



ROBOT WARS

SIGMUND BROUWER

BOOK FIVE

FINAL BATTLE



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Final Battle

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Summary: In the first of two adventures set in 2040, fourteen-year-old, wheelchair-bound, virtual reality specialist, Tyce Sanders is forced to reveal his special talents in order to avert a nuclear reactor explosion, and in the second, Tyce and his friend Ashley must find a way to stop a dreaded Manchurian fleet from overtaking the Earth.

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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.*

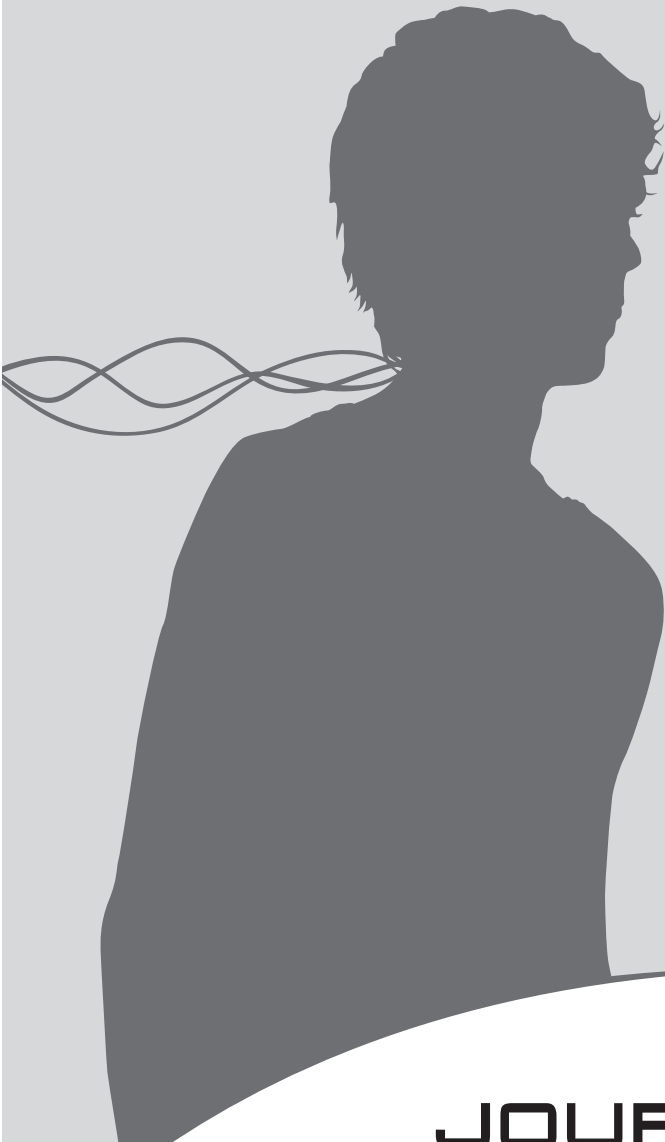
FROM THE AUTHOR

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

Radiation blast!

Behind me, three doors—each three feet thick and made of steel-encased concrete—were already open to the outer world. Ahead was the final door protecting the inner core of the nuclear reactor at the power plant. It was the final barrier between me and the intense heat and radiation about to blast me when a computer signal triggered it to open like the ones behind me.

Had my body been there in my wheelchair, the heat would have made puddles of my skin and flesh, reducing me to bones and skull. Just as deadly were the radiation waves coming from the reactor's uranium core, only a half hour away from a final and catastrophic meltdown.

Fortunately I had not approached in my wheelchair but

through a robot body that had rolled under my control through the first three doorways toward that last door. In theory, my task was simple. Pull the rod of uranium from the sheath that fueled the reactor, shutting it down. But I had to do it fast—all before the entire reactor exploded in a mushroom cloud with five times the power of any nuclear bomb.

And all because of bad hamburgers.



Ten hours earlier, a bizarre chain of events had begun the meltdown. First, one of the power plant transformers had been struck by lightning, triggering three massive, key surge protectors. This in itself would have done no serious damage. After all, engineers had installed the surge protectors for something exactly like this. What they hadn't planned on was a second lightning bolt hitting the same transformer within the next 10 seconds. Millions of volts had overwhelmed the power plant's internal systems, crashing half the computers and scrambling the other half.

Even so, the problem should have ended there. At any given time, three technicians were on shift to monitor the system. In an emergency such as this one, only two of the technicians are needed to hit twin fail-safe controls on each side of the massive monitoring panel, and a computer would begin shutting down the nuclear reactor.

Shutting down the nuclear reactor wasn't something

you wanted to do every day, though. The city of Los Angeles, California, would lose the electrical power supplied by this nuclear plant. And it would take 10 days to complete the shutdown and then get the nuclear core up and running again to restore power to the city.

But now, compared to the alternative, 10 days of black-out was a cheap price to pay. Because if the nuclear core exploded, its shock waves would kill every person within 30 miles. And with the wind blowing as it was, deadly radioactive dust would cover everyone else for another 20 miles beyond to the west.

Which meant all of Los Angeles. With the freeways jammed to a standstill by people trying to flee in panic.

In short, on any other day the one-in-a-hundred-million chance of a second lightning bolt would have led to an immediate and inconvenient shutdown.

Except for those uncooked hamburgers.

All three night-shift technicians had shared some take-out burgers as they carpooled to work that evening. And all three had gotten violently sick halfway through their shift. With one technician in the bathroom, the other two had stayed, doubled over in agony in front of the controls. That's why they had missed the first warning lights on the control board. Backup sirens had alerted them 30 seconds later. Sick or not, they knew what needed to be done: count down so that each could hit his own shutdown button. Both

buttons had to be pressed at exactly the same time to begin the shutdown.

But the retching and dizziness caused by the bad hamburgers had proved to be too much strain for the older of the two remaining technicians. He had fainted and fallen backward as he reached for the shutdown control.

How did I know this? All of it was well documented on the video loop that monitored the control room. With one technician in the bathroom and one unconscious on the control-room floor, the sole technician remaining at the control board was helpless. He could reach only one shutdown control at a time. When the technician returned from the bathroom two minutes later, the nuclear core was out of control.

That's why I'd been sent. I'm Tyce Sanders. Fourteen years old and very new to Earth. I was supposed to be on an urgent secret mission to the Moon: locating a missing pod of kids like me, who could control robots using their own brain waves. Instead, because of this Earth emergency, high-ranking Combat Force military officials had flown me in early this morning, 04.02.2040, by supersonic jet from New York City, where I was supposed to meet with the military higher-ups, to an L.A. military base, with my robot beside me.

As if this wasn't enough stress, just a day earlier my friend Ashley and I had nearly died. We and our robots helped stop a terrorist plot that would have killed all the supreme governors of the World United Federation—what used to be

called the *United Nations* when my dad was a kid. Ashley was in the desert mountains of Arizona, helping with the other robot-control kids who had just been rescued.

And I'd been sent here to California. With the thunderstorm that had begun the blowout long gone, the weather had been perfect for flying. As the jet circled the Los Angeles basin on its approach to the Combat Force base, the military division of the World United Federation, I had a clear view of the almost endless city sprawl and the autopilot vehicles that plugged the highways.

The city was in a valley, guarded by the jagged edges of the green-brown mountains against blue sky. I took in the view with awe, since the planet I'd lived on all my life—Mars—looked so different. There the mountains are red, and during the day, the sun is blue against a butterscotch-colored sky.

Nuclear plant officials had spoken to me by videophone almost the entire flight, explaining the situation and trying to prepare me for my task. Time was running short, so they couldn't afford to give me instructions on my arrival.

Once the jet touched ground in L.A., it had taken another two hours for the nuclear experts to coach me through the training session. Or, more precisely, for me to run the robot through its training session. Again and again and again. I would have only one chance. If I made the slightest mistake, I might actually trigger an earlier meltdown.

Which would kill me just as surely as everyone else in

the meltdown zone. Because I was only a mile away from the nuclear plant, controlling the robot by remote from my wheelchair.



Now the fourth and final door began to open, and I focused all my attention on the task ahead.

I'd already shut down the robot's heat sensors. Although the titanium skin of my robot was far more durable than my own skin, I didn't want my brain to panic, telling me my body was in a furnace.

A vertical bar of intense white heat widened as the door opened more.

I directed my robot to reach up with its right arm and flip down a protective shield of black glass to reduce the glare. Otherwise, with the light rays reaching my brain through the robot's video lenses, it would be like staring into the sun. I was already in a wheelchair. I didn't want to become blind too.

Mentally I braced myself to rush the robot forward. Even with the robot's asbestos cape for protection, the technicians figured it would not last for more than 30 seconds against the heat.

So that's all I had. Thirty seconds.

If the robot even continued to function once the radiation hit.

The technicians' biggest fear was that the intense radia-

tion would interfere with the robot's computer drive, which received signals from a transmitter that was directly linked to a plug in my spinal column, and from there to my brain. I shared that fear. If the robot failed to operate, the nuclear plant would blow. And no one could guess if the radiation interference might scramble the transmissions enough to affect my brain. You see, if a robot is zapped with an electrical current, the controller is knocked unconscious at a minimum or perhaps even killed. As for radiation interference . . . well, that could be far more deadly.

But with the door three-quarters open, I had no time to worry anymore.

I could see a huge glow through the black glass of my protective shield. Somewhere in the center of it was a rod the length and width of a person's arm. I had to pull it loose before the robot lost its function.

The door stopped opening, then sagged slightly. Had the heat melted its hinges?

I didn't hesitate. My robot was nearly six feet tall, 150 pounds, and incredibly strong. I surged forward, smashing into the door.

Pain instantly shot through me in my wheelchair. The virtual-reality program that enables me to control a robot is so real, it felt like my left arm had broken. I tried to get the robot's left arm to wave. It wouldn't. I'd demolished it against the door.

But the door was open, and I was through.

At the center of the huge glow filling the room was a rod-shaped whiteness almost unbearable to see, even with the black glass that protected the robot's video lenses.

I had to act quickly. The robot already felt sluggish.

I commanded it forward. It lurched, stopped, then lurched again.

Radiation interference!

I'd spent 10 seconds, and the robot was only halfway there.

With all my concentration, I commanded it to continue.

Then . . . *clunk*.

It had hit the far end. The core was within reach. All I had to do was somehow get the robot's right arm up and . . .

Another 10 seconds.

The robot's arm began to glow. Would it last long enough to . . . ?

The robot's titanium hand closed on the end of the core rod and fused instantly. That didn't matter. We'd expected that.

What I had to do now was roll backward and . . .

A sluggishness hit my own brain. Like black glue oozing into my skull.

Come on! I shouted mentally. *Come on! Think!*

In my mind, it felt like I was falling backward.

Backward. Backward.

And then the black glue froze all of my thoughts.

Silence squeezed my consciousness into total darkness.

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

IS DNA JUST ABOUT FINGERPRINTS?

Q: Is DNA just about fingerprints?

A: Your body comes with a complete set of instructions. This “master blueprint,” called a *genome*, is what told your mother’s body to make you into a human being instead of a frog or a dog or a cat. It’s what makes you *you*, instead of your brother or sister. And you’re still carrying that genome even as you grow up. It will never change.

A genome consists of *DNA* (you can think of DNA as the “building blocks of life”) and associated protein molecules contained in something called *chromosomes*. The nucleus of each human cell contains two sets of chromosomes. One’s from your dad. The other is from your mom.

The way it all works together is pretty complicated but

also very cool. And scientists are still trying to figure out how our bodies work. That's why the United States started the Human Genome Project in 1990—to figure out how to identify people's genes and map DNA. Currently it's being used to test babies for any genetic problems before they're born and to screen newborn babies. Mapping someone's DNA can even tell if someone is high-risk to develop cancer or confirm the diagnosis of a genetic disease. It can tell you how long you'll probably live. And it can even ID a criminal!

All of these are very good things, but there's also the risk of taking them too far. In Tyce's world of 2040, the Terratakers are arguing that everyone should be automatically tested, without having a say in it. And that means the DNA test results will have to be stored somewhere. That also means that those test results can fall into the wrong people's hands—people like Dr. Jordan, Luke Daab, and other Terratakers who want to identify skills, like those of the robot kids, that they can abuse.

It also means that suddenly those with “perfect” genes will become the highly prized people. Those with “imperfect” DNA—who have genetic defects or even those who aren't as “smart” as others—can become less important to the world. They can be considered “not fully human”—like the vice governor who seemed to imply that Tyce isn't as good as other humans because he's in a wheelchair. And that kind of thinking can lead to some scary things down the road. Like what

happened to the Jews in concentration camps in the days of World War II and Hitler. They were considered a “nonhuman” race just because they were Jews.

So although these leaps ahead in science, like the Human Genome Project, can be good and can identify what’s “unique” about you through your individual human genome, they can’t and don’t tell you what God does. He’s the one who has made you with your particular, individual genes. That means in his eyes you’re perfect—just as you are. No matter if your nose or teeth are crooked, you can’t throw a baseball, or you can’t run as fast as your sister. It also means that he has something special in mind for your life.

Just look at Tyce. Even though he’s in a wheelchair, he was able to save the lives of millions of people at the Los Angeles nuclear plant. And because of his special skills, he figured out a unique way to rescue the robot kids near the Moon.

It all comes down to this. Your DNA and chromosomes—what makes your physical body—aren’t what’s most important. Instead, what makes you really human is that you’ve been created by God, implanted with a soul, and that only you, as a human, can have a relationship with God.

Your DNA isn’t just about your fingerprints or your skills. It’s actually God’s fingerprint on you.

JOURNAL TWO

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH MATTER?

Q: *What's the matter with matter?*

A: When matter and antimatter touch, *bam!* They explode, destroying each other. You see, matter is made up of what's called *quarks*; antimatter is made of *antiquarks*. Although quarks and antiquarks are identical to each other in most aspects, their touching and the subsequent explosion results in a burst of energy.

Physicists tell us that in the first moments of creation, the energy levels were so high that immediately upon self-destruction, new quarks and antiquarks were formed. But as the universe began to cool, there was no way for new quarks and antiquarks to replace the destroyed ones.

Basically all this technical stuff means that according to the laws of physics, nothing in this universe should exist.

And that means no Moon, no sun, no Mars, no Earth. And certainly no you.

Instead, for reasons physicists can't figure out, for every 10 billion antiquarks, the beginning universe created 10 billion and one quarks. And that one extra quark per every 10 billion antiquarks led to an infinite amount of matter that became the planets, stars, and galaxies of the universe.

Q: How is it that so much matter managed to survive? Why is there some matter rather than no matter?

A: Science cannot give us that answer. In fact, the chances that matter could survive are, according to a bigwig Oxford mathematician, Roger Penrose, less than one in 10123. That's a 10 followed by 123 zeros, which means the chances are not likely at all!

Yet somehow, against those kinds of odds, the universe grew in a way to make life possible on Earth. To make *your* life possible.

No matter what, many scientists argue that this shows us that the creation of the universe was not a random event. Our bodies are composed of the dust of the stars. The carbon and hydrogen and oxygen and trace elements are arranged in such a way that we can breathe, that our eyes can interpret light waves, and that our brains can generate thoughts and give instructions to our bodies (much as Tyce's brain waves tell the robot how to move in this story).

When you think about this, it's not so startling to think that the world was not only created, but it continues to spin and move at the direction of an invisible Creator. A Creator who exists beyond what we can see and sometimes sense physically. A Creator who sustains us through daily miracles. Like the fact that the sunlight is not too strong and not too weak. It comes from a star the perfect distance away from Earth in order to allow plants to grow in the dirt that was once stardust. Not only do our bodies depend on these plants, we find nutrition in the protein of animals that eat these plants.

The life cycle of all matter on this planet exists because of things like this—sunlight, water, and dirt—all possible because of the creation events set in motion by God at the beginning of time. It's that simple. And also that wonderful.

So in the end, science can't totally answer the question of "what's the matter with matter?"

But God can. And everything you learn about science will only strengthen the ability of your brain to accept his existence. Even when things seem impossible (like the reaction of matter and antimatter), God will always find a way.

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.