

iRobot

By

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FADE IN:

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - MORNING

The POSTMAN takes a package from the back of his van, walks up the pock holed drive and rings the bell of the weather worn blue door.

The Postman is young, late teens, acne scars still evident - but not fresh, uniform too starched and new, his first proper job, first month or two, maybe.

A few moments later he rings again.

He glances to the side window, no signs of life.

He raises his hand, about to ring for a third time, when the door cracks open a hair's breadth.

POSTMAN

Package mate.

The door cracks open further.

ROY, 80s and superficially frail, all liver spots and shaving nicks, peeks through the gap.

ROY

ID?

POSTMAN

Mr Green, I deliver your post every day, do we need to go through this rigmarole again?

ROY

Yes, we do. ID, please, young man.

Postman sighs and rummages in his pocket.

He holds up his ID badge.

POSTMAN

Okay now?

ROY

Closer, please... can't see very well.

Postman shoves his ID forward a few inches.

Roy retreats from peeking for a moment.

CHAIN RATTLES.

Door opens fully.

Roy is in old fashioned pin-striped pyjamas and a dog eared tartan dressing gown. On his head is perched a moth eaten military beret. A couple of carefully polished medals adorn the lapel of his gown.

He waves his walking stick at the box.

ROY

What is it?

POSTMAN

Dunno Mr Green, but you need to sign for it.

The postman holds out the bulky package.

Roy grabs it suspiciously as the postman retrieves his digital signature scanner.

POSTMAN

Just there, please Mr Green.

He indicates where to sign with his finger.

Roy hooks his walking stick over his arm and takes the stylus in arthritic hands.

Very deliberately, he scribbles a big X on the screen.

POSTMAN

Jeez.

Roy shuffles, turns, to shut the door.

POSTMAN

Have a nice day Mr Green.

ROY

Humph.

The door slams shut.

Postman smiles ruefully and retreats to his van.

INT. HALLWAY - MORNING

Roy locks the door, smiles, puts the chain back on.

He turns the package over in his hands, feeling the weight and shaking it slightly.

He moves his walking stick back into his hand, maneuvers the box under his arm and heads through to the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Roy sets the package down on the table and ambles over to one of the kitchen drawers.

He rummages for a moment, returning with a small knife.

He places his stick over the back of one of the chairs, sizes up the box and moves in.

With a few surprisingly deft flicks of the knife, the package is open.

ROY

What's all this then?

The external wrapping is off, revealing a brightly coloured box.

'iRobot - your robot vacuum cleaner.' Reads the label.

Taped to the box is a smaller envelope, 'Dad', handwritten on it.

Roy pulls it free and opens it.

Reads.

'Dad, thought this would help a bit round the house. It's fully charged - just put it on the floor and switch it on. I'll be round later to see how you two are getting on.

Love Wendy.'

Roy drops the note back on the table.

ROY

Bah, bloody rubbish.

Roy retrieves his stick, sweeps it over table and connects solidly with the boxed vacuum.

ROY
Good riddance.

He wanders slowly, unsteadily, out of the kitchen.

After a few moments the sound of god-awful daytime TV pervades the house.

A low WHIR comes from the box, followed by a slightly louder TICK.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Roy FLICKS on the light.

The box is semi-open, impact damage from the fall.

He moves to the kettle, fills it at the tap and switches it on.

He turns to examine the mangled box as he waits for the kettle.

He flicks the box top off with his walking stick.

The IROBOT is circular, new and shiny, minimalist design, large power button on it's top.

ROY
Ugly thing, ain't ya.

In the background, steam rises and the kettle switches off.

Roy doesn't notice as he bends and flips the iRobot over to look at the underneath, all wheels and brushes.

ROY
(distractedly)
Bloody, woodlouse.

Roy glances at the Quick Start guide, a cursory glance - male glance, no more.

Roy slowly places the unit on the floor and prods the power button with his walking stick.

Nothing.

He prods with his stick again, harder this time.

Nothing.

ROY

Bugger.

Roy pulls back for one final assault on the power button.

IROBOT

Whir, click.

Small lights fade up, the iRobot spins in a circle, a low WHIRRING HUM accompanying the movement.

Roy steps back in surprise, teetering unsteadily before remembering to use his stick.

iRobot moves off, hits the skirting board, turns and edges along it. Moves away again and heads towards the doorway.

Turn, advance.

Turn, advance, turn, turn.

Scanning the room, understanding it's environment...

ROY

Hmmm, cute.

IROBOT

Whir. Click.

iRobot advances towards Roy, brushes his slipper and diverts off under the table.

ROY

Hey!

Roy moves forward carefully, peers under the table.

iRobot isn't visible.

iRobot appears from higher up, almost behind Roy, beelines straight for him again.

Roy is caught unaware as iRobot bumps into his ankle.

ROY

Arrghh.

Roy lurches forward, overbalancing, momentum growing.

The table meets his grasping hands, he steadies himself.

The abrupt stop forces one of Roy's medals to drop to the floor.

IROBOT
Whir, click.

iRobot scuttles over the fallen medal, sucks it in.

The medal clicks around it's underneath for a moment, tasting it, then iRobot spits the medal out, tarnished and bent.

ROY
Bastard.

IROBOT
(louder)
Click, whir.

iRobot moves off, turns with a jerk and disappears round the side of the cooker.

Roy stares after it, visibly shaken.

He bends carefully to retrieve the medal.

A sinister SCUTTling emanates from behind the cooker, a rat in armour, machinating.

iRobot pokes his head out, pauses, turns to glance at Roy, moves back and scuttles some more.

Roy glances at the kitchen door, the table that separates him from an open run and then back at the cooker.

IROBOT O.S.
Scuttle. Whir. Click.

Roy edges forward.

iRobot inches out from behind the cooker.

Roy edges back.

iRobot disappears from view.

Roy scans the kitchen again, desperate.

He edges round the table the other way, quiet as a mouse.

He's halfway round the table when iRobot appears and feigns cleaning the skirting again.

The subterfuge is dropped when it darts under the table, hiding from Roy's view.

Slo-mo pinball sounds drift up, as the cleaner tries and fails to negotiate the tangle of table and chair legs.

ROY
Ha, that's got you.

IROBOT
Click. Click. Click.

Roy edges closer to the door, hallway beckoning.

IROBOT
Whir...

iRobot emerges, inches away from Roy, spinning in a daze.

Roy senses his chance, seizes it as he brings his stick heavily down on the iRobot power button.

Nothing.

Roy goes again, harder, effort etched on his face.

iRobot reacts, annoyed, WHIR almost a BUZZ.

Roy senses his chance disappearing and takes a final lunge forward with his stick.

Overstretched, Roy plunges down.

Simultaneously iRobot moves forward, targeting Roy's feet.

For a moment iRobot is stopped, skewered by the walking stick... but momentum takes Roy forward, toppling.

iRobot skitters against the pressure, spins as the pressure eases, gains traction.

Shoots backwards to be lost from view as Roy crashes down on top of the fleeing insect.

ROY
(screams in pain)

Arrrghh!

IROBOT O.S.
(sound fades)

Whir... whir... cli...

Roy groans, dazed.

iRobot is quiet, smothered by the geriatric wrestler's body slam.

CLICK.

ROY

No...

It isn't the vengeful vacuum making the noise.

The key finishes turning in the lock, and front door creaks open.

WENDY O.S.

Dad?

ROY

In here.

Wendy bustles into the room, 50s, harried looking, but with a warm smile that fades when she sees Roy on the floor.

WENDY

Bloody hell, Dad.

Wendy rushes forward.

ROY

Help me up.

Wendy helps him to his feet, retrieving his stick on the way up.

Upright, stick in hand, Roy looks down at the iRobot.

He pokes the wreckage.

ROY

That'll learn ya.

WENDY

You okay, Dad, what the hell happened?

ROY

Fine, fine, stop fussing.

WENDY

And?

ROY

And, that mechanical rat of yours went for me.

WENDY
(exasperated)
Daaad...

ROY
Did too.

Wendy looks at her Dad, love and sorrow play on her face in equal measure.

WENDY
Okay, well let's get you to your
armchair and I'll clean up.

Roy harrumphs but holds his hand out to her.

The pair move slowly, out of the kitchen, disappear down the hallway.

Beat.

An almost inaudible WHIR escapes iRobot.

It's power light flickers, blinks.

On.

FADE OUT:

THE END