



ROBOT WARS

SIGMUND BROUWER

BOOK FOUR

COUNTER- ATTACK



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Counterattack

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Designed by Mark Anthony Lane II

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THIS SERIES IS DEDICATED
IN MEMORY OF MARTYN GODFREY.

*Martyn, you wrote books that reached all of
us kids at heart. You wrote them because you
really cared. We all miss you.*

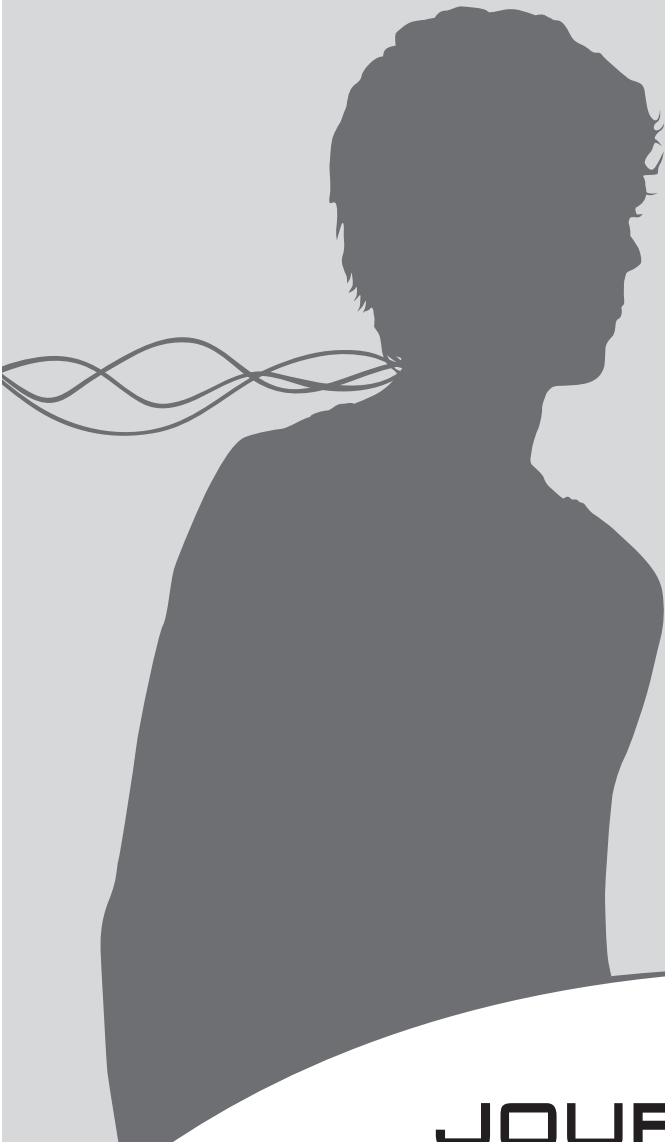
FROM THE AUTHOR

We live in amazing times! When I first began writing these Mars journals, not even 40 years after our technology allowed us to put men on the moon, the concept of robot control was strictly something I daydreamed about when readers first met Tyce. Since then, science fiction has been science fact. Successful experiments have now been performed on monkeys who are able to use their brains to control robots halfway around the world!

Suddenly it's not so far-fetched to believe that these adventures could happen for Tyce. Or for you. Or for your children.

With that in mind, I hope you enjoy stepping into a future that could really happen. . . .

Sigmund Brouwer



JOURNAL ONE

CHAPTER 1

Neuron rifles.

Twenty soldiers—in full protective gear, including black uniforms, black helmets, dark mirrored visors—each held a rifle aimed directly at my head. The voltage of just one neuron rifle would cripple me with the pain of an electrical jolt through the nerve pathways of my body.

But 20 neuron rifles fired at me all at once? With the nerve pathways too scrambled to give instructions to my muscles, I wouldn't even be able to scream as I died.

Each of those soldiers followed my slow progress by keeping me in the sights of their weapons. I had nowhere to run. Nowhere to hide.

Only moments earlier, the robot that carried me in its arms had arrived to take me out of my prison cell. I'd grabbed my

comp-board—my fold-up laptop computer—in the few seconds I had to gather my belongings. I had left behind my wheelchair from Mars, since it was useless. The prison officials had removed its wheels on the remote chance I'd find a way to escape. Now as the robot wheeled down the wide, white corridor of this military prison, the soldiers surrounded me, front and back.

Carried as I was by the robot, I felt like a baby. Worse, if the robot set me down, the best I'd be able to do was crawl by using my arms to pull me forward. I was without my wheelchair, and after a lifetime on Mars, I struggled with the extra gravity on Earth.

The squeak of the robot's wheels provided a steady backdrop to the soft thumping of the soldiers' footsteps in the quiet of the corridor. None of the soldiers spoke. I wondered if they would fire without warning. I wondered how long they would let the robot continue to take me away from my prison cell. I wondered why they had let me go this far.

I wondered where I was going. And why.

All I knew was that the robot had appeared as my prison cell door opened, and from the speakers of the robot, a familiar but mechanical-sounding voice had instructed me to sit up from my bunk so the robot's arms could lift me. I had trusted that voice.

And now I was here.

With all those neuron rifles ready and able to kill me in the worst way possible.



I didn't even know why I'd been put in this prison. Two days ago, Chase Sanders, my dad and the pilot of the *Moon Racer* spaceship, my friend Ashley, and I had arrived from Mars—where I had been born over 14 Earth years ago. To our shock, World United Federation soldiers had boarded our ship and arrested us. And I hadn't talked to Ashley or my dad since.

In my solitude, I kept wondering if it had anything to do with the robots.

For about as long as I could remember, I had been trained in a virtual-reality program. Like the ones on Earth where you put on a surround-sight helmet that gives you a 3-D view of a scene on a computer program. The helmet is wired so when you turn your head, it directs the computer program to shift the scene as if you were there in real life. Sounds come in like real sounds. Because you're wearing a wired jacket and gloves, the arms and hands you see in your surround-sight picture move wherever you move your own arms and hands.

With me, the only difference is that the wiring reaches my brain directly through my spine. And I can control a real robot, not one in virtual reality. You see, part of the long-term Mars Project that my mom, dad, and I were a part of was to use robots—which don't need oxygen, water, or heat—to explore Mars. However, the problem was that robots couldn't think like humans.

So that's where I came in. When I was a baby, I had an experimental operation to insert a special rod with thousands of tiny, biological implant fibers into my spine. Each of the fibers has a core that transmits impulses of electricity, allowing my brain to control a robot's computer. From all my years of training in a computer simulation program, my mind knows all the muscle moves it takes to handle the virtual-reality controls. Handling the robot is no different, except instead of actually moving my muscles, I imagine I'm moving the muscles. My brain sends the proper nerve impulses to the robot, and it moves the way I made the robot move in the virtual-reality computer program.

I admit, it's cool. Almost worth being in a wheelchair.

Ashley was wired in the same way—with one difference. Because she'd had the operation on Earth, with better medical facilities, her spine hadn't been damaged. She had the best of both worlds.

Now she was controlling the robot that was carrying me.

Only I had no idea how she'd gotten control of it.

Or where we were headed.

Or why.

SCIENCE AND GOD

You've probably noticed that the question of God's existence comes up in Robot Wars.

It's no accident, of course. I think this is one of the most important questions that we need to decide for ourselves. If God created the universe and there is more to life than what we can see, hear, taste, smell, or touch, that means we have to think of our own lives as more than just the time we spend on Earth.

On the other hand, if this universe was not created and God does not exist, then that might really change how you view your existence and how you live.

Sometimes science is presented in such a way that it suggests there is no God. To make any decision, it helps to know as much about the situation as possible. As you decide for yourself, I'd like to show in the Robot Wars series that

many, many people—including famous scientists—don't see science this way.

As you might guess, I've spent a lot of time wondering about science and God, and I've spent a lot of time reading about what scientists have learned and concluded. Because of this, I wrote a nonfiction book called *Who Made The Moon?* and you can find information about it at www.whomadethemoon.com. If you ever read it, you'll see why science does not need to keep anyone away from God.

With that in mind, I've added a little bit more to this book—a couple of essays about the science in journals one and two of *Robot Wars*, based on what you can find in *Who Made The Moon?*

Sigmund Brouwer

www.whomadethemoon.com

JOURNAL ONE

ARE YOU AN ALIEN?

Q: *Are you an alien?*

A: That's exactly how Tyce feels. After all, he's spent his entire life on Mars—weird as it sounds—and has never seen Earth before. When he arrives on Earth, he's in awe. Just think of never having seen a yellow sun, white clouds, and a blue sky before, and then seeing them for the first time. Then add to that lots of other sights, like dogs, palm trees, tall grass, a variety of flowers. Sounds, like birds chirping, trucks on an interstate, and the roar of a male gator. Smells, like fish frying and the musty dampness of the Everglades. Surrounded by all these things you'd never experienced, your mouth would probably drop open too! You'd be overwhelmed. And who could blame you?

It wouldn't help, either, if somebody made fun of you, even

in a teasing way, like Wild Man did to Tyce. “Where exactly are you from? Mars or something?” Little did Wild Man know how much his teasing bugged Tyce. How it hit home and made Tyce feel even more lonely and afraid. Because he is from another planet. And worse, he’s the only true “Martian” on Earth. He’s 50 million miles from his home—and everything he knows!

It’s no wonder that all of a sudden the dome on Mars looks less scary. Even with all its regulations, like only getting a shower twice a month. Even with all its crises, such as the oxygen leak, a hostile takeover, and almost getting blown up by a black box. Why? Because Earth, as beautiful as it is, will never be Tyce’s real home.

Q: Is Earth your true home?

A: All of us have an emptiness that needs to be filled. Some people try to fill it with money or the pursuit of fun. This emptiness truly can make us feel like an alien; some people have described the emptiness as being “homesick for a place you’ve never been.”

Where is that place, the place that lies beyond our life on Earth? Because of his growing faith in God, Tyce has discovered there’s more to life than what meets the eye. Than what we can see and touch. He believes that neither Earth nor Mars is his final destination. Instead, someday he’ll take an incredible flight to a place called heaven, where he’ll live forever with God.

But that doesn't mean we take this beautiful Earth for granted. God wants us to enjoy it. So why not, for the next few days, pretend you're seeing everything on Earth for the first time? Like it's "one giant candy store," as Wild Man said. From plants to insects to reptiles and birds, explore how life swarms this world, cramming each nook and corner. Then you, too, might agree with Nate—that it takes more faith to deny the existence of God than to see a Creator behind all of this.

And then you'll also find it easier to see beyond this Earth to God's ultimate plan for us—to be with him in heaven someday.

JOURNAL TWO

IS IT RIGHT TO MANIPULATE LIFE?

Q: Is it right to manipulate life?

A: That's the very question Tyce Sanders has been asking himself all through this mission. After all, the evil Dr. Jordan is totally controlling the jelly kids' lives, treating them as his slaves. He considers them valuable only because they are part of a very expensive experiment.

Even more, Tyce discovers that Cannon has manipulated his life too. The general is the guy who pushed for the funds that caused Tyce's surgery as a baby. The surgery that went wrong and caused his legs to be useless. Tyce is angry—and he has reason to be.

Is it right to manipulate life?

Although Robot Wars is set in the future, we need to ask ourselves that question now. You don't have to look much farther than the headlines of your newspaper to find out that

life is being manipulated today. It all started by genetically manipulating things like corn and beans to give farmers better crops. Then scientists figured out the technology to clone sheep (the first one's name was Dolly), and the genetic material from a jellyfish was successfully implanted into a monkey.

All these things may sound cool, but they could lead to scary places in the future. Like what's happening at the Institute on Earth in A.D. 2040, where defenseless kids are being implanted with spinal plugs so they can control robots.

In short, scientists are rapidly becoming more and more able to manipulate the building blocks of life. But the debates on whether this is right or wrong and how far we should go lag far behind the scientific advances. In other words, we as humans are learning how to do many things before we as a society are able to decide whether we should do them.

Is it right to manipulate life? Is it okay for Dr. Jordan to use the jelly kids as an experiment?

The Terratakers are like those who believe that humans consist of nothing more than complicated arrangements of protein and water. To the Terratakers, then, humans are in control, and they have the right to decide who should live and who should die. Following this philosophy means to people like Dr. Jordan that the "powerful" people can use the "less powerful" people as their slaves. And that the "powerful" people have more value to society than the "less powerful" people, like the jelly kids.

But that's not what Tyce, his parents, Ashley, Nate, and Rawling believe. As Christians, they believe that God created the world. That he created each human being uniquely, and that all human beings are equally valuable in his eyes. And as the one who created us, he and only he should have power over our life and death. Not people like Dr. Jordan, who threaten to use death chips to manipulate others through fear.

When you believe in God, you also have to believe that every life—including your own—is valuable. And that it deserves to be treated with respect.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sigmund Brouwer, his wife, recording artist Cindy Morgan, and their daughters split living between Red Deer, Alberta, Canada, and Nashville, Tennessee. He has written several series of juvenile fiction and eight novels. Sigmund loves sports and plays golf and hockey. He also enjoys visiting schools to talk about books. He welcomes visitors to his Web site at www.coolreading.com.