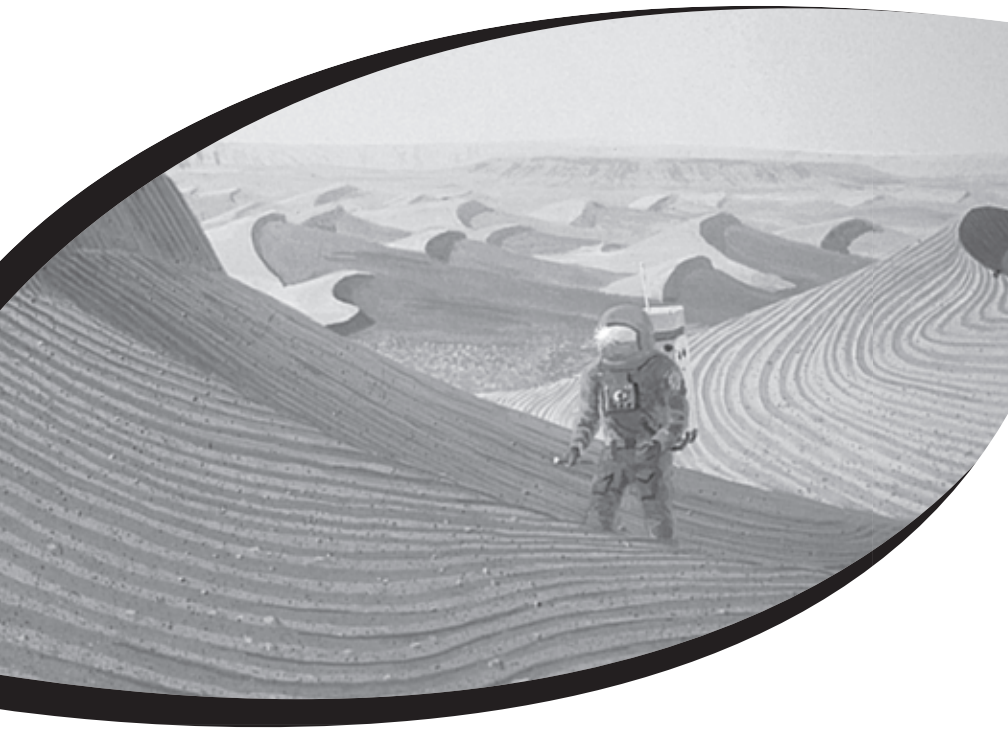
ROBOT WARS



ROBOT WARS

SIGMUND BROUWER

BOOK TWO

DOUBLE CROSS

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Double Cross

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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.

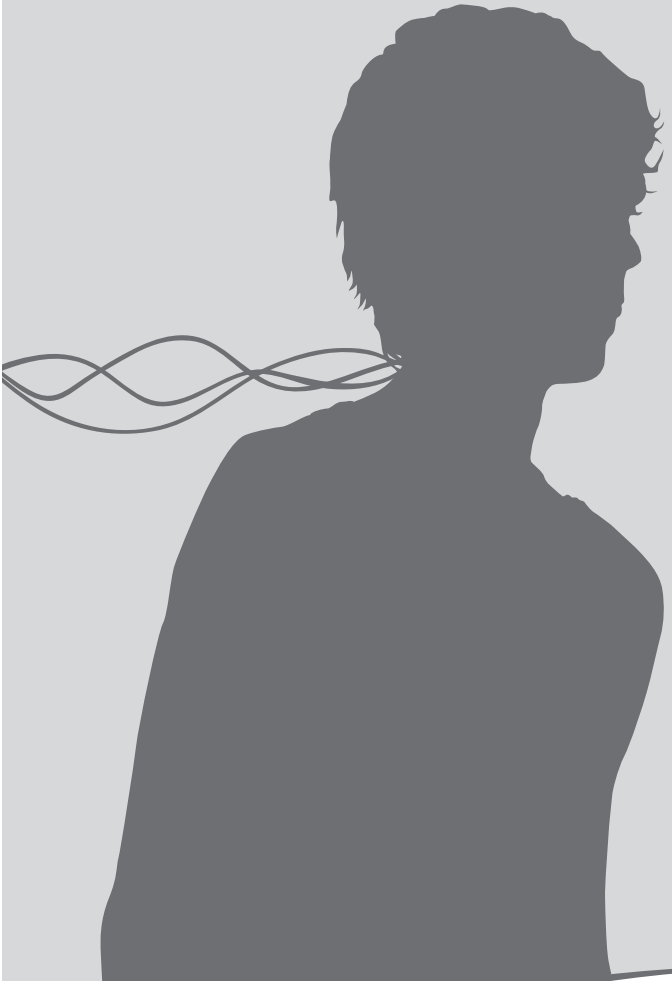
FROM THE AUTHOR

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

On the side of the cliff, I hung from a thin metal cable. Hundreds of feet below, the jagged red rocks of the Martian valley floor pointed up at me like deadly spears.

The temperature had risen from minus 100 degrees Fahrenheit to a nice, warm minus 20 degrees Fahrenheit. Wind pushed at my body, making me sway from side to side. But it could have been worse. I could have been stuck in a sandstorm, with grains of sand hitting me at 60 miles an hour, rattling off my titanium shell and blinding me completely.

As it was, I had a good view. On Mars at midday, when the sand isn't blowing, the sun is blue against a butterscotch-colored sky. The clouds are barely more than stretched-out strings of fog, lighter blue than the sun.

I could look across the entire valley and see the oranges and reds of Martian soil. Nearly 10 miles away, a gigantic dome held all 200 of the scientists and techies who founded the first colony on Mars. Under that dome were oxygen and water and warmth and food, all the things humans need to survive.

Out here? There was no oxygen. No water. No warmth. And no food. My robot body didn't need any of that.

Of course, those jagged rocks waited for any mistakes. From where I was, it wouldn't matter much that gravity on Mars is about a third of Earth's gravity. If my grip on the cable slipped, those rocks would tear through my robot body like daggers. What made it worse was that I had a passenger strapped to my back.

My job was to make it to the bottom of the cliff with both of us undamaged.

At the top, the metal cable was attached to a long spike driven deep into the soil. All 300 feet of the cable dangled from this spike.

I held on to the cable with a gripper in each hand. Each gripper clamped the cable securely with much more power than I could have gotten by using just my fingers.

The trick was to unclamp the gripper in my right hand and hold on with the gripper in my left hand. Then I had to bring my free right hand down and reclamp at a level below my left hand. Once the right-hand grip was secure,

I unclamped the left and reclamped it below the right. And so on. It was slow work that took a lot of concentration.

One thing made this easier. My lower body was on wheels, so all I had to do was let myself roll down the cliff. Slowly. Very slowly.

I was halfway down when it happened.

As I leaned against the cliff, my right wheel hit a loose portion of rock. It broke away, clattering down the cliff. My right side swung inward, spinning me sideways. This wouldn't have been a problem if I'd been clamping the cable with both grippers. But I was holding with only my left.

In panic, I grabbed at the cable with my right hand. Because I was spinning, I missed the cable and jammed my hand into the cliff. This pushed me away from the cliff too hard. For a second, I was like a pendulum. With less gravity on Mars than on Earth, my action shot me six feet away from the side of the cliff and then banged me against rock on the return.

It felt like I'd been slammed with a baseball bat. Keeping my grip on the cable with my left hand, I fought to find the cable with my right. But I was off balance. Especially with a passenger on my back. My wheels began to roll upward on the cliff wall as the weight on my back pulled me upside down and backward.

The cable twisted more. Still I tried to find a grip with my right hand.

Nothing.

Then . . .

Snap. The buckle keeping the passenger on my back opened, and suddenly I had no passenger.

"Rawling!" I shouted as I watched the downward tumble of arms and legs. "Rawling!"

Seconds later, there was an explosion of dust as the body smashed into the rocks.

I had failed my mission.

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

CAN WE EXPECT SCIENCE TO BE OUR SAVIOR?

Q: What's ahead?

A: For the first 10,000 years of recorded human history, the fastest that any human could travel was the speed of a galloping horse. (Unless someone wanted to jump off a building or a cliff!) Horse-drawn wagons were very slow, wind-powered ships were slow, the first trains were slow, and even the first automobiles were slow.

It's only in the last hundred years or so—the tiniest sliver of time—that technology has allowed us to travel faster. Some cars go as fast as 200 miles an hour. Airplanes can go faster than sound. A journey that took the early American settlers weeks or months by wagon over dangerous territory, we can accomplish in hours on an interstate in air-conditioned comfort.

In fact, thanks to science and technology, most of us truly live better than kings did only 100 years ago. We live in heated homes with running water, HDTVs, and washers and dryers. Doctors no longer try to cure us by applying leeches to our heads to suck blood; we can get the best of modern drugs and operations. We're protected by electronic security systems and police forces; we probably don't lie awake at night worrying about barbarians tearing down our town. We store our wealth in electronic binary codes in bank computers, not in piles of gold or silver that armies can steal.

And these improvements in science and technology are happening faster and faster. After all, it was only 40 years ago that a man first stepped on the moon.

Now SUVs have more technology than the first spaceships, and your computer has more calculating power than the computers that placed the first men on the moon. With cell phones and computers, you can instantly communicate through satellites to locations anywhere in the world.

Medicine? Your body can be vaccinated, wired, and soon, cloned.

Even color TVs aren't very old. Now you can entertain yourself with the virtual reality of music videos, computer games, and theater screens three stories tall.

Science and technology are staggering, amazing, incredible. Who knows how many more leaps ahead we will be by AD 2039, the date of this story? And what's even more exciting is

that you, like Tyce Sanders and his virtual-reality missions, may be the one who helps discover this new technology!

Q: Can science and technology stop crime? Can they prevent heartache, loneliness, fear? Can they make families perfect? Can they prevent death?

A: The answer to all of the questions is obvious. No.

Although the conditions around you have improved with blinding speed, you can still suffer pain, guilt, heartache, fear, and loneliness deep inside you. Where it matters.

Those who look to science and technology to save us as a human race assume we just don't know enough yet. But learning more about our world and how it works doesn't make problems go away. The answer is all too obvious. All you need to do is read the headlines of a newspaper or watch the daily news to see it.

The real problem—sadly—is the choices we make. Some are good choices. Others are hurtful, evil choices. Because God loves us, he gives us the power to choose. But then we have to live with the consequences.

The bottom line is that science and technology are incredible tools for exploring what it means to be human—and for helping other humans, if used properly. But science and technology cannot change anyone's heart. And they'll never give meaning or hope or peace to your life.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sigmund Brouwer and 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.