

Delivery 'Bot

Marlene was over the moon. She'd just been given her first delivery route, and things were starting to look up for her. She'd even been given an official badge with her new name on it. DeliveryBot-3302. Now she was nearly three-hundred years old, she was starting to feel like living with her parents was a little bit uncool. Most of her friends had started to move into their own charging pods as soon as they'd left programming school.

There'd never been any question about where Marlene would end up working. Her father had been a delivery bot and his father before him. When she'd been born, her parents had always assumed she'd follow in their treads. Now here she was. Barely old enough to drive and she already had her own route.

Unfortunately, there was a problem.

All new delivery bots were given easy routes and inexpensive cargo. This was usually letters and spare parts. Whatever they were given, the packages didn't normally make a sound. They certainly didn't cry.

Over the years, Marlene had seen lots of human babies. They'd always played a lead role in monster movies that her parents watched with her. Films where a giant baby would come crashing out of space onto Robot City and tear down the buildings. It would always be wailing and dribbling. Now, unless she was mistaken, there was one in the back of her van.

On the one hand, she knew that human babies apparently had feelings just like robots, though she found that idea very strange. The other hand was much scarier. If she opened the package, there was a good chance that the baby would burst out and destroy the entire city. *It's not fair*, she thought angrily. *It's my first day*.

Something needed to be done. On the very first day of training, their manager had made it clear that delivery bots were fearless and must deliver their packages no matter what. "Neither rain nor

snow nor gloomy night,” their manager had said. He’d been annoyingly quiet on the subject of babies though.



Behind her, the honking of horns started to irritate Marlene. She knew her van was holding up the other drivers, but this was important. The address on the label was clear and well written. No chance of returning it to the depot and claiming she couldn’t read it. And the address was right there in front of her. A perfectly normal tower block filled with robot charging pods.

What would a robot want with a human baby?

She had to find out. Nervously, she rolled up to the front door and pressed the buzzer.

INFERENCE FOCUS

1. How do you think Marlene felt about human babies after watching the films?
2. Why was Marlene so happy to be given a delivery route?
3. Why did she find it strange that human babies had feelings?
4. Why was she annoyed that her manager never mentioned babies?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

V What word tells us that Marlene’s parents expected her to become a delivery bot?

R What things did her manager say wouldn’t stop a delivery bot?

E Explain how this package was different to most others.

P What do you think will happen now that the monster has been discovered?

S Summarise what has happened so far on Marlene’s first day.