



# THE WILD ROBOT

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WORDS AND PICTURES BY  
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*To the robots of the future*

## CHAPTER 1

# THE OCEAN

*Our story begins* on the ocean, with wind and rain and thunder and lightning and waves. A hurricane roared and raged through the night. And in the middle of the chaos, a cargo ship was sinking

down

down

down

to the ocean floor.

The ship left hundreds of crates floating on the surface. But as the hurricane thrashed and swirled and knocked them around, the crates also began sinking into the depths. One after another, they were swallowed up by the waves, until only five crates remained.

By morning the hurricane was gone. There were no clouds, no ships, no land in sight. There was only calm water and clear skies and those five crates lazily bobbing along an ocean current. Days passed. And then a smudge of green appeared on the horizon. As the crates drifted closer, the soft green shapes slowly sharpened into the hard edges of a wild, rocky island.

The first crate rode to shore on a tumbling, rumbling wave and then crashed against the rocks with such force that the whole thing burst apart.

Now, reader, what I haven't mentioned is that tightly packed inside each crate was a brand-new robot. The cargo ship had been transporting hundreds of them before it was swept up in the storm. Now only five robots were left. Actually, only four were left, because when that first crate crashed against the rocks, the robot inside shattered to pieces.

The same thing happened to the next crate. It crashed against the rocks, and robot parts flew everywhere. Then it happened to the next crate. And the

next. Robot limbs and torsos were flung onto ledges. A robot head splashed into a tide pool. A robot foot skittered into the waves.

And then came the last crate. It followed the same path as the others, but instead of crashing against the rocks, it sloshed against the remains of the first four crates. Soon, more waves were heaving it up out of the water. It soared through the air, spinning and glistening until it slammed down onto a tall shelf of rock. The crate was cracked and crumpled, but the robot inside was safe.

## CHAPTER 2

# THE OTTERS

*The island's northern shore* had become something of a robot gravesite. Scattered across the rocks were the broken bodies of four dead robots. They sparkled in the early-morning light. And their sparkles caught the attention of some very curious creatures.



A gang of sea otters was romping through the shallows when one of them noticed the sparkling objects. The otters all froze. They raised their noses to the wind. But they smelled only the sea. So they cautiously crept over the rocks to take a closer look.

The gang slowly approached a robot torso. The biggest otter stuck out his paw, swatted the heavy thing, and quickly jumped back. But nothing happened. So they wriggled over to a robot hand. Another brave otter stuck out her paw and flipped the hand over. It made a lovely clinking sound on the rocks, and the otters squeaked with delight.

They spread out and played with robot arms and legs and feet. More hands were flipped. One of the otters discovered a robot head in a tide pool, and they all dove in and took turns rolling it along the bottom.

And then they spotted something else. Overlooking the gravesite was the one surviving crate. Its sides were scraped and dented, and a wide gash ran across its top. The otters scampered up the rocks and climbed onto the big box. Ten furry faces poked through the gash, eager to see what was inside. What they saw was another brand-new robot. But this robot was different from the others. It was still in one piece. And it was surrounded by spongy packing foam.

The otters reached through the gash and tore at the foam. It was so soft and squishy! They squeaked as they snatched at the fluffy stuff. Shreds of it floated away on the sea breeze. And in all the excitement, one of their paws accidentally slapped an important little button on the back of the robot's head.

*Click.*

It took a while for the otters to realize that something was happening inside the crate. But a moment later, they heard it. A low whirring sound. Everyone stopped and stared. And then the robot opened her eyes.



## CHAPTER 3

# THE ROBOT

*The robot's computer brain booted up. Her programs began coming online. And then, still packed in her crate, she automatically started to speak.*

“Hello, I am ROZZUM unit 7134, but you may call me Roz. While my robotic systems are activating, I will tell you about myself.

“Once fully activated, I will be able to move and communicate and learn. Simply give me a task and I will complete it. Over time, I will find better ways of completing my tasks. I will become a better robot. When I am not needed, I will stay out of the way and keep myself in good working order.

“Thank you for your time.

“I am now fully activated.”

## CHAPTER 4

# THE ROBOT HATCHES

*As you might know*, robots don't really feel emotions. Not the way animals do. And yet, as she sat in her crumpled crate, Roz felt something like curiosity. She was curious about the warm ball of light shining down from above. So her computer brain went to work, and she identified the light. It was the sun.

The robot felt her body absorbing the sun's energy. With each passing minute she felt more awake. When her battery was good and full, Roz looked around and realized that she was packed inside a crate. She tried to move her arms, but they were restrained by cords. So she applied more force, the motors in her arms hummed a little louder, and the cords snapped. Then she lifted her hands and pulled apart the crate. Like a hatchling breaking from a shell, Roz climbed out into the world.



## CHAPTER 5

# THE ROBOT GRAVESITE

*Those otters were now* hiding behind a rock. Their round heads nervously poked up, and they watched as a sparkling monster emerged from the crate. The monster slowly turned her head as she scanned the coastline. Her head turned and turned, all the way around, and it didn't stop turning until she was looking right at the otters.

“Hello, otters, my name is Roz.”

The robot's voice was simply too much for the skittish creatures. The biggest otter squeaked, and the whole gang suddenly took off. They galloped back across the robot gravesite, flopped into the ocean, and raced through the waves just as fast as they could.

Roz watched the otters go, but her eyes lingered on the sparkling objects that littered the shore. The objects looked strangely familiar. The robot swung her left leg forward, then her right, and just like that she was taking her very first steps. She stomped away from her crate and over the rocks and through the gravesite until she was standing above a broken robot body. She leaned in and noticed the word *ROZZUM* lightly etched on the torso. She noticed the same word on all the torsos, including her own.

Roz continued exploring the gravesite until a playful little ocean wave washed over the rocks. She automatically stepped away from it. Then a bigger wave sloshed toward her, and she stepped away again. And then a gigantic wave crashed over the rocks and engulfed the entire gravesite. Heavy water pounded against her body and knocked her to the ground, and her Damage Sensors flared for the first time. A moment later, the wave was gone, and Roz lay there, dripping and dented and surrounded by dead robots.

Roz could feel her Survival Instincts—the part of her computer brain that

made her want to avoid danger and take care of herself so she could continue functioning properly. Her instincts were urging her to move away from the ocean. She carefully got to her feet and saw that high above the shore, the land was bursting with trees and grasses and flowers. It looked lush and safe up there. It looked like a much better place for our robot. She had just one problem. To get up there, she would have to climb the sea cliffs.

## CHAPTER 6

# THE CLIMB

*Crack!*

*Thunk!*

*Clang!*

Roz was having a little trouble climbing the cliffs. She had a new dent on her rear and a long scrape down her side. And she was just about to get another ding when a crab scuttled out from under a piece of driftwood.

The crab looked up and immediately showed off his giant claws. Everyone was afraid of his claws. But not the robot. She just looked down and introduced herself. “Hello, crab, my name is Roz.”

After a brief standoff, the crab cautiously backed away. And that’s when Roz noticed how easily he moved over the rocks. With his wide stance and his grippy feet, the crab could crawl up and down any rock face. So Roz decided to try out his climbing technique. She spread her arms wide and clamped each of her hands onto the cliffside. She jammed one foot into a crack and lifted her other foot onto a narrow ledge, and just like that she was climbing.

Roz moved awkwardly at first. A chunk of rock crumbled in her hand, and she had trouble finding footholds. But as she climbed higher and higher, she started to get the hang of it.

Seagulls squawked from their cliff nests and soared away when the robot came too close. But Roz paid them no mind. She was focused only on getting to the top. Up and up and up she went, methodically climbing past nests and ledges and tiny trees rooted in the cracks, and before long our robot felt the soft soil of the island beneath her feet.

## CHAPTER 7

# THE WILDERNESS

*Animal sounds filled* the forest. Chirps and wingbeats and rustlings in the underbrush. And then, from the sea cliffs, there came new sounds. Heavy, crunching footsteps. The forest animals fell silent, and from their hiding places they watched as a sparkling monster stomped past.

But the forest was not a comfortable place for Roz. Jagged rocks and fallen trees and tangled underbrush made it difficult for her to walk. She stumbled along, struggling to keep her balance, until her foot snagged and she toppled over like a piece of timber. It wasn't a bad fall. No dings, no dents, just dirt. But Roz was programmed to keep herself in good working order, and once she was back on her feet, she immediately began cleaning herself off. Her hands darted around her body, quickly brushing and picking off every speck of dirt. Only when the robot was sparkling again did she continue through the forest.





Roz stumbled on until she found a patch of ground that was flat and open and carpeted with pine needles. It seemed like a safe place, and safety was all the robot really wanted, so she stood there, motionless, all perfect lines and angles set against the irregular shapes of the wilderness.

## CHAPTER 8

# THE PINECONES

*If you stand* in a forest long enough, eventually something will fall on you. And Roz had been standing in the forest long enough. A gentle wind whispered through the treetops, and then—*thunk!*—a pinecone bounced off her head. The robot looked down and watched the pinecone roll to a stop. It seemed harmless, so Roz went right back to doing nothing.



A few hours later, a gust of wind rushed through the treetops and then—*thunk!*—the robot looked down as another pinecone rolled away.

And then a few hours after that, a howling wind tore through the treetops. It bent trunks and shook branches and then—*thunk thunk thunk!*—pinecones began raining down. *Thunk thunk!* Roz felt something like annoyance. *Thunk!* She quickly scanned the area for somewhere safe from pinecones. And she spotted the perfect place when she looked up at the huge, rocky shape that towered above the forest.

## CHAPTER 9

# THE MOUNTAIN

*Roz was now* stomping her way up the mountain. Dense forest and rocky outcrops forced the robot to zig and zag and backtrack, but after an hour of steady hiking, she arrived at the craggy mountain peak.

Grasses and flowers and shrubs sprouted from every pocket of soil. But there were no trees at the top. Roz was safe from those annoying pinecones. She dusted herself off and then carefully climbed up a leaning slab of stone, to the very highest point of the entire mountain.

The robot slowly turned her head completely around. She saw the ocean stretching to the horizon in every direction. And in that moment, Roz learned what you and I have known since the beginning of this story. In that moment, Roz finally realized that she was on an island.

Roz looked down and surveyed the island. Starting from the sandy southern point, the island grew wider and greener and hillier until it finally jutted up into the rocky cone of the mountain. In some places the mountain fell away, leaving sheer cliffs. A waterfall rushed off one cliff and fed a river that wound its way through a great meadow in the center of the island. The river flowed past wildflowers and ponds and boulders and then disappeared into the forest.

Blurry shapes suddenly cut through the robot's vision. She refocused her eyes and saw vultures circling above the foothills. Then she noticed lizards warming themselves on a distant rock. A badger peeked out from a berry bush. A moose waded through a stream. A flock of sparrows turned in perfect unison above the trees. The island was teeming with life. And now it had a new kind of life. A strange kind of life. Artificial life.

## CHAPTER 10

# THE REMINDER

*I should remind you, reader, that Roz had no idea how she had come to be on that island. She didn't know that she'd been built in a factory and then stored in a warehouse before crossing the ocean on a cargo ship. She didn't know that a hurricane had sunk the ship and left her crate floating on the waves for days until it finally washed ashore. She didn't know that she'd been accidentally activated by those curious sea otters. As the robot looked out at the island, it never even occurred to her that she might not belong there. As far as Roz knew, she was home.*