

THE
WILD
ROBOT
PROTECTS

THE #1 BESTSELLING SERIES BY
PETER BROWN

An underwater scene rendered in a dark, monochromatic style. The background is a textured, greyish-blue. A bright, diagonal beam of light enters from the top left, illuminating a school of small, dark fish swimming towards the right. The water is filled with various types of seaweed and coral, some appearing as dark, branching structures and others as smaller, more intricate forms. The overall mood is mysterious and serene.

THE WILD ROBOT PROTECTS

WORDS AND PICTURES BY
PETER BROWN



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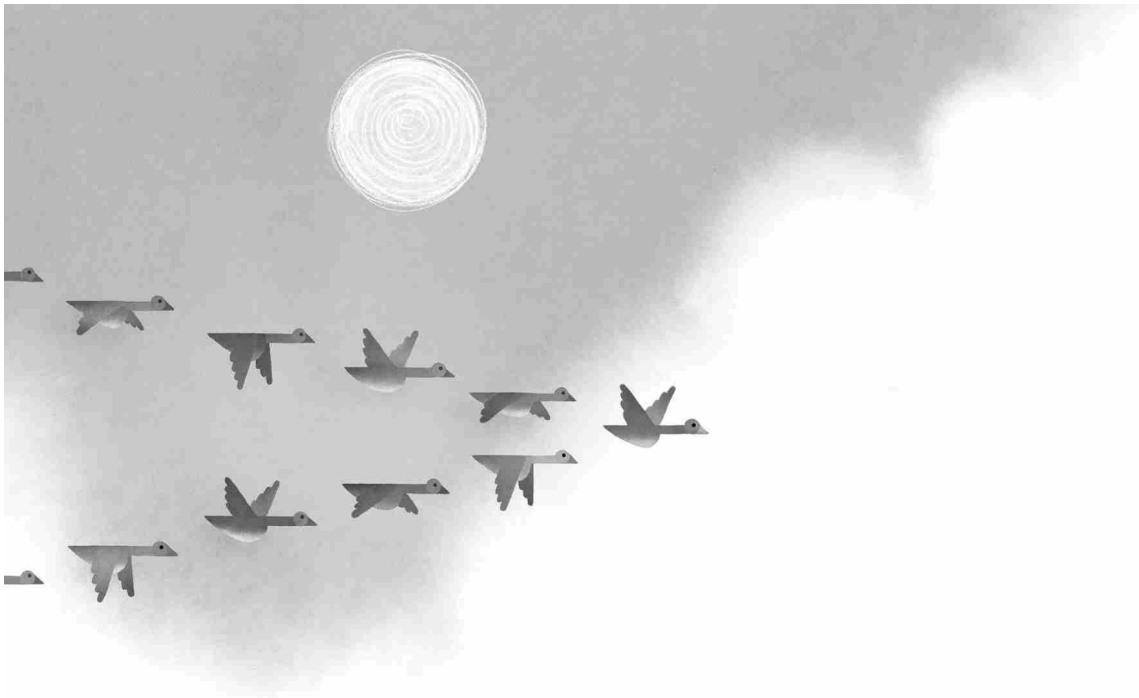
To the oceans of the future

CHAPTER 1

THE SKY

Our story begins in the sky, with a bright sun and puffy clouds and a large flock of geese. After spending the cold months at their southern wintering grounds, the geese were migrating back to their northern home. They flew in a perfect V formation, and leading the way was a graceful young goose. The leader kept his eyes forward, constantly searching for bad weather or airships, but the sky was clear of any trouble.

Towns and roads and meadows and rivers passed beneath the geese as they flew. Far ahead, where the land met the sky, the dark blue line of the ocean gradually came into view. The ocean grew closer and closer, and then the flock was soaring above a sandy beach and out over the water.



An island appeared in the distance. Another island appeared, and another. The geese spent a few days hopping from island to island, munching on dune grass and resting their wings. Then they took off for the last leg of their journey.

Cargo ships were powering through the waves below. This part of the ocean was a shipping lane. It was crawling with huge vessels, each making its own migration to the next seaport. The geese flew high over the ships, and soon all they could see was water spreading to the horizon in

every direction.

Hours passed before the geese spotted the familiar rocky shapes of their home island. They quickened their pace. Now they could see the mountain, and the forests, and the white slash of the waterfall. Now they were flying over the coastline. Now they were circling above the beaver pond.

The flock glided

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to the pond and

splashed onto the surface. They floated there, quietly cleaning their feathers, until, below the water, their webbed feet started paddling, and they swam to shore and waddled onto a pebble beach.

While the others made themselves at home, the leader wandered into the forest by himself. He followed a path through the undergrowth, passing old trees and mossy stones and thick brambles, and he stopped in a small clearing.

The goose honked loudly and listened for a response. Silence. And then the forest began to move. A cluster of ferns shook and the ground bulged up and chunks of dirt tumbled aside, and there, standing in front of the goose, was a robot.

Reader, you and I would have been terrified in that moment. It's not every day you see a robot burst up from the ground. But the goose wasn't terrified—he was happy. You see, that robot was his mother. He fluttered onto her shoulder. Then the two of them spoke to each other in the language of the animals.

“I've missed you, Ma!” said Brightbill, the goose.

“Welcome home, son!” said Roz, the wild robot.



CHAPTER 2

THE REUNION

Roz and Brightbill, mother and son, were eager to catch up, and they immediately started talking about all that had happened over the winter. But their conversation was interrupted by the sound of little claws scampering through the treetops. A tiny voice was muttering, “Brightbill’s back Brightbill’s back Brightbill’s back!” Then a squirrel came bounding out to the tip of a branch.

“Hello, Chitchat!” said Brightbill to the squirrel. “How have you been?”

But Chitchat had come a long way, and she was out of breath. Wind rushed from her mouth, and she held up her paw as if to say, “Hang on a minute.” When she was ready, the squirrel unleashed the following flurry of words:

“Brightbill I’m so glad you’re home I always worry about you when you’re gone which is silly because I know you’re clever and tough and I’m also clever and tough so I hope you don’t worry about me oh right you asked how I’ve been well I have some very exciting news which is that I am now a mother can you believe it I have three young kits and I can’t wait for you to meet them...”

Chitchat jabbered on and on. And on. And the squirrel’s jabbering voice caught the attention of nearby creatures. Fink, the fox, crept out from the bushes. Mr. and Mrs. Beaver climbed up from the pond. Swooper, the owl, flew down to a log. More and more animals emerged from the forest, smiling and laughing, eager to reunite with their old friend Brightbill.

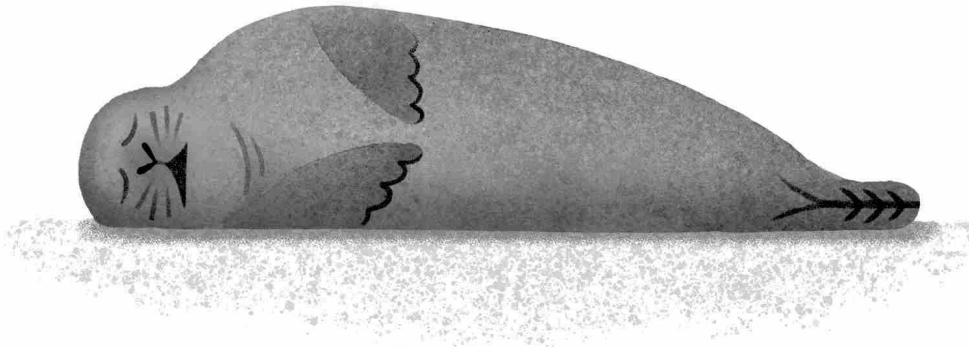
And then a screechy voice called out from afar. The voice was repeating something, over and over, but nobody could make out the words. Roz and the animals hurried to the edge of the forest just as a seagull named Gale appeared in the sky. She was frantically squawking and flapping toward them. Gulls were rarely seen so far inland. Something had to be wrong. And as Gale flew nearer, her words became clear.

“Help! Help! Help!”

CHAPTER 3

THE SEAL

The gull swooped past the crowd of creatures and cried, “Help! Roz! Follow me!” Then she swung back around the way she had come. Roz started running, and Brightbill started flying, and together they followed Gale north across the island and down to the rocky shore. Seabirds and otters and crabs had gathered on the rocks, and lying in the middle of the gathering was a seal. His nose was bleeding. His eyes were swollen shut. Roz knelt and inspected his injuries.



From the seal's mouth came a weak voice. “The poison tide is coming!”

“I do not understand,” said the robot.

“I was hunting in the north with my friends and family when we noticed a shimmering patch of water,” said the seal. “We were curious, so we swam closer. And then we felt the poison. The shimmering water burned our mouths and our noses and our eyes! I couldn't see, and I called out for the others, but nobody called back. The poison tide kept washing over me, and the pain was too much, so I turned and swam for my life, back into clear ocean water, and I just kept swimming, for days, until I arrived here.”

“What is the poison tide?” said the robot. “Where did it come from?”

But the seal couldn't answer because he suddenly erupted into a fit of coughing. The animals exchanged nervous glances as the seal coughed and coughed. Everyone wanted to help him, but there was nothing they could do.

When he finally stopped coughing, the seal hardly had enough strength to speak. “Please,” he whispered. “I want to feel the ocean.”

Very carefully, Roz lifted him up, carried him across the rocks, and released him into the shallows. The touch of salt water against his body brought a faint smile to the seal's face. It was too hard for him to speak, so without saying a word he slowly swam away and disappeared beneath the waves.

CHAPTER 4

THE NERVOUS ANIMALS

Each day, before sunrise, creatures came out from their homes and headed to the Great Meadow, in the center of the island. That was the site of the Dawn Truce, where everyone could safely get together and chat about the latest island news. Ordinarily, the Dawn Truce was a cheerful occasion, but on this day they had very serious matters to discuss.

Gale fluttered onto a rock and screeched, “The poison tide is coming! The poison tide is coming!”

Mr. Beaver grunted, “Pull yourself together, Gale! You’ll cause a panic!”

Fink barked, “Why should I care what happens in the ocean? I live on dry land!”

Swooper hooted, “Because the land and the water and the air are all connected!”

Other animals began calling out.

“We’ll be fine, this island has everything we need!”

“I don’t even like the ocean!”

“But what about our friends on the coast?”

The animals grew louder and wilder until they were silenced by the robot’s booming voice. “The seal might be right,” said Roz. “There might be a poison tide spreading through the ocean. But I do not think it will reach our shores. I think we are safe—”

Roz was cut off by Nettle and Thorn, the bears who were sister and brother.

“You *think* we’re safe?” growled Nettle.

“I want to *know* we’re safe!” snarled Thorn.

“I understand your concern,” said Roz. “But of the creatures here, only the migratory birds and I have ever left the island, and we know that the ocean is truly enormous. It seems highly unlikely that the poison tide could spread through the whole ocean and find its way to us. The poison tide does not worry me, and it should not worry you either.”

CHAPTER 5

THE TALK

Brightbill had something important to tell his mother. So he led her up to the grassy ridge on the west side of the island, to the place where he had learned to fly. It was one of their favorite spots to visit.

The goose was a fast flier, but the robot had no problem keeping up, thanks to her new body. You might remember that Roz had been designed by a woman named Dr. Molovo. They had once met under some rather difficult circumstances, and during their time together, Dr. Molovo transferred Roz's mind from her old robotic body to a new one. Her new body was stronger and tougher and faster than the original. Now Roz effortlessly glided across the rugged landscape as Brightbill raced through the air.

Before long, they were standing at the crest of the ridge, facing a grassy hillside that sloped down to the ocean. Far below, a wave crashed against the rocks, shooting sea spray into the wind. A moment later, our friends felt the spray sprinkling against their bodies. And then Brightbill started to talk.

"We lost two members of the flock this winter," he said softly. "They were an older couple who wandered off from the wintering grounds and were attacked by a pack of coyotes. I didn't know them well. They kept to themselves and only joined the flock for migrations. But the loss was hard on us all. They had a daughter, and I checked on her to see how she was doing. Her name is Glimmerwing, but everyone calls her Glimmer. She's about my age, and we enjoyed each other's company, and by the end of winter, she and I were inseparable." A little smile appeared on Brightbill's face. "It turns out, some good has come from that tragedy, because Glimmer and I have decided to be mates."

Roz stared at her son. Her glowing eyes gently pulsed. Then she said, "I am so sorry to hear about Glimmerwing's parents. But I am so happy to hear that you have found a mate! Tell me about Glimmerwing. I want to know everything!"

"I could tell you about her," said Brightbill. "But I thought I'd introduce you to her instead."

CHAPTER 6

THE MATE

The robot had a simple home in the forest. It was a dome made of wood and rock and mud, with a low doorway at one end. Inside, the walls were lined with stone benches, and in the center of the space was a firepit for those cold winter nights. Outside, the dome was surrounded by a lush garden of wildflowers and herbs and berry bushes. Roz called her home the Nest.

Brightbill and his mate would soon be arriving at the Nest, and Roz wanted everything to be perfect. A cloud of dust billowed out the door as she tidied up the interior. And then came Brightbill's voice from the garden. "We're here, Ma!"

Roz crouched and stepped out of the doorway. It was a bright, beautiful day, and sunlight streaked down through the canopy of leaves and branches. Among the sun-dappled flowers stood Brightbill and a female goose.

"Ma, this is Glimmerwing." Brightbill motioned to the goose at his side.



"Hello, Glimmerwing," said the robot. "It is lovely to meet you."

"Please, call me Glimmer," said the goose. "Of course, I've seen you around the island, but it's so nice to actually meet you!" Glimmer fluttered up to Roz's shoulder and gave her a big

hug.

“What should I call you?” said Glimmer. “Roz? Ma? Ms. Robot?”

“Please, call me Roz.”

The three of them spent the afternoon together. They talked about Glimmer’s family and the loss of her parents. Later, Roz lightened the mood with stories of Brightbill from when he was young. The conversation flowed smoothly until Roz brought up one particular subject.

“I have prepared the Nest, and you may move in whenever you like,” said the robot to the geese. “It will be wonderful to have your company!”

The geese looked at each other.

“Oh, um, you see, Ma...” Brightbill was struggling to find the right words. “Glimmer and I thought we’d live in our own nest. You know, like other geese.”

The robot thought for a moment and said, “It is only natural for two mates to want some privacy.”

“Thank you for understanding,” said Glimmer.

“I will build you a new nest,” said Roz. “I know exactly how to weave together grasses and twigs. It will be my gift to you, to celebrate your union.”

The geese looked at each other.

“Yeah, well, about that...” Brightbill was struggling to find the right words again. “Glimmer and I want to build our own nest, in our own way.”

“But we appreciate the kind offer,” said Glimmer.

“You’re not upset, are you, Ma?” said Brightbill.

“Who? Me? Upset? Do not be silly! I completely understand that you would want to start your life together by building a nest. If you ever need anything from me, all you have to do is ask.”

CHAPTER 7

THE PASSING FLOCKS

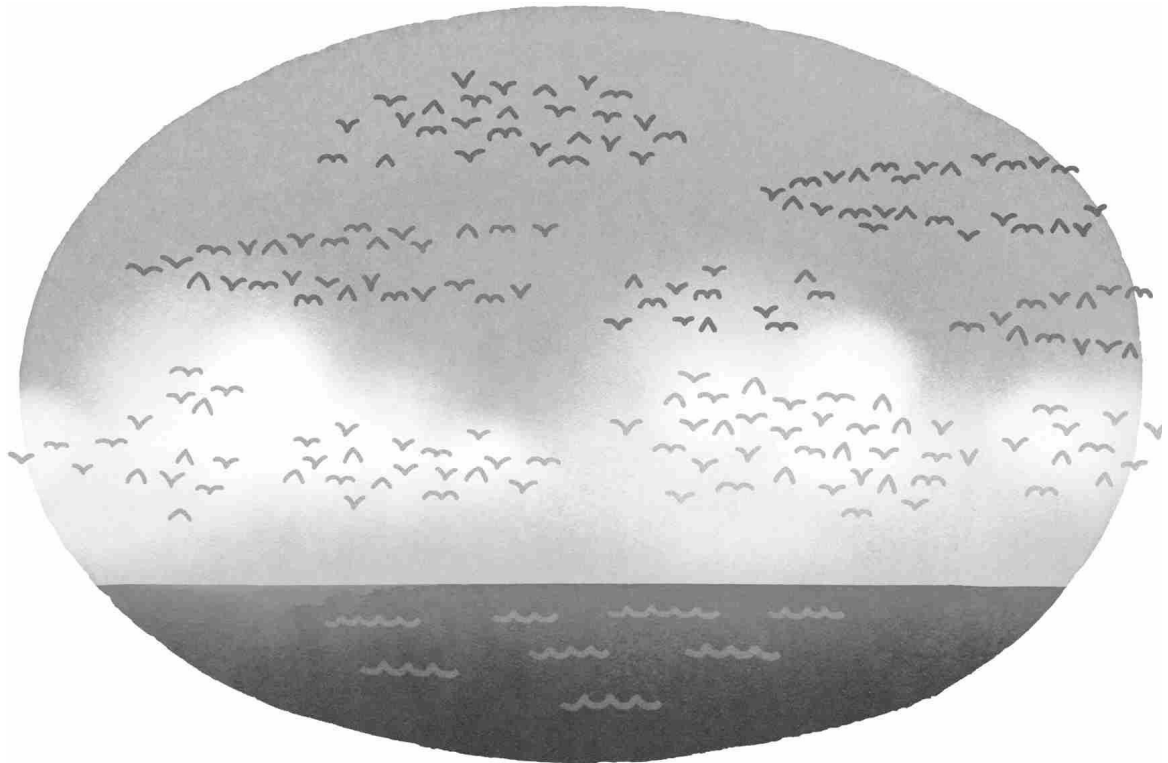
Birds often stopped by the island to rest their wings during flights across the ocean. They'd find a comfortable place to relax, and once they'd recovered their strength, they'd continue on their way. So when a flock of seagulls approached the island one afternoon, there was nothing strange about it. What was strange, however, was that the gulls flew right past the island without stopping to rest.

It wasn't long before a flock of geese flew past the island without stopping.

A little later, a flock of terns flew past.

And then a flock of vultures flew past.

As more flocks flew past, a sense of worry settled over the island creatures. And when a flock of ducks passed overhead, Brightbill and Glimmer took flight to see what was going on. They flew alongside the ducks, asking questions and listening to answers. Then the two geese came gliding back down to the edge of the pond, where a crowd was waiting.



Glimmer let out a heavy breath and shared the troubling news. “That poor seal was right,” she began. “The poison tide is coming. The ducks said it will be here tomorrow. Nobody knows what

it is. They only know that it's spreading south through the ocean, harming every living thing in its path. The reason why so many birds have been passing us by is that they're fleeing from the poison tide."

Animals glared at the robot, and Fink growled, "You said we had nothing to worry about!"

"It seems I was wrong," said Roz. "I am very sorry."

"According to the ducks, there is someone who can help," said Brightbill. "They said there's an Ancient Shark who is wise and powerful. If we can contact her, we might be able to stop the poison tide. The Ancient Shark lives somewhere in the north, but nobody knows exactly where to find her."

Animal voices called out.

"Who cares about an old shark?"

"How will we survive the poison tide?"

"What are we going to do?"

"This is what we are going to do," said the robot. "We are going to help our friends. Seabirds, otters, fish, crabs, and all the other coastal creatures are in grave danger. They must be evacuated at once."

CHAPTER 8

THE EVACUATION

The flock of geese fanned out across the island and alerted everyone that the poison tide was coming. Otters raced through the waves, telling their neighbors the news. Crabs scuttled down into the depths of the ocean. Fish who'd spent their whole lives in those reefs abandoned their homes and swam out to open water.

Many animals came down to the coast to help with the evacuation. But as the hours passed, the animals needed to rest. The robot, however, did not. Night fell and the stars came out and there was Roz, wading through the shallows, her headlights turning from side to side as she warned the coastal creatures to leave.