



ASTOUNDING

SCIENCE

FICTION

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Into Thy Hands

by LESTER DEL REY

The trouble with robots was that, even when they had knowledge, they didn't have sense. They tended to know only what they were taught. That made one robot a religious maniac, and one a prisoner!

Illustrated by Williams

Simon Ames was old, and his face was bitter as only that of a confirmed idealist can be. Now a queer mixture of emotions crossed it momentarily, as he watched the workmen begin pouring cement to fill the small opening of the domelike structure, but his eyes returned again to the barely visible robot within.

"The last Ames' Model 10," he said ruefully to his son. "And even then I couldn't put in full memory coils! Only the physical sciences here; biologicals in the other male form, humanities in the female. I had to fall back on books and equipment to cover the rest. We're already totally converted to soldier robots, and no more humanoid experiments. Dan, is there no way conceivable war can be avoided?"

The young Rocket Force captain shrugged, and his mouth twitched

unhappily. "None, Dad. They've fed their people on the glories of carnage and loot so long they have to find some pretext to use their hordes of warrior robots."

"The stupid, blind idiots!" The old man shuddered. "Dan, it sounds like old wives' fears, but this time it's true; unless we somehow avoid or win this war quickly, there'll be no one left to wage another. I've spent my life on robots, I know what they can do—and should never be made to do! Do you think I'd waste a fortune on these storehouses on a mere whim?"

"I'm not arguing, Dad. God knows, I feel the same!" Dan watched the workmen pour the last concrete, to leave no break in the twenty-foot thick walls. "Well, at least if anyone does survive, you've done all you can for them. Now it's

in the hands of God!"

Simon Ames nodded, but there was no satisfaction on his face as he turned back with his son. "All we could—and never enough! And God? I wouldn't even know which of the three to pray survives—science, life, culture." The words sighed into silence, and his eyes went black to the filled-in tunnel.

Behind them, the ugly dome hugged the ground while the rains of God and of man's destruction washed over it. Snow covered it and melted, and other things built up that no summer sun could disperse, until the ground was level with its top. The forest crept forward, and the seasons flicked by in unchanging changes that pyramided decade upon century. Inside, the shining case of SA-10 waited immovably.

And at last the lightning struck, blasting through a tree, downward into the dome, to course through a cable, short-circuit a ruined timing switch, and spend itself on the ground below.

Above the robot, a cardinal burst into song, and he looked up, his stolid face somehow set in a look of wonder. For a moment, he listened, but the bird had flown away at the sight of his lumbering figure. With a tired little sigh, he went on, crashing through the brush of the forest until he came back near the entrance to his cave.

The sun was bright above, and he studied it thoughtfully; the word he knew, and even the complex carbon-chain atomic breakdown that

went on within it. But he did not know how he knew, or why.

For a second longer he stood there silently, then opened his mouth for a long wailing cry. "Adam! Adam, come forth!" But there were doubts in the oft-repeated call now and the pose of his head as he waited. And again only the busy sounds of the forest came back to him.

"Or God? God, do you hear me?"

But the answer was the same. A field mouse slipped out from among the grass and a hawk soared over the woods. The wind rustled among the trees, but there was no sign from the Creator. With a lingering backward look, he turned slowly to the tunnel he had made and wriggled back down it into his cave.

Inside, light still came from a single unbroken bulb, and he let his eyes wander, from the jagged breach in the thick wall, across to where some ancient blast had tossed crumpled concrete against the opposite side. Between lay only ruin and dirt. Once, apparently, that half had been filled with books and films, but now there were only rotted fragments of bindings and scraps of useless plastic tape mixed with broken glass in the filth of the floor.

Only on the side where he had been was the ruin less than complete. There stood the instruments of a small laboratory, many still useful, and he named them one by one, from the purring atomic generator to the projector and screen set up on one table.

Here, and in his mind, were order

and logic, and the world above had conformed to an understandable pattern. He alone seemed to be without purpose. How had he come here, and why had he no memory of himself? If there was no purpose, why was he sentient at all? The questions held no discoverable answers.

There were only the cryptic words on the scrap of plastic tape preserved inside the projector. But what little of them was understandable was all he had; he snapped off the light and squatted down behind the projector, staring intently at the screen as he flicked the machine on.

There was a brief fragment of some dark swirling, and then dots and bright spheres, becoming suns and planets that spun out of nothing into a celestial pattern. "In the beginning," said a voice quietly, "God created the heavens and the earth." And the screen filled with that, and the beginnings of life."

"Symbolism?" the robot muttered. Geology and astronomy were part of his knowledge, at least; and yet, in a mystic beauty, this was true enough. Even the lifeforms above had fitted with those being created on the screen.

Then a new voice, not unlike his own resonant power, filled the speaker. "Let us go down and create man in our image!" And a mist of light that symbolized God appeared, shaping man from the dust of the ground and breathing life into him. Adam grew lonely, and Eve was made from his rib, to be shown Eden and tempted by the serpentine mist of darkness; and

she tempted the weak Adam, until God discovered their sin and banished them. But the banishment ended in a blur of ruined film as the speaker went dead.

The robot shut it off, trying to read its moaning. It *must* concern him, since he alone was here to see it. And how could that be unless he were one of its characters? Not Eve or Satan, but perhaps Adam: but then God should have answered him. On the other hand, if he were God, then perhaps the record was unfulfilled and Adam not yet formed, so that no answer could be given.

He nodded slowly to himself. Why should he not have rested here with this film to remind him of his plan, while the world readied itself for Adam? And now, awake again, he must go forth and create man in his own image! But first, the danger of which the film had warned must be removed.

He straightened, determination coming into his steps as he squirmed purposefully upwards. Outside the sun was still shining, and he headed toward it into the grossly unkempt Eden forest. Now stealth came to him as he moved silently through the undergrowth, like a great metal wraith, with eyes that darted about and hands ready to snap forward at lightning speed.

And at last he saw it, curled up near a large rock. It was smaller than he had expected, a mere six feet of black, scaly suppleness, but the shape and forked tongue were unmistakable. He was on it with a blur of motion and a cry of



elation; and when he moved away, the lifeless object on the rock was forever past corrupting the most naïve Eve.

The morning sun found the robot bent over what had once been a wild pig, a knife moving precisely in his hand. Delicately he opened the heart and manipulated it, studying the valve action. Life, he was deciding, was highly complex, and a momentary doubt struck him. It had seemed easy on the film! And at times he wondered why he should know the complex order of the heavens but nothing of this other creation of his.

But at last he buried the pig's remains, and settled down among the varicolored clays he had collected, his fingers moving deftly as he rolled a white type into bones for the skeleton, followed by a red clay heart. The tiny nerves and blood vessels were beyond his means, but that could not be helped; and surely if he had created the gigantic sun from nothing. Adam could rise from the crudeness of his sculpturing.

The sun climbed higher, and the details multiplied. Inside the last organ was complete, including the grayish lump that was the brain, and he began the red sheathing of muscles. Here more thought was required to adapt the arrangement of the pig to the longer limbs and different structure of this new body; but his mind pushed grimly on with the mathematics involved, and at last it was finished.

Unconsciously he began a crooning imitation of the bird songs as

his fingers molded the colored clays to hide the muscles and give smooth symmetry to the body. He had been forced to guess at the color, though the dark lips on the film had obviously been red from blood below them.

Twilight found him standing back, nodding approval of the work. It was a faithful copy of the film Adam, waiting only the breath of life; and that must come from him, be a part of the forces that flowed through his own metal nerves and brain.

Gently he fastened wires to the head and feet of the clay body; then he threw back his chest plate to fasten the other ends to his generator terminals, willing the current out into the figure lying before him. Weakness flooded through him instantly, threatening to black out his consciousness, but he did not begrudge the energy. Steam was spurting up and covering the figure as a mist had covered Adam, but it slowly subsided, and he stopped the current, stealing a second for relief as the full current coursed back through him. Then softly he unhooked the wires and drew them back.

"Adam!" The command rang through the forest, vibrant with his urgency. "Adam, rise up! I, your creator, command it!"

But the figure lay still, and now he saw great cracks in it, while the noble smile had baked into a gaping leer. There was no sign of life! It was dead, as the ground from which it came.

He squatted over it, moaning, weaving from side to side, and his fingers tried to draw the ugly cracks together, only to cause greater ruin. And at last he stood up, stamping his legs until all that was left was a varicolored smear on the rock. Still he stamped and moaned as he destroyed the symbol of his failure. The moon mocked down at him with a wise and cynical face, and he howled at it in rage and anguish, to be answered by a lonely owl, querying his identity.

A powerless God, or a Godless Adam! Things had gone so well in the film as Adam rose from the dust of the ground—

But the film was symbolism, and he had taken it literally! Of course he had failed. The pigs were not dust, but colloidal jelly complexes. And they knew more than he, for there had been little ones that proved they could somehow pass the breath of life along.

Suddenly he squared his shoulders and headed into the forest again. Adam should yet rise to ease his loneliness. The pigs knew the secret, and he could learn it; what he needed now were more pigs, and they should not be too hard to obtain.

But two weeks later it was a worried robot who sat watching his pigs munch contentedly at their food. Life, instead of growing simpler, had become more complicated. The fluoroscope and repaired electron microscope had shown him much, but always something was lacking. Life seemed to begin only with life; for even the two basic cells were alive in some manner

strangely different from his own. Of course God-life might differ from animal-life, but—

With a shrug he dismissed his metaphysics and turned back to the laboratory, avoiding the piglets that ambled trustingly under his feet. Slowly he drew out the last ovum from the nutrient fluid in which he kept it, placing it on a slide and under the optical microscope. Then, with a little platinum filament, he brought a few male spermatozoa toward the ovum, his fingers moving surely through the thousandths of an inch needed to place it.

His technique had grown from failures, and now the sperm cell found and pierced the ovum. As he watched, the round single cell began to lengthen and divide across the middle. This was going to be one of his successes! There were two, then four cells, and his hands made lightning, infinitesimal gestures, keeping it within the microscope field while he changed the slide for a thin membrane, lined with thinner tubes to carry oxygen, food, and tiny amounts of the stimulating and controlling hormones with which he hoped to shape its formation.

Now there were eight cells, and he waited feverishly for them to reach toward the membrane. But they did not! As he watched, another division began, but stopped; the cells had died again. All his labor and thought had been futile, as always.

He stood there silently, relinquishing all pretensions to godhood. His mind abdicated, letting the

dream vanish into nothingness; and there was nothing to take its place and give him purpose and reason—only a vacuum instead of a design.

Dully he unbarred the rude cage and began chasing the grumbling, reluctant pigs out and up the tunnel, into the forest and away. It was a dull morning, with no sun apparent, and it matched his mood as the last one disappeared, leaving him doubly lonely. They had been poor companions, but they had occupied his time, and the little ones had appealed to him. Now even they were gone.

Wearily he dropped his six hundred pounds onto the turf, staring at the black clouds over him. An ant climbed up his body inquisitively, and he watched it without interest. Then it, too, was gone.

"Adam!" The cry came from the woods, ringing and compelling. "Adam, come forth!"

"God!" With metal limbs that were awkward and unsteady, he jerked upright. In the dark hour of his greatest need, God had finally come! "God, here I am!"

"Come forth, Adam. Adam! Come forth, Adam!"

With a wild cry, the robot dashed forward toward the woods, an electric tingling suffusing him. He was no longer unwanted, no longer a lost chip in the storm. God had come for him. He stumbled on, tripping over branches, crashing through bushes, heedless of his noise: let God know his eagerness. Again the call came, now further aside, and he turned a bit, lumbering forward.

"Here I am, I'm coming!"

God would ease his troubles and explain why he was so different from the pigs; God would know all that. And then there'd be Eve, and no more loneliness! He'd have trouble keeping her from the Tree of Knowledge, but he wouldn't mind that!

And from still a different direction the call reached him. Perhaps God was not pleased with his noise. The robot quieted his steps and went forward reverently. Around him the birds sang, and now the call came again, ringing and close. He hastened on, striving to blend speed with quiet in spite of his weight.

The pause was longer this time, but when the call came it was almost overhead. He bowed lower and crept to the ancient oak from which it came, uncertain, half-afraid, but burning with anticipation.

"Come forth, Adam, Adam!" The sound was directly above, but God did not manifest Himself visibly. Slowly the robot looked up through the boughs of the tree. Only a bird was there—and from its open beak the call forth again. "Adam, Adam!"

A mockingbird he'd heard imitating the other birds, now mimicking his own voice and words! And he'd followed that through the forest, hoping to find God! He screeched suddenly at the bird, his rage so shrill that it leaped from the branch in hasty flight, to perch in another tree and cock its head at him. "God?" it asked in his voice, and changed to the raucous call of a jay.

The robot slumped back against the tree, refusing to let hope ebb wholly from him. He knew so little of God; might not He have used the bird to call him here? At least the tree was not unlike the one under which God has put Adam to sleep before creating Eve.

First sleep, *then* the coming of God! He stretched out determinedly, trying to imitate the pigs' torpor, fighting back his mind's silly attempts at speculation as to where his rib might be. It was slow and hard, but he persisted grimly, hypnotizing himself into mental numbness; and bit by bit, the sounds of the forest faded to only a trickle in his head. Then that, too, was stilled.

He had no way of knowing how long it lasted, but suddenly he sat up groggily, to the rumble of thunder, while a torrent of lashing rain washed in blinding sheets over his eyes. For a second, he glanced quickly at his side, but there was no scar.

Fire forked downward into a nearby tree, throwing splinters of it against him. This was definitely not according to the film! He groped to his feet, flinging some of the rain from his face, to stumble forward toward his cave. Again lightning struck, nearer, and he increased his pace to a driving run. The wind lashed the trees, snapping some with wild ferocity, and it took the full power of his magnets to forge ahead at ten miles an hour instead of his normal fifty. Once it caught him unaware, and crashed him down over a rock with a wild clang of

metal, but it could not harm him, and he stumbled on until he reached the banked-up entrance of his muddy tunnel.

Safe inside, he dried himself with the infrared lamp, sitting beside the hole and studying the wild fury of the gale. Surely its furor held no place for Eden, where dew dampened the leaves in the evening under caressing, musical breezes!

He nodded slowly, his clenched jaws relaxing. This could not be Eden, and God expected him there. Whatever evil knowledge of Satau had lured him here and stolen his memory did not matter; all that counted was to return, and that should be simple, since the Garden lay among rivers. Tonight he'd prepare here out of the storm, and tomorrow he'd follow the stream in the woods until it led him where God waited.

With the faith of a child, he turned back and began tearing the thin berylite panels from his laboratory tables and cabinets, picturing his homecoming and Eve. Outside the storm raged and tore, but he no longer heard it. Tomorrow he would start for home! The word was misty in his mind, as all the nicer words were, but it had a good sound, free of loneliness, and he liked it.

Six hundred long endless years had dragged their slow way into eternity, and even the tough concrete floor was pitted by those centuries of pacing and waiting. Time had eroded all hopes and plans and wonder, and now there was only



numb despair, too old to vent itself in rage or madness, even.

The female robot slumped motionlessly on the atomic excavator, her eyes centered aimlessly across the dome, beyond the tiers of books and films and the hulking machines that squatted eternally on the floor. There a pickax lay, and her eyes rested on it listlessly; once, when the dictionary revealed its picture and purpose, she had thought it the key to escape, but now it was only another symbol of futility.

She wandered over aimlessly, picking it up by its two metal handles and striking the wooden blade against the wall; another splinter chipped from the wood, and century-old dust dropped to the floor, but that offered no escape. Nothing did. Mankind and her fellow robots must have perished long ago, leaving her neither hope for freedom nor use for it if it were achieved.

Once she had planned and schemed with all her remarkable knowledge of psychology to restore man's heritage, but now the note-littered table was only a mockery; she thrust out a weary hand—

And froze into a metal statue! Faintly, through all the metal mesh and concrete, a dim, weak signal trickled into the radio that was part of her!

With all her straining energy, she sent out an answering call; but there was no response. As she stood rigidly for long minutes, the signals grew stronger, but remained utterly aloof and unaware of her. Now some sudden shock seemed to cut

through them, raising their power until the thoughts of another robot mind were abruptly clear—thoughts without sense, clothed in madness! And even as the lunacy registered, they began to fade; second by second, they dimmed into the distance and left her alone again and hopeless!

With a wild, clanging yell, she threw the useless pickax at the wall, watching it rebound in echoing din. But she was no longer aimless; her eyes had noted chipped concrete breaking away with the sharp metal point, and she caught the pick before it could touch the floor, seizing the nub of wood in small, strong hands. The full force of her magnate lifted and swung, while her feet kicked aside the rubble that came cascading down from the force of her blows.

Beyond that rapidly crumbling lay freedom and—madness! Surely there could be no human life in a world that could drive a robot mad, but if there were— She thrust back the picture and went savagely on attacking the massive wall.

The sun shone on a drenched forest filled with havoc from the storm, to reveal the male robot pacing tirelessly along the banks of the shallow stream. In spite of the heavy burden he carried, his legs moved swiftly now, and when he came to sandy stretches, or clear land that bore only turf, his great strides lengthened still further; already he had dallied too long with delusions in this unfriendly land.

Now the stream joined a larger

one, and he stopped, dropping his ungainly bundle and ripping it apart. Scant minutes later, he was pushing an assembled berylite boat out and climbing in. The little generator from the electron microscope purred softly and a steam jet began hissing underneath; it was crude, but efficient, as the boiling wake behind him testified, and while slower than his fastest pace, there would be no detours or impassable barriers to bother him.

The hours sped by and the shadows lengthened again, but now the stream was wider, and his hopes increased, though he watched the banks idly, not yet expecting Eden. Then he rounded a bend to jerk upright and head toward shore, observing something totally foreign to the landscape. As he beached the boat, and drew nearer, he saw a great gaping hole bored into the earth for a hundred feet in depth and a quarter mile in diameter, surrounded by obviously artificial ruins. Tall bent shafts stuck up haphazard, amid jumbles of concrete and bits of artifacts damaged beyond recognition. Nearby a pole leaned at a silly angle, bearing a sign.

He scratched the corrosion off and made out dim words:

Welcome to Hoganville.
Pop. 1,876.

It meant nothing to him, but the ruins fascinated him. This must be some old trick of Satan; such ugliness could be nothing else.

Shaking his head, he turned back to the boat, to speed on while the

stars came out. Again he came to ruins, larger and harder to see, since the damage were more complete and the forest had claimed most of it. He was only sure because of the jagged pits in which not even a blade of grass would grow. And sometimes as the night passed there were smaller pits, as if some single object had been blasted out of existence. He gave up the riddle of such things, finally; it was no concern of his.

When morning came again, the worst ruins were behind, and the river was wide and strong, suggesting that the trip must be near its end. Then the faint salty tang of the ocean reached him, and he whooped loudly, scanning the country for an observation point.

Ahead, a low hill broke the flat country, topped by a rounded bowl of green, and he made toward it. The boat crunched on gravel, and he was springing off over the turf to the hill, up it, and onto the bowl-shaped top that was covered with vines. Here the whole lower course of the river was visible, with no more large branches in the twenty-five miles to the sea. The land was pleasant and gentle, and it was not hard to imagine Eden out there.

But now for the first time, as he started down, he noticed that the mound was not part of the hill as it had seemed. It was of the same gray-green concrete as the walls of the cave from which he had broken, like a bird from an egg.

And here was another such thing, like an egg unhatched yet but al-

ready cracking, as the gouged-out pit on its surface near him testified. For a moment, the idea contained in the figure of speech staggered him, and then he was ripping away the concealing vines and dropping into the hole, reaching for a small plate pinned to an unharmed section nearby. It was a poor tool, but if Eve were trapped inside, needing help to break the shell, it would do.

"To you who may survive the holocaust, I, Simon Ames—" The words caught his eyes, drawing his attention to the plate in spite of his will, their terse strangeness pulling his gaze across them. "—dedicate this. There is no easy entrance, but you will expect no easy heritage. Force your way, take what is within, use it! To you who need it and will work for it, I have left all knowledge that was—"

Knowledge! Knowledge, forbidden by God! Satan had put before his path the unquestioned thing meant by the Tree of Knowledge symbol, concealed as a false egg, and he had almost been caught! A few minutes more—! He shuddered, and backed out, but optimism was freshening inside him again. Let it be the Tree! That meant this was really part of Eden, and being forewarned by God's marker, he had no fear for the wiles of Satan, alive or dead.

With long, loping strides he headed down the hill toward the meadows and woods, leaving the now useless boat behind. He would enter Eden on his own feet, as God had made him!

Half an hour later he was humming happily to himself as he passed beside lush fields, rich with growing things, along a little woodland path. Here was order and logic, as they should be. This was surely Eden!

And to confirm it came Eve! She was coming down the trail ahead, her hair floating behind, and some loose stuff draped over her hips and breasts, but the form underneath was Woman, beautiful and unmistakable. He drew back out of sight, suddenly timid and uncertain, only vaguely wondering how she came here before him. Then she was beside him, and he moved impulsively, his voice a whisper of ecstasy!

"Eve!"

"Oh, Dan! Dan!" It was a wild shriek that cut the air, and she was rushing away in panic, into the deeper woods. He shook his head in bewilderment, while his own legs began a more forceful pumping after her. He was almost upon her when he saw the serpent, alive and stronger than before!

But not for long! As a single gasp broke from her, one of his arms lifted her aside, while the other snapped out to pinch the fanged head completely off the body. His voice was gently reproving as he put her down. "You shouldn't have fled to the serpent, Eve!"

"To—Ugh! But— You could have killed me before it struck!" The taut whiteness of fear was fading from her face, replaced by defiance and doubt.

"Killed you?"

"You're a robot! Dan!" Her

words cut off as a brawny figure emerged from the underbrush, an ax in one hand and a magnificent dog at his heels. "Dan, he saved me . . . but he's a robot!"

"I saw, Syl. Steady! Edge this way, if you can. Good! They sometimes get passive streaks, I've heard. Shep!"

The dog's thick growl answered, but his eyes remained glued to the robot. "Yeah, Dan?"

"Get the people; just yell robot and hike back. O. K., scram! You . . . what do you want?"

SA-10 grunted harshly, hunching his shoulders. "Things that don't exist! Companionship and a chance to use my strength and the science I know. Maybe I'm not supposed to have such things, but that's what I wanted!"

"Hm-m-m. There are fairy stories about friendly robots hidden somewhere to help us, at that. We could use help. What's your name, and where from?"

Bitterness crept into the robot's voice as he pointed up river. "From the sunward side. So far, I've only found who I'm not!"

"So? Meant to get up there myself when the colony got settled." Dan paused, eyeing the metal figure speculatively. "We lost our books in the hell-years, mostly, and the survivors weren't exactly technicians. So while we do all right with animals, agriculture, medicine and such, we're pretty primitive otherwise. If you really do know the sciences, why not stick around?"

The robot had seen too many

hopes shattered like his clay man to believe wholly in this promise of purpose and companionship, but his voice caught as he answered. "You . . . want me?"

"Why not? You're a storehouse of knowledge, Say-Ten, and we—"

"Satan?"

"Your name; there on your chest." Dan pointed with his left hand, his body suddenly tense. "See? Right there!"

And now, as SA-10 craned his neck, the foul letters were visible, high on his chest! Ess, aye—

His first warning was the ax that crashed against his chest, to rock him back on his heels, and come driving down again, powered by muscles that seemed almost equal to his own. It struck again, and something snapped inside him. All the strength vanished, and he collapsed to the ground with a jarring crash, knocking his eyelids closed. When he lay there, unable even to open them.

He did not try, but lay waiting almost eagerly for the final blows that would finish him. Satan, the storehouse of knowledge, the tempter of men—the one person he had learned to hate! He'd come all this way to find a name and a purpose; now he had them! No wonder God had locked him away in a cave to keep him from men.

"Dead! That little fairy story threw him off guard." There was a tense chuckle from the man. "Hope his generator's still O.K. We could heat every house in the



settlement with that. Wonder where his hideout was?"

"Like the one up north with all the weapons hidden? Oh, Dan!" A strange smacking sound accompanied that, and then her voice sobered. "We'd better get back for help in hauling him."

Their feet moved away, leaving the robot still motionless but no longer passive. The Tree of Knowledge, so easily seen without the vine covering over the hole, was barely twenty miles away, and no casual search could miss it! He had to destroy it first!

But the little battery barely could maintain his consciousness, and the generator no longer served him. Delicate detectors were sending their messages through his nerves, assuring him it was functioning properly under automatic check, but beyond his control. Part of the senseless signaling device within him must have been defective, unless the baking of the clay man had somehow overloaded a part of it, and now it was completely wrecked, shorting aside all the generator control impulses, leaving him unable to move a finger.

Even when he blanked his mind almost completely out, the battery could not power his hands. His evil work was done; now he would heat their house, while they sought the temptation he had offered them. And he could do nothing to stop it. God denied him the chance to right the wrong he had done, even.

Bitterly he prayed on, while strange noises sounded near him and he felt himself lifted and carried bumpily at a rapid rate. God would not hear him! And at last he stopped, while the bumping went on to whatever end he was destined. Finally even that stopped, and there were a few moments of absolute quiet.

"Listen! I know you still live!" It was a gentle, soothing voice, hypnotically compelling, that broke in on the dark swirls of his thoughts. Brief thoughts of God crossed his mind, but it was a female voice, which must mean one of the settlement women who must have be-

lieved him and be trying to save him in secret. It came again. "Listen and believe me! You *can* move—a very very little, but enough for me to see. Try to repair yourself, and let me be the strength in your hands. Try! Ah, your arm!"

It was inconceivable that she could follow his imperceptible movements, and yet he felt his arm lifted and placed on his chest as the thought crossed his mind. But it was none of his business to question how or why. All his energy must be devoted to getting his strength before the men could find the Tree!

"So . . . I turn this . . . this nut. And the other — There, the plate is off. What do I do now?"

That stopped him. His life force had been fatal to a pig, and probably would kill a woman. Yet she trusted him. He dared not move—but the idea must have been father to the act, for his fingers were brushed aside and her arms scraped over his chest, to be followed by an instant flood of strength pouring through him.

Her fingers had slipped over his eyes, but he did not need them as he ripped the damaged receiver from its welds and tossed it aside. Now there was worry in her voice, over the crooning cadence she tried to maintain. "Don't be too surprised at what you may see. Everything's all right!"

"Everything's all right!" he repeated dutifully, lingering over the words as his voice sounded again in his ears. For a moment more, while

he reattached his plate, he let her hold his eyes closed. "Woman, who are you?"

"Eve. Or at least, Adam, those names will do for us." And the fingers withdrew, though she remained out of sight behind him.

But there was enough for the first glance before him. In spite of the tiers of bookcases and film magazines, the machines, and the size of the laboratory, this was plainly the double of his own cave, circled with the same concrete walls! That could only mean the Tree!

With a savage lurch, he was facing the rescuer, seeing another robot, smaller, more graceful, and female in form, calling to all the hunger and loneliness he had known! But those emotions had betrayed him before, and he forced them back bitterly. There could be no doubt while the damning letters spelled out her name. Satan was male and female, and Evil had gone forth to rescue its kind!

Some of the warring hell of emotions must have shown in his movements, for she was retreating before him, her hands fumbling up to cover the marks at which he stared. "Adam, no! The man read it wrong—dreadfully wrong. It's not a name. We're machines, and all machines have model numbers, like these. Satan wouldn't advertise his name. And I never had evil intentions!"

"Neither did I!" He bit the words out, stumbling over the objects on the floor as he edged her

back slowly into a blind alley, while striving to master his own rebellious emotions at what he must do. "Evil must be destroyed! Knowledge is forbidden to men!"

"Not all knowledge! Wait, let me finish! Any condemned person has a right to a few last words— It was the Tree of Knowledge of *Good and Evil*. God called it that! And He had to forbid them to eat, because they couldn't know which was the good; don't you see, He was only protecting them until they were older and able to choose for themselves! Only Satan gave them evil fruit—hate and *murder* — to ruin them. Would you call healing the sick, good government, or improving other animals evil? That's knowledge, Adam, glorious knowledge God wants man to have. Can't you see?"

For a second as she read his answer, she turned to flee; then, with a little sobbing cry, she was facing him again, unresisting. "All right, murder me! Do you think death frightens me after being imprisoned here for six hundred years with no way to break free? Only get it over with!"

Surprise and the sheer audacity of the lie held his hands as his eyes darted from the atomic excavator to a huge drill, and a drum marked as explosives. And yet—even that cursory glance could not overlook the worn floor and thousand marks of age-long occupation, though the surface of the dome had been unbroken a few hours before. Reluctantly, his eyes swung back to the

excavator, and hers followed.

"Useless! The directions printed on it say to move the thing marked 'Orifice Control' to zero before starting. It can't be moved!"

She stopped, abruptly speechless, as his fingers lifted the handle from its ratchet and spun it easily back to zero! Then she was shaking her head in defeat and lifting listless hands to help him with the unfastening of her chest plate. There was no color left in her voice.

"Six hundred years because I didn't lift a handle! Just because I have absolutely no conception of mechanics, where all men have some instinct they take for granted. They'd have mastered these machines in time and learned to read meaning into the books I memorized without even understanding the titles. But I'm like a dog tearing at a door, with a simple latch over his nose. Well, that's that. Good-by, Adam!"

But perversely, now that the terminals lay before him, he hesitated. After all, the instructions had not mentioned the ratchet; it was too obvious to need mention, but— He tried to picture such ignorance, starting at one of the Elementary Radio books above him. "Application of a Cavity Resonator." Mentally, he could realize that a nonscience translation was meaningless: Use of a sound producer or strengthener in a hole! And then the overlooked factor struck him.

"But you did get out!"

"Because I lost my temper and threw the pickax. That's how I found the metal was the blade, not the wood. The only machines I could use were the projector and typer I was meant to use—and the typer broke!"

"Um-m-m." He picked the little machine up, noting the yellowed incomplete page still in it, even as he slipped the carriage tension cord back on its hook. But his real attention was devoted to the cement dust ground into the splintered handle of the pick.

No man or robot could be such a complete and hopeless dope, and yet he no longer doubted. She was a robot moron! And if knowledge were evil, then surely she belonged to God! All the horror of his contemplated murder vanished, leaving his mind clean and weak before the relief that flooded him as he motioned her out.

"All right, you're not evil. You can go."

"And you?"

And himself? Before, as Satan, her arguments would have been plausible, and he had discounted them. But now—it *had* been the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil! And yet—

"Dogs!" She caught at him, dragging him to the entrance where the baying sound was louder. "They're hunting you, Adam—dozens of them!"

He nodded, studying the distant forms of men on horseback, while his fingers busied themselves with

a pencil and scrap of paper. "And they'll be here in twenty minutes. Good or evil, they must not find what's here. Eve, there's a boat by the river; pull the red handle the way you want to go, hard for fast, a light pull for slow. Here's a map to my cave, and you'll be safe there."

Almost instantly, he was back at the excavator and in its saddle, his fingers flashing across its panel; its heavy generator bellowed gustily, and the squat, heavy machine began twisting through the narrow isles and ramming obstructions aside. Once outside, where he could use its full force without danger of backwash, ten minutes would leave only a barren hill; and the generator could be overdriven by adjustment to melt itself and the machine into useless slag.

"Adam!" She was spraddling into the saddle behind him, shouting over the roar of the thin blade of energy that was enlarging the tunnel.

"Go on, get away, Eve! You can't stop me!"

"I don't want to—they're not ready for such machines as this, yet! And between us, we can rebuild everything here, anyhow. Adam?"

He grunted uneasily, unable to turn away from the needle beam. It was hard enough trying to think without her distraction, knowing that he dared not take chances and must destroy himself, while her words and the instincts within him

fought against his resolution. "You talk too much!"

"And I'll talk a lot more, until you behave sensibly! You'll make your mind sick, trying to decide now; come up the river for six months with me. You can't do any harm there, even if you are Satan! Then, when you've thought it over, Adam, you can do what you like. But not now!"

"For the last time, will you go?" He dared not think now, while he was testing his way through the flawed, cracked cement, and yet he could not quiet his mind to her words, that went on and on. "GO!"

"Not without you! Adam, my receiver isn't defective; I knew you'd try to kill me when I rescued you! Do you think I'll give up so easily now?"

He snapped the power to silence with a rude hand, flinging around to face her. "You knew—and still saved me? Why?"

"Because I needed you, and the world needs you. You had to live, even if you killed me!"

Then the generator roared again, knifing its way through the last few inches, and he swung out of the dome and began turning it about. As the savage bellow of full power poured out of the main orifice, he turned his head to her and nodded.

She might be the dumbest robot in creation, but she was also the sweetest. It was wonderful to be needed and wanted!

And behind him, Eve nodded to herself, blessing Simon Ames for



listing psychology as a humanity. In six months, she could complete his reeducation and still have time to recite the whole of the Book he knew as a snatch of film. But not yet! Most certainly not Leviticus yet; Genesis would give her trouble enough.

It was wonderful to be needed and wanted!

Spring had come again, and Adam sat under one of the budding trees, idly feeding one of the new crop of piglets as Eve's hands moved swiftly, finishing what were to be his clothes, carefully copied from those of Dan.

They were almost ready to go south and mingle with men in the task of leading the race back to its heritage. Already the yielding plastic he had synthesized and she had molded over them was a normal part of them, and the tiny magnetic muscles he had installed no longer needed thought to reveal their emotions in human expressions. He might have been only an uncommonly handsome man as he stood up and went over to her.

"Still hunting God?" she asked lightly, but there was no worry on her face. The metaphysical binge was long since cured.

A thoughtful smile grew on his face as he began donning the clothes. "He is still where I found Him—Something inside us that needs no hunting. No, Eve, I was wishing the other robot had survived. Even though we found no trace of his dome where your records indicated,

I still feel he should be with us."

"Perhaps he is, in spirit, since you insist robots have souls. Where's your faith, Adam?"

But there was no mockery inside her. Souls or not, Adam's God had been very good to them.

And far to the south, an aged figure limped over rubble to the face of a cliff. Under his hands, a cleverly concealed door swung open, and he pushed inward, closing and barring it behind him, and heading down the narrow tunnel to a rounded cavern at its end. It had been years since he had been there, but the place was still home to him as he creaked down onto a bench and began removing tattered, travel-stained clothes. Last of all, he pulled a mask and gray wig from his head, to reveal the dented and worn body of the third robot.

He sighed wearily as he glanced at the few tattered books and papers he had salvaged from the ruinous growth of stalagmites and stalactites within the chamber, and at the corroded switch the unplanned dampness had shorted seven hundred years before. And finally, his gaze rested on his greatest treasure. It was faded, even under the plastic cover, but the bitter face of Simon Ames still gazed out in recognizable form.

The third robot nodded toward it with a strange mixture of old familiarity and ever-new awe. "Over two thousand miles in my condition, Simon Ames, to check on a story I heard in one of the

colonies, and months of searching for them. But I had to know. But they're good for the world. They'll bring all the things I couldn't, and their thoughts are young and strong, as the race is young and strong."

For a moment, he stared about the chamber and to the tunnel his adapted bacteria had eaten toward the outside world, resting again on the picture. Then he cut off ~~the~~ the main generator and settled down in the darkness.

"Seven hundred years since I came out to find man extinct on the earth," he muttered to the picture. "Four hundred since I learned enough to dare attempt his recreation, and over three hundred since

the last of my superfrozen human ova grew to success. Now I've done my part. Man has an unbroken tradition back to your race, with no knowledge of the break. He's strong and young and fruitful, and he has new leaders, better than I could ever be alone. I can do no more for him!"

For a moment there was only the sound of his hands sliding against metal, and then a faint sigh. "Into my hands, Simon Ames, you gave your race. Now, into Thy Hands, God of that race, if you exist as my brother believes, I commend him—and my spirit."

Then there was a click as his hands found the switch to his generator, and final silence.

THE END.