaky tried to turn around so that he could see the problem, but he was anchored weirdly. In addition to being stuck, he could feel a strange thrumming on that leg. It came in sporadic intervals, it was getting more intense, and it tickled. As he went to free himself, something occurred to Uncle Squeaky. He listened to the gentle hum that was coming from behind him. He felt the machine still clinging to him, and started to pay attention. Other customers were walking past and giving him strange looks, but he didn't notice. The thrumming was in a pattern. The pattern sounded something like this: Dit Dah Dah Dit, Dit Dah Dit Dit, Dit, Dit Dah, Dit Dit Dit, Dit Pause, Dit Dit Dit Dit, Dit, Dit Dah Dit Dit, Dit Dah Dah Dit, Dah Dah, Dit, Dit Dit Dit, Dah Dah Dah, Dit Dit Dit.

"Morse code. Unmistakable," said Uncle Squeaky to a woman in a red coat. The woman had a worried look on her face, and hurried away the little girl that was following her. "I'm a little rusty", Uncle Squeaky said to himself. He reached into his suit coat pocket and pulled out his little blue notebook and a pen. He waited for the thrumming to stop and start again. As the vacuum thrummed, Uncle Squeaky wrote.

"Please help me. SOS. I am trapped. I need your help desperately. Please help me. I am trapped. SOS. PS I won't be able to hear you. Please help me. I am trapped. SOS."

Uncle Squeaky blinked in surprise. He looked around. There were throngs of customers walking up and down the aisles, but no one seemed to take any notice of the distress signal that was gently pushing on the back of his leg. Uncle Squeaky still hadn't seen what held him captive. With a decisive whirl, he grabbed onto his pant leg and tore himself free. A dramatic ripping sound and sudden breeze told Uncle Squeaky that the back of his pants had

ripped, but when he looked around, it wasn't immediately apparent what had happened. He turned in a complete circle but couldn't see anything unusual. There was nothing there. The thrum came again, but Uncle Squeaky wasn't attached to whatever it was anymore, so he had to bend down to hear whatever it was. To his surprise, when he bent down, he saw a display of small, circular, robotic vacuum cleaners, stacked on a low shelf. The one closest to the end appeared to be active. It had two flashing lights on the top, and its two whisker like brushes were protruding and rotating, waving in the air. Uncle Squeaky bent down closer. He heard the code again, now sounding like a quiet whir. This time he didn't need to transcribe in his notebook. "Please help me."

Uncle Squeaky looked around. No one was watching. He picked up the small appliance off of the low shelf and walked over to the shoe department, examining it as he went. He placed the vacuum on the floor by the sock display. When he thought that no one was looking his direction, he began waving his arms repeatedly in the direction of the small circular device. The woman in the red coat walked by again, still clutching the little girl nervously. She gave him an odd look and quickened her steps.

Uncle Squeaky turned desperately toward the sock display and began choosing a pair of socks. His feet were now drenched in nervous, sticky shoe sweat. A bright multi pack of grey and black and turquoise argyles caught his eye. He selected them and turned back towards the robot vacuum cleaner. The coast was clear. He waved his arms again, the socks waving in the air like pom-poms. He approached the machine. The machine rolled forward, then backward, adjusting itself, until it came to rest near the bare back of Uncle Squeaky's leg, the place where his pants should have been. The brushes thrummed. Uncle Squeaky wrote the words that he felt on his leg in his blue notebook. "Please buy me. SOS. Please buy me. SOS." Uncle Squeaky turned to face the machine, glanced around and waved his arms again. He picked up the vacuum and began searching for the nearest check out kiosk.

There was some trouble, it turned out, in wanting to purchase a demonstrator floor model circular robotic vacuum. No one wanted to sell it to him. It took some negotiating, and about the time it looked like a deal had been struck, there had been trouble about which battery docking station unit should go with which machine. Uncle Squeaky could feel a warning thrum from the machine as the sales manager insisted that a new battery should be sold so that the warranty would be guaranteed. This led to a discussion on whether spare parts should be ordered from the manufacturer. Apparently this particular robotic vacuum was particularly attached to its own docking station and was nervous about being sold with a different unit.

Uncle Squeaky did his best to comfort the small round appliance during the ordeal, as the store clerks huffed and fussed over the unusual transaction. Forty minutes later, Uncle Squeaky had finally persuaded the floor manager to open a new box, remove the new item and new docking station unit and to place the floor model and its rightful docking station into the new box.

Uncle Squeaky eventually walked out of the store with a bag of spiffy new socks, and a small, circular, self driving, robotic vacuum cleaner, sealed in a new box, and marked in large red letters, "Floor Model, As Is, Absolutely No Returns". The word 'No' was underlined twice in red ink.

He retraced his steps out of the store, and stood, blinking myopically in the sunlight. He stared blankly at his car in the loading dock, waiting there, ready for a big delivery. He had forgotten to get a chair.