

The answer is robots

I pushed Buff as he tried to shoot Hoo-Woo. The laser gun burnt a hole in the plastic wall, but it didn't hit Hoo-Woo.

Buff was screaming and the whites of his eyes were showing. He fell on the ground and water ran out of his mouth. He was crazy. I remembered the way I had gone crazy when I first came into the Star Zoo. It was seeing the animals. It was the Book of Remembering coming to life. It made people go crazy.

I hid Buff's laser gun and used some long plants to tie him up. Hee-Haw sat on him while I did it. A bell was ringing and all the animals started looking for something. What were they looking for?

A bird found it. It was the hole where the laser had burnt through the wall. The Star Zoo was losing air. I could hear the air escaping.

It was the computer's job to check for damage like that. Then it rang the bell. But how could the animals mend the hole?

Eee-Eee went to a pipe on the wall and waited. Warm wet plastic came out of the end of the pipe. The squirrel held little bits of the plastic and ran quickly up the wall. She put the soft plastic over the hole and ran down to get more plastic from the pipe.

In one minute the hole was covered. Eee-Eee went on working until the bell stopped ringing.

The computer and the animals worked together to mend the Star Zoo. After fifteen thousand years they were very good at it!

Buff had crazy eyes. The animals didn't want to go near him so I took care of him. I hoped he would get better soon.

But he didn't get better. Three days later he still wanted to kill and destroy every animal that he saw. He thought I was an animal too.

He never spoke. Perhaps he had forgotten how to speak. He wouldn't touch food or water.

I didn't know what to do. In the end I went to see the computer with Hee-Haw and the robot.

There was the same terrible light and the fear. But I knew it was ultrasonics that made me afraid. The robot didn't have any feelings, of course. The robot and I went into the computer room but Hee-Haw stayed outside.

The ultrasonics stopped and the light went soft.

'Hummingbird,' the computer said. 'You have come back. Computer is happy. Who is the other human?'

'This isn't a human,' I explained. 'This is just a family robot.'

'Not human? Looks very human.'

'I know,' I said. 'But that's not important. Everything's gone crazy!'

'What is the problem?' the computer asked.

I told the computer about visiting my parents and that they didn't believe me. I explained about Buff and said, 'But he's gone crazy. I know I went crazy at first but I got better.'