

THE
WILD
ROBOT
ESCAPES

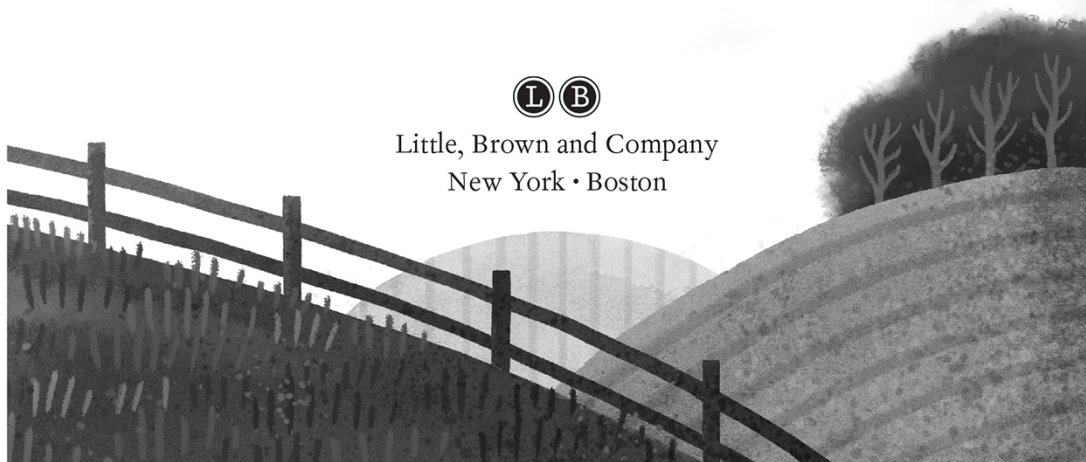
BY *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING AUTHOR
PETER BROWN

THE WILD ROBOT ESCAPES

WORDS AND PICTURES BY
PETER BROWN



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Contents

COVER

TITLE PAGE

COPYRIGHT

DEDICATION

CHAPTER 1: THE CITY

CHAPTER 2: THE CRATE

CHAPTER 3: THE ROBOT

CHAPTER 4: THE FAMILY

CHAPTER 5: THE FARM

CHAPTER 6: THE MONSTER

CHAPTER 7: THE ROBOT'S STORY

CHAPTER 8: THE COMPUTER

CHAPTER 9: THE FIRST DAY

CHAPTER 10: THE ROUTINE

CHAPTER 11: THE STRAGGLERS

CHAPTER 12: THE HOMESICK ROBOT

CHAPTER 13: THE ELECTRONIC SIGNAL

CHAPTER 14: THE SAD TRUTH

CHAPTER 15: THE CHILDREN

CHAPTER 16: THE ROBOT'S DREAM

CHAPTER 17: THE BIRDS

CHAPTER 18: THE ENTERTAINING ROBOT

CHAPTER 19: THE STORYTELLERS

CHAPTER 20: THE WILD ANIMALS

CHAPTER 21: THE HOWL

CHAPTER 22: THE WOLVES

CHAPTER 23: THE RIFLE

CHAPTER 24: THE BLUFF

CHAPTER 25: THE SUMMER

CHAPTER 26: THE TORNADO

CHAPTER 27: THE BROKEN ROBOT

CHAPTER 28: THE SHOP

CHAPTER 29: THE AFTERMATH

CHAPTER 30: THE GIFT

CHAPTER 31: THE CAMPFIRE

CHAPTER 32: THE OLD BARN

CHAPTER 33: THE AUTUMN

CHAPTER 34: THE DELIGHTED GEESE

CHAPTER 35: THE MEMORIES

CHAPTER 36: THE UNUSUAL FLOCK

CHAPTER 37: THE REUNION

CHAPTER 38: THE TRUTH

CHAPTER 39: THE ALLIES

CHAPTER 40: THE INSTINCTS

CHAPTER 41: THE WINTER

CHAPTER 42: THE PLAN

CHAPTER 43: THE OPERATION

CHAPTER 44: THE PATIENT ROBOT

CHAPTER 45: THE BARN CONVERSATIONS

CHAPTER 46: THE SPRING

CHAPTER 47: THE DINNER

CHAPTER 48: THE RETURN

CHAPTER 49: THE GOOD-BYES

CHAPTER 50: THE FREE ROBOT

CHAPTER 51: THE AIRSHIP

CHAPTER 52: THE SCOUT

CHAPTER 53: THE FARM COUNTRY

CHAPTER 54: THE MOUNTAINS

CHAPTER 55: THE ATTACK

CHAPTER 56: THE TORCH

CHAPTER 57: THE STONES

CHAPTER 58: THE CABIN

CHAPTER 59: THE STRANGE WILDERNESS

CHAPTER 60: THE HUNTERS

CHAPTER 61: THE GUIDE

CHAPTER 62: THE SHOWDOWN

CHAPTER 63: THE ROWBOAT

CHAPTER 64: THE SEA CREATURE

CHAPTER 65: THE WHALE

CHAPTER 66: THE NEW LAND

CHAPTER 67: THE TOWN

CHAPTER 68: THE STATION

CHAPTER 69: THE TRAIN

CHAPTER 70: THE MARCH THROUGH THE CITY

CHAPTER 71: THE OBSERVATIONS

CHAPTER 72: THE POLICE

CHAPTER 73: THE PIGEONS

CHAPTER 74: THE SKY

CHAPTER 75: THE RECOS

CHAPTER 76: THE MORNING

CHAPTER 77: THE UNDERGROUND

CHAPTER 78: THE CHASE

CHAPTER 79: THE DESIGNER

CHAPTER 80: THE BEAUTIFUL GLITCH

CHAPTER 81: THE MELTDOWN

CHAPTER 82: THE SECRET

CHAPTER 83: THE NEW ROBOT

CHAPTER 84: THE NEW MOTHER

CHAPTER 85: THE GUESTS

CHAPTER 86: THE FLIGHT

CHAPTER 87: THE HOMECOMING

CHAPTER 88: THE FINAL FAREWELL

CHAPTER 89: THE DEPARTURE

CHAPTER 90: THE ISLAND

THE EPILOGUE

A NOTE ABOUT THE STORY

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

PRAISE FOR *THE WILD ROBOT*

To the wild places of the future

CHAPTER 1

THE CITY

Our story begins in a city, with buildings and streets and bridges and parks. Humans were strolling, automobiles were driving, airships were flying, robots were hard at work.

Weaving through the city streets was a delivery truck. The truck knew where to go, and how to get there, all by itself. It pulled up to a construction site and automatically unloaded some crates. A few more turns and it unloaded more crates down at the docks. The truck

zigged

and

zagged

across the city, delivering crates as it went, and then it merged onto a highway.

Cars and buses and trucks were cruising along the highway together. But as the delivery truck continued, the traffic became lighter, the buildings became smaller, and the landscape became greener.

With nothing but open road ahead, the truck accelerated to its top speed. The landscape outside was now just a green blur, occasionally broken by a flicker of gray as a town flew past. On and on the delivery truck went, racing over long bridges, shooting through mountain tunnels, gliding down straight stretches of highway, until it started to slow. It drifted from the fast lane to the exit lane, and then it rolled down a ramp and into farm country.

Clouds of dust billowed up behind the truck as it drove past fields

and fences. In the hazy distance, enormous barns loomed above the plains. The air was thick with the smells of soil and livestock. Robot crews methodically worked the crops and fed the animals and operated the massive farm machines.

A hill gradually climbed into view. The hill was crowned with trees and white buildings. Another farm. But this one was smaller and shabbier than the rest. Out front was a crooked sign that read *Hilltop Farm*.

Wheels crunched on gravel as the delivery truck rolled onto the driveway and up to the top of the hill. It stopped beside the front porch of the farmhouse and dropped its last crate to the ground. Then the truck drove away.

Reader, can you guess what was tightly packed inside that crate? If you guessed a robot, you're correct. But this was no ordinary robot. It was ROZZUM unit 7134. You might remember her old life on a remote, wild island. Well, Roz's new life was just about to begin.

CHAPTER 2

THE CRATE

Woof! Woof! Woof!

Inside the farmhouse, a dog was barking and scraping at the front door. When the door finally opened, the dog scurried out and bounced down the porch steps. And then a man appeared.

The man walked with a limp, and slowly made his way down to the crate, where his dog was sniffing around. He unlatched the top of the crate and it swung open on its hinges. Packing foam was tossed aside, restraining cords were unfastened, and there was ROZZUM unit 7134. Her lifeless body sparkled in the late-day sun.

The man reached down and pressed an important little button on the back of the robot's head.

Click.

CHAPTER 3

THE ROBOT

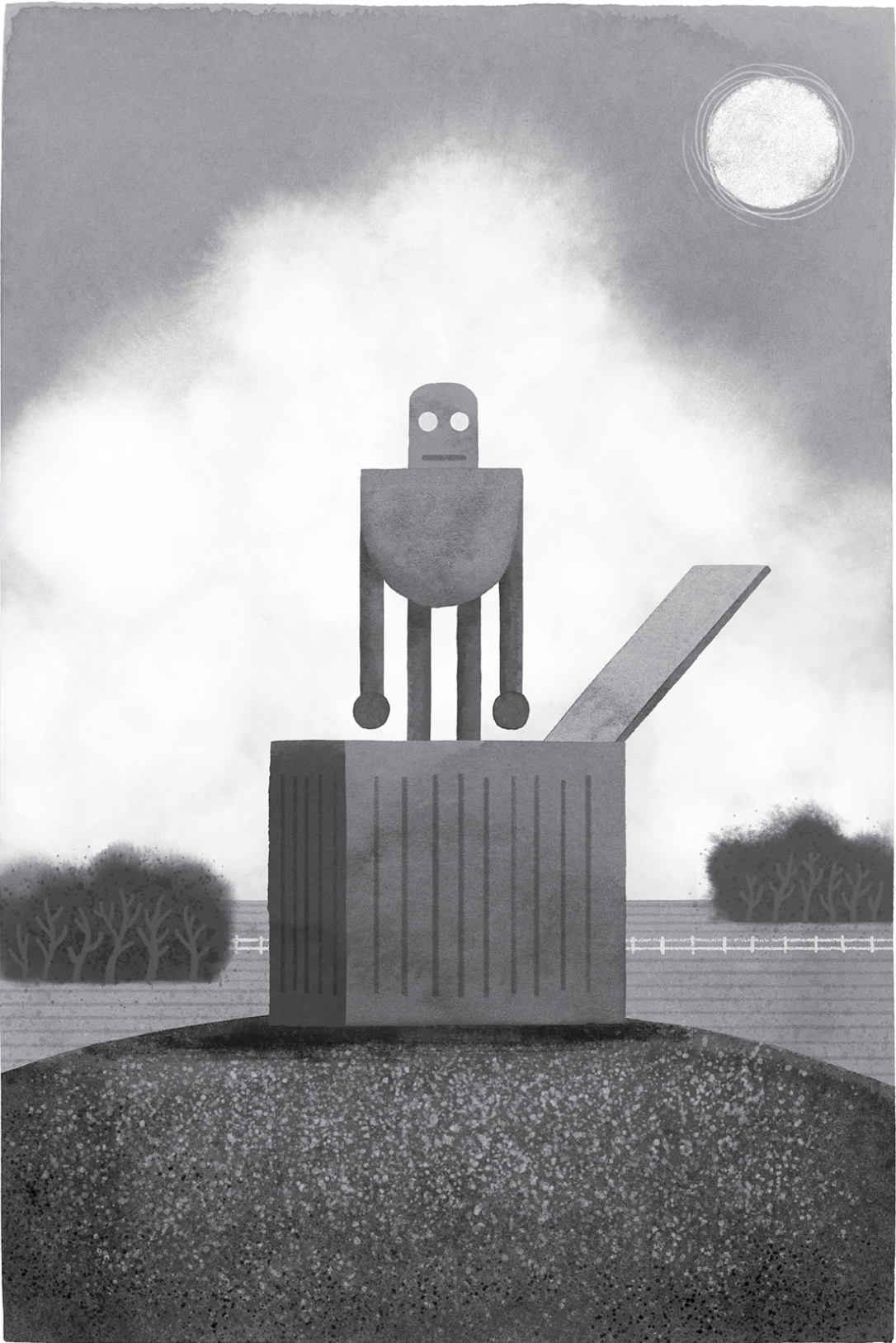
The robot's computer brain booted up and her programs began coming online. Then she automatically stood, stepped out of her crate, and started to speak.

"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 FAMILY

"*Welcome to Hilltop Farm, Roz. My name is Mr. Shareef. You belong to me now.*"

Roz studied the man with her softly glowing eyes and in a robotic voice she said, "Hello, Mr. Shareef."

"This old fella here is Oscar." Mr. Shareef scratched his dog's head. "You won't see much of him. Oscar spends most of his time sleeping in the house."

"Hello, Oscar," said the robot.

A goofy grin stretched across the dog's face and he let out a happy yelp.

Mr. Shareef pulled a small computer from his pocket. He tapped the screen and brought up a map of Hilltop Farm. "There you are, Roz," he said as the robot's electronic signal appeared on the map. "You'll be working all over this farm. And now that you're in the system I can always see right where you are."

"What would you like me to do?" said Roz.

"You can start by putting your crate in the garage over there. I'll hold on to it, in case I ever have to send you back to the factory."

Clearly, Roz was designed to take orders, because her body automatically did as it was told. She stuffed the packing materials into her crate and carried it into the garage.

When Roz returned, Mr. Shareef was watching a school bus winding along the country road. Oscar barked and dashed off as the bus came to a stop at the bottom of the driveway. A girl and a boy jumped out, and the bus drove on. In their matching school uniforms, the children looked almost identical. But the boy was a

little taller, and the girl's hair was a little longer. They meandered up the driveway and romped around with their dog until they noticed Roz.

"A robot!" said the girl, running up.

"It's about time we got one," said the boy.

"She's refurbished," said the man. "She's the cheapest one I could find, but she'll make a decent farmer."

"What's her name?" said the girl.

"She said her name's Roz."

"That's just her starter name," said the boy. "We can give her any name we want. Let's call her... Farmbot!"

"I kind of like the name Roz," said the girl.

"Me too," said Mr. Shareef. "Let's leave her name as it is. Roz, I'd like you to meet my daughter, Jaya, and my son, Jad."

"Hello, Jaya and Jad," said the robot.

The children looked at each other and smiled.

"Will Roz take orders from me?" asked Jad.

"What about me?" asked Jaya.

"She'll take orders from both of you."

"Roz, I order you to do my homework!" said Jaya.

"Don't waste her time with nonsense!" Mr. Shareef grumbled. "Roz is here to do farmwork, not homework, understand?"

The children nodded.

"Now, I order you kids to bring the dog inside and do your own homework," said Mr. Shareef. "I need to show Roz the farm."

