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# Boot: Small Robot, Big Adventure

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Boot is the story of a robot's quest to restore his memories by finding his owner, Beth. It's a simple enough premise, but Boot's journey is one of discovery, and he finds so much more than he was searching for.

When Boot wakes up, he has only a few short memories on his hard drive, and these are his only clues for finding his owner and re-establishing their friendship. He notices that, since he was switched off, his world has changed. Humans have adopted robots of all shapes and sizes to help them with all manner of tasks. There are robotic fridges and fire extinguishers and everybody is accompanied by a robot to carry their shopping and keep them informed of social media updates. It is a strange and unusual world for Boot, but is not difficult to imagine, and is a convincing evolution from our current addiction to mobile devices.

It is not just the world around him that has changed. Boot feels different, and is aware that having feelings at all makes him rather unusual. As he sets off to find Beth, Boot realises that he is in danger. In danger of capture and destruction by the luddite at the local scrap store, who is determined to rid his town of job-stealing robots. He is going to need some help.

Robots that help Boot, including the rough and rusty Noke, and the elegant Red, also seem different to the other robots by whom they are surrounded. They're not sure what it is about them, but they are aware that they aren't like all the others, and the friendship they develop is genuine and endearing. Through these likeable robotic characters, Hegarty invites readers to consider deep questions about themselves: What does it mean to be alive? What is it that makes us who we are? Does it matter what we look like? These themes, along with the narrative of a toy robot's quest to find his child owner, evoke very similar feelings to those conjured by the Toy Story films, and readers will recognise a number of similarities. However, the world described by Hegarty is sufficiently vivid and original, with characters that children will easily laugh with and relate to.

Accompanied by engaging and playful illustrations, the action and excitement in Boot is sustained throughout, with plenty of peril provided by decreasing power levels and the angry Flint from the scrapyard. The greatest jeopardy, though, is in the question of whether or not Beth will welcome Boot back into her life, and this is the true heart of the book. We are all

insecure under the surface (even if our surface is a shiny metal one) and we all long for someone special in our life. Boot's story reminds us that we are all unique and that we should always be ourselves, even when we can't quite remember who we are: "I am me," I said, because I didn't know how else to explain it.

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