

# Chapter 20- The Language of the Animals

*It started with the birds.* They had always been skittish when the robot was near. They would stare and screech and then scatter. But now that Roz was camouflaged, she could secretly observe their normal behavior, right up close.

Roz noticed chickadees fluttering through the same flowers and signing the same song every morning. She noticed a lark who swooped down to the same rock and sang the same song every afternoon. She noticed the same two magpies singing to each other from a cross the same meadow every evening. After weeks of robotically studying the birds, Roz knew what each bird would sing, and when they would sing, and eventually, why they would sing. The robot was beginning to understand the birds.

But she was also beginning to understand the porcupines and the salamanders and the beetles. She discovered that all the different animals shared one common language; they just spoke the language in different ways. You might say each species spoke with its own unique accent.

When Roz first listened to the chickadees, their songs had sounded like “TWEEE-tweedle! TWEEE-tweedle!” But now when the chickadees sang, Roz heard, “Oh, what a lovely day it is! Oh, what a lovely day it is!”

Deer spoke mostly with their bodies. By simply turning her head, a doe could say to her family, “Let’s look for clovers by the stream.”

Snakes often hissed to themselves, things like “I know there’s a tasty mouse around here ssssomewhere.”

Bees said very little. They used their wings to buzz a few simple words like *nectar* and *sun* and *hive*.

Frogs spent much of their time searching for each other. One would croak, “Where are you? I can’t see you!” And then another would reply, “I’m over here! Follow my voice!”

When Roz first stomped across the island, the animal squawks and growls and chirps had sounded like nothing more than meaningless noises. But she no longer heard animal noises. Now she heard animal words.