

To my nature-loving mom,  
Marie-Luise Roth  
—With love, SRS

# SPRING AFTER SPRING

How Rachel Carson  
INSPIRED the  
Environmental Movement

Springdale, Pennsylvania

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It was dawn when the chorus began.





Rachel didn't want to miss a note.







And wonders big ...



and small.







Spring was Rachel's favorite time of year.



As the sun set, she could hear the first bubbles of frogsong. Crickets began their nighttime tune and bats squeaked a lullaby.



At home there was a warm supper and a big family. Mom played the piano, and Dad sang songs and read stories.



Rachel's favorites were those about the sea.



As the days grew longer and warmer, the chattering, chirping, and hooting got louder.



Until the gathering calls from migrating birds meant that it was autumn. They were coming together for their long journey through the ocean of air to their wintering homes.







Snuggled under a warm blanket, Rachel drew pictures and wrote about the life she experienced all year.



She read books about animals and imagined what their lives were like.

Spring after spring, year after year, the birds arrived

“Cherry! Cherry!”

Every season Rachel watched, listened, and wrote,

“New songs!”

and like the nestlings, she grew quickly.

“The birds are singing!”  
“The birds are singing!”  
“The birds are singing!”

“The birds are singing!”

“The birds are singing!”

“The birds are singing!”

“The birds are singing!”

“The birds are singing!”

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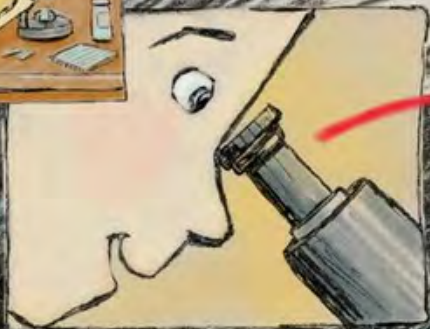
Then one autumn, it was time for her to go off to college.

She was sure she wanted to be a writer until . . .





... she looked through a microscope and saw a small world in a drop of water—tiny sea plants and animals. Rachel was amazed and in love.



She wanted to know more about the very small world made visible by a microscope. She had never been to the ocean and was scared to go in the water.



To learn about the creatures in tidal pools, marshes, and the sea, Rachel decided that she would study biology. She put her writing aside.





After she finished school, Rachel worked as a scientist and compiled information about the ocean. Now for her job she wanted to know what it was like to actually be underwater. She was still scared. But she went anyway.



"IN THE FISH WORLD, MANY THINGS  
ARE TOLD BY SOUND WAVES..."



Under the Sea Wind

The Island lay in shadows  
only a little deeper than  
those that were swiftly  
stealing

But there was something wrong.





All around, nature's voices were going quiet.



So Rachel did what she did best: she watched closely, listened carefully, and learned as much as she could about what was happening.



Rachel put together scattered facts and found the answer.





People wanted to kill bugs that ate their plants, bothered them, and sometimes even made them sick.

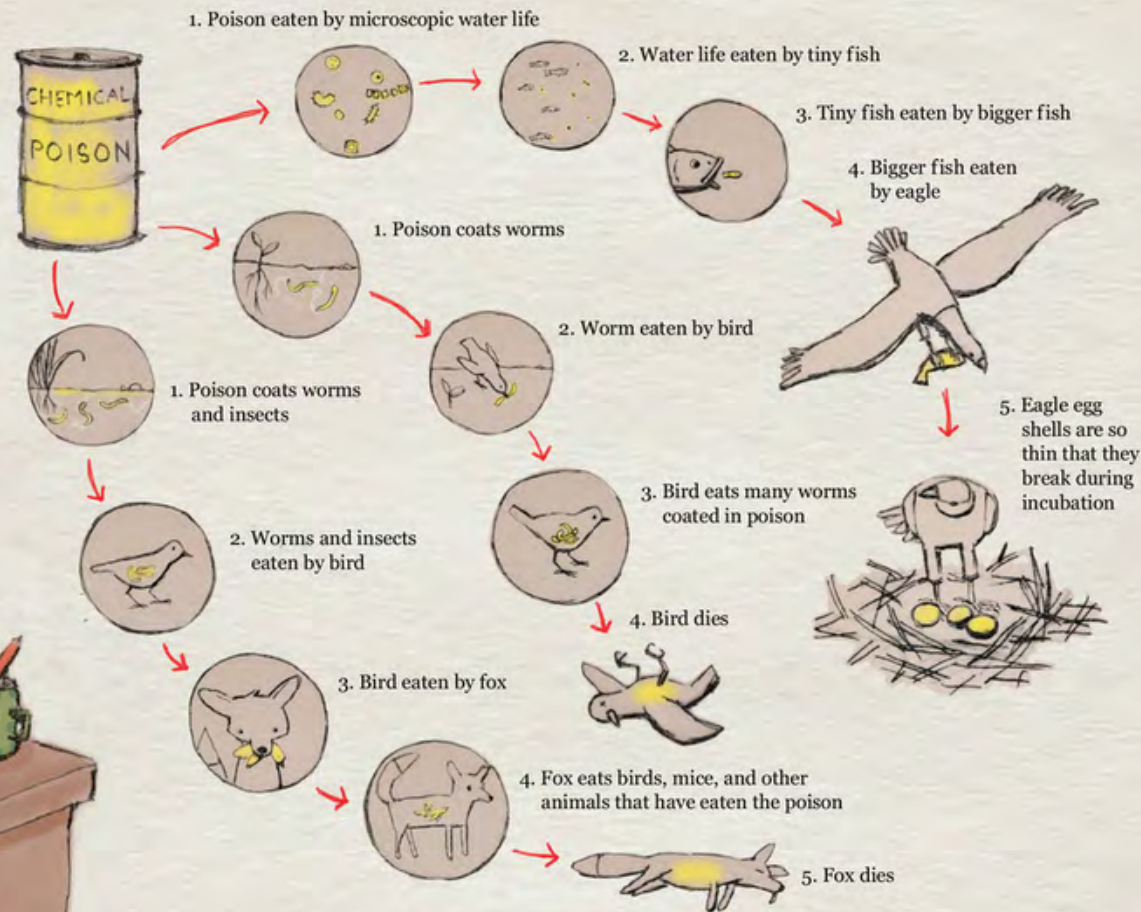


Chemists created new poisons to solve the insect problems that *seemed* to work and *seemed* to be harmless to other creatures and humans.



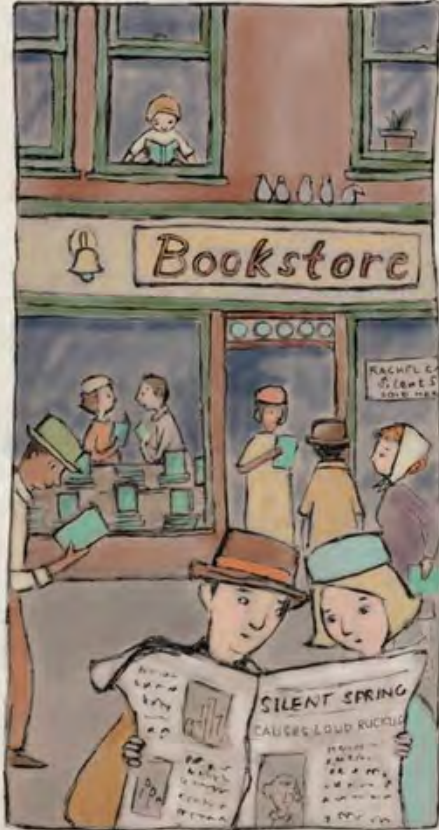
These poisonous chemicals were quickly used everywhere in huge amounts because people thought they were safe.

But Rachel found evidence that the poisons were not safe.





Rachel wrote a book to tell people what she had learned.



*Silent Spring* created a huge ruckus. Some people were inspired to change, but many didn't believe Rachel.



Eventually President Kennedy took notice and began an investigation to find out what was true. Rachel was asked to come to Washington, D.C., and defend her book.



She was scared, but she went.



Rachel's testimony in Washington and her writing in *Silent Spring* made people see that they have an effect on the environment and the other creatures that they share the world with.

People were inspired to speak up, congress passed new laws so that nature was treated with more care, and some of the most harmful chemicals were banned.

Spring after spring, year after year, people celebrated the Earth and the environment because Rachel showed them how beautiful and precious it is.





But Rachel went home and continued watching and listening. In the morning, she went out among the tide pools and gathered specimens. In the afternoon, she carefully studied them and took notes on her observations. And in the evening, when the tide had gone out again, she returned each creature with great care—exactly in the spot she had found it.

Exactly where it belonged.



#### AUTHOR'S NOTE

I have long loved Rachel Carson's writing, especially her books about the wonders of nature where she writes so poetically about science. But her most famous book, *Silent Spring*, is hard for me to read because it's a warning about what happens when people are not careful.

*Silent Spring* is one of those rare books that changes the way a whole society thinks. In the 1950s, people thought that science could solve all their problems and that nature could be controlled through chemicals—no one questioned that. Except Rachel Carson. In a 1963 television interview, Rachel said, "the balance of nature is built on a series of relationships between living things and their environment." Rachel knew chemicals had their place. But she asked people to slow down and look carefully at what they were doing and to understand that by affecting the tiniest creature, they were influencing the whole web of life, including humans. In the end, I realized that *Silent Spring* is about ecology and the wonders of nature, just like all her other books. And I came to love it as well.

Rachel died on April 14, 1964, just two years after writing *Silent Spring*. She was fifty-seven years old. She never saw the full impact of her work. *Silent Spring* led to the formation of the Environmental Protection Agency, it inspired people to try to find less harmful ways to deal with pests, and it is widely seen as the beginning of the environmental movement, which led to the creation of Earth Day. Rachel Carson gave a voice to nature and an awareness of peoples' connection to our fragile planet. However, pesticides and herbicides are still used in large quantities all over the world, and they still negatively affect many animal species as well as humans. There is still much to learn about the relationship between living things and their environment, and this knowledge is crucial to understanding climate change.

Today, Rachel's writing is as important as ever.

