

Robot 1233453

In a small town, between a bakery and a square full of lime trees, lived a robot named 1233453.

Because his name was rather long, everyone called him Three.

Three was six years old. Six years had passed since he was switched on for the first time and, ever since then, he had devoted himself to helping people.

Every morning, when the sun touched his antenna, he opened his blue-light eyes and said:

—Beep-beep! Who needs help?

One Monday, Mrs Margaret could not carry all her shopping bags.

—I'll help you! —said Three.

He stretched out his metal arms, picked up the bags and carried them all the way to her home.

Then he found Jan outside the school. One of the wheels on Jan's bicycle had come loose.

—I’ll help you! —said Three.

Using his screwdriver finger, he tightened the wheel in no time.

Later, the baker’s cat climbed a tree and did not know how to get down.

—I’ll help you! —said Three.

He lengthened his legs like two ladders and brought the cat down very carefully.

Three kept helping all day. He watered the flowers in the square, fetched a ball that had fallen into the stream and found Grandad Michael’s glasses under a bench.

But, as it began to get dark, he heard a strange noise inside his chest.

—Beep… beep… beeeep…

The light on his antenna began to flash. Three tried to walk, but his legs would not move.

—Who needs… he… lp? —he murmured.

Then he sat down on the ground.

Mrs Margaret was the first to see him.

—Now you are the one who needs help.

She quickly called the others. Jan went to fetch his tools. The baker brought a blanket. Grandad Michael found Three’s charger, which had been left behind in the workshop.

Together, they plugged him into a socket.

After a while, the blue light on his antenna came on.

—Beep-beep! —went Three—. I’m working again!

Everyone clapped.

—I didn’t know I could ask for help too —the robot admitted.

—Everyone needs it sometimes —Mrs Margaret explained.

The next day, Three went out again. He helped sweep the square and repair a toy. But when his battery began to run low, he stopped.

—I’m going to rest for a while now —he said.

Jan saved him a place on the bench. The baker brought him a cup full of crunchy screws, his favourite treat.

Three looked at all the people he had helped and understood something important: helping did not mean doing everything on his own.

From that day on, every morning he raised his antenna and asked:

—Beep-beep! Who needs help?

Then he added:

—If I need help too, I’ll let you know.