



TRACTOR AND THE TYRE

By Tor Caldwell

In an old part of the town there's a huge scrapheap, protected by a high metal fence. It's full of lots of different things, waiting to be re-used or made into something else. During the day, people come and go and the scrapheap is busy with the noise of shouting and machinery. But at night, when everyone has left, the scrapheap really comes alive. Because that's when the NumBots come out of hiding.

As the sky grew darker, the moon became bigger and brighter, illuminating the scrapyard with its silver light. The air was thick with the scent of oil and petrol as TractorBot roared to life to start his nightly duties. As one of the largest bots in the scrapyard, Tractor was always called upon to help others with their tasks, which usually involved moving something heavy, reaching something high up, or shifting many objects in one go. Tractor loved helping others, in fact, it was one of his most favourite things to do.

Whilst the other bots were sleeping in, Tractor had been up extra early to help remove large pieces of discarded machinery, so that StrikerBot could have a new football pitch. He was heaving an old washing machine towards the scrapheap when BANG - a large boom and blast rang around the scrapyard. Tractor groaned, he plonked the washing machine down with a thud and looked down his large green body to his four humongous wheels. As he suspected, one of his large tyres was as flat as a pancake.

Tractor's tyres were always bursting and popping because the scrapyard was filled with rusty nails, broken glass, and exposed cables...

Whenever one of his tyres needed replacing, he knew exactly who to call. Within minutes, his trusty friend RustyBot was by his side, heaving a spare tyre from the scrapheap and dismantling Tractor's busted one.

Rusty began tweaking, twisting and fiddling with the tyre. "Just - one - more - ouch - needs a little - here - oops - right - got it - DONE!" Rusty stepped back, mopping the oil from his brow and panting slightly.

Tractor chuckled. "Thank you Rusty! As good as new! Now then, back to work!"

Rusty watched as Tractor's engine whirred and whizzed, his gears clunked and clanked, and his tyres crunched over some shards of broken metal. BANG! Oh no, another one of Tractor's tyres had burst!

Tractor blushed. Unable to fix his own tyre, he slowly reversed back towards Rusty, who got to work on fixing Tractor again.

"You know Tractor," said Rusty, "it's quite easy to fix a tyre - you could learn this yourself one day. All you have to do is lift here, then twist this, after that you remove the flat tyre. Once you've found a replacement in the piles of scrap, you place this bit here, then put that there, screw here and...look! All done!"

"Ooooo...err..." Tractor muttered. "That doesn't sound easy...I'm not sure I can do that all by myself..."

"Yes you can, Tractor!" Rusty beamed as he wiped the oil off of his hands with a rag. "You can do anything you put your mind to."

Tractor smiled, although he hoped his tyre would never burst without Rusty being nearby. "Thanks, Rusty!" He bellowed over the rumble and roar of his engine. He waved over his shoulder as he trundled off. He would just have to be extra careful...

Tractor finished clearing the space for the new football pitch. His next job was to take the spare junk to the edge of the scrapheap, where it would be out of the way.

The edge of the scrapyards was a deserted, eerie place. Having heard many spooky stories that it was haunted by machines from the past, most bots were too scared to venture to these parts. Here lived the oldest of the abandoned scrap metal, which hadn't been used, seen, or touched in hundreds of years. Their once-shiny surfaces were now covered in thick layers of orange-brown rust. Without the presence of humans or robots, small shoots of wild plants had begun to grow in the cracks in the metal, which was home to hundreds of creepy spiders.

Tractor whistled away his nerves as he approached the dark, lonely edge of the scrapheap. As small gusts of wind blew across the yard, all that could be heard was the creaking of the rubbish piles, and Tractor panting as he hauled large piles of scrap behind him.

He quickly deposited the load and immediately swivelled to leave. Just as he was about to accelerate off, Tractor heard another large BANG!

Swallowing hard, he looked down. A large nail was sticking out of his very flat tyre.

"Oh no, oh no, oh no, not now, not here" he moaned to himself. "I don't know how to fix my own tyre!" He searched around him, but there was no one in sight.

"Help!" He bellowed, but all he heard was the echo of his cry. It was no use, he was completely alone.

Tractor panicked, he was frightened and worried. He decided to try and get back to Rusty with his three tyres. He clunked into the right gear and began to roll forwards slowly, but immediately he limped heavily on one side, thumping and thudding as his flat tyre hit the ground. "Ouch - oomph - oh, OW!"

Breathless and panting, Tractor physically could not continue. The pain shooting up his wheels became unbearable. He winced as he came to a halt, gently rubbing his soorest wheel of all, which *still* had a flat tyre and he was *still* alone. He definitely couldn't make it back to the scrapyard on three tyres. Shivers ran down his spine as he looked around his dark surroundings, jumping every time he heard the flutter of a bats' wings or the soft howl of the wind.

Taking a deep breath, Tractor realised it was now down to him to learn how to change his tyre. He searched his brain for the instructions Rusty had told him earlier.

"I can do anything I put my mind to..." Tractor repeated Rusty's words.

He began tweaking and twisting, and lifting and loosening, "Rusty said lift here - or was it here - that's it - just this bit here and - yes!" Before he knew it, the flat tyre had popped off.

"Phew," he grunted. It was much easier than Tractor thought it would be. He understood how each lever and latch worked, and he was able to remove and disassemble each nut and bolt. And, best of all - he didn't fall over!

He was rather impressed with himself as he sorted through scraps of junk to find a replacement tyre...luckily in a scrapyard, spare tyres were never too hard to find. He picked one up and got to work again. This time, he actually enjoyed the process!

"Just pop this here - tighten this - screw that bit - and - done!" He slowly rolled forwards, and then backwards. He had done it! The tyre was fixed! Eager to leave the spooky corners of the scrapyard, Tractor zoomed off. He wore an enormous smile the whole way home, the delight spreading across his face like a radiant ray of sunshine.

When he returned to the centre of the scrapyard, he bumped into Rusty!

"Tractor...is that a new tyre?!" Rusty enquired.

"Yes! I fixed it all by myself! I can do it on my own! You were right Rusty, I can do anything I put my mind to!" He beamed, showing Rusty his brand new tyre. Because he had fixed his own tyre, he felt more confident than ever.

"Well done, Tractor! I'm proud of you! It's so important to learn how to do things for ourselves - it helps us to grow and thrive. Asking for help will always be OK, but by learning how to do things on your own too, you'll become a well-rounded and capable Tractor who can handle anything that comes your way!"