

Cara met the robot at the airport.

She was with her parents. They had been on holiday. Now they were flying back home, to London.

Cara was looking out of the window when she met it. She loved airport windows. There was so much to see. Planes moving, cargo being loaded... everyone was so busy.

Then, out of the corner of her eye, she saw something moving. When she turned, she saw a robot.

Its base looked like a vacuum cleaner: grey plastic, oval shaped, with two black wheels. There was a green light on the top, to show it was working.

Coming out of the top were two flat metal poles. At the top of these poles there was a screen - like a tablet but bigger.

The robot was moving all by itself. It wasn't like a remote-controlled car or a drone. *Nobody* was controlling it. Cara was amazed.

The robot glided towards her. Its wheels made no sound on the carpet. She couldn't hear any motor. It was totally silent.

Cara found that spooky. She wanted a machine to *sound* like a machine. This one didn't.

The robot kept coming. It was fast, and its green light was flashing. *Would it run her over? Should she move out of the way?* But the robot sensed she was there. It stopped, right in front of her. It was taller than she was.

Cara tapped the screen. Nothing happened. She tapped it again. Suddenly it lit up, and the robot began to spell out a message.

Hello.  
How may I help you?

Cara stared at it.

The screen flashed. The robot was asking the question again.

Hello.  
How may I help you?

'Are you talking to me?' said Cara.

Yes.

'But I didn't call you.'

I saw you.

'OK.' Cara didn't know what else to say.

How may I help you?

'I don't think I need any help.' she said. 'I was just looking out of the window. I am quite happy. I am with my mum and dad. We are flying to London. Our plane leaves in... an hour? I don't really know.'

I hour 47 minutes  
15:23 Zee Airways to London Heathrow  
Gate number: 14  
Gate opens in 55 minutes

Cara read all this information. 'Wow. You really know things.'

I am happy to help you.

'Can you do anything else?' asked Cara. 'Or do you just know the times and places of things?'

I can do many tasks. Ask me.

'OK... Where are the toilets?'

Follow me.

The robot turned and started to glide away.

'No! I don't want to go there!' said Cara, with a giggle. 'I was just asking.'

What do you want?

'Right now? To get on the plane. I'm tired of waiting.'

Gate opens in 51 minutes.

Cara sighed. 'That is a long time. Can you make the plane leave sooner?'

No.

Sorry.

'It's OK. You can't do everything.'

I can take you shopping.

'I have no money. Well, I do, but not much. \$3.50.'

Do you like ice cream?

'I love ice cream!'

Mario's Ice Cream Parlour

One scoop \$2.25

Two scoops \$3

'Oh, you are wonderful! I can afford that! Do they have peanut butter flavour?

Fifteen flavours.

Yes.

'Then let's go!'

Follow me.

Cara followed the robot. It glided past the gates, where people were waiting to get on their planes. Then it turned right, and led her back into the shopping area.

Soon Cara saw a sign, with twinkly lights all around it.