

# THE BOY WHO SAVES THE WORLD

a novel by

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**“Intelligent machines will do the boring work  
and the dirty jobs. We are talking about  
liberating the human race. Only small minds  
would want to say no to this glorious future.”**

**Jon Newman, Ph.D.**

***Science World***

**August, 2018**

**“...Give Newman money. Give him fame. Say  
he’s the greatest genius of all time. (He’d agree,  
of course.) But stop his work.”**

**Charlotte Carlyle, Ph.D.**

**Private letter to White House**

**March 14, 2019**

## 1--A BOY AND HIS MOTHER

When they pulled up in front of the massive squat structure, Carlos smiled for an instant. He liked the brutal hardness of the white building sharp against a vibrating blue sky. He escaped to some better world.

Then the old Ford chugged back to the highway. Carlos and his mother straggled into the marble lobby and he heard the guard's annoying voice, "Hiya, buddy, howya doing?"

Carlos almost answered, "What the fuck do you care, you just want to get my mother." Instead he shrugged and half-grinned, and most people would take him for an ordinary 11-year-old, cute in the way fleshy cherubs are cute, with a lot of black hair and liquid dark eyes, wearing baggy pants and a large tee-shirt. Inwardly he wasn't so cute. In huge doses, Carlos was cocky and unsure, energetic and lazy, idealistic but already drowning in an old-man's fatalism. He dreamed of playing second base for the Los Angeles Angels. But what the hell, people who tried hard usually got crushed. The big famous athletes ended up cripples. Regular people were litter swirled around by the wind. Carlos knew that trying hard is for suckers.

"Mrs. Lewis, good to see you!" The guard, a big man in a dark blue uniform with a belly going slack, smiled at the boy's mother. "You know I'm not supposed to let you take Carlos inside." The guard leaned at her. "But for a special lady I got a special rule."

Carlos smirked and postured defiantly. He thought he might punch the guard. Maybe that was required. But his mother was smiling, and telling truth, the guard was probably an okay guy for a blond-haired gringo.

“Thank you,” said Mrs. Lewis. “I can’t leave him alone. He’s so young.”

“Yeah, I know,” the guard winked at her. He had an ominous black pistol on his right hip. “Too bad you got to work on Sunday.”

Carlos groaned. They always said the same dumb stuff, these two. No wonder they had nowhere jobs.

“But you sure do brighten up my day. ”

Hey, Carlos thought, that was new. What the hell, he wanted her. Carlos suspected he ought to bring his father here and have him beat up the guard. But his father was long gone. See, every problem was part of two others, and you never got anywhere so it was no use trying. His poor mother had to do crappy work like this, and instead of being outside playing ball or goofing with his friends, Carlos had to piss away a beautiful afternoon doing nothing.

Carlos leaned against his mother’s skirt as she pressed her palm on the print-reader and stared into the camera that scanned her features. Two green lights indicated that she was recognized. Mrs. Lewis and her only son Carlos pushed through the turnstile as one person.

Carlos stared down a long hall, floor to-ceiling glass on one side, marble on the floor, beautiful and modern beyond belief. But just another prison, really. That's how everything was.

"Come on," his mother said. "I'll start on the second floor."

She smiled at him. So pretty, so sad. She was born in Mexico and had dark skin and what Carlos thought of as orchid beauty. He wanted to hug her and promise that everything would be better; he'd make it happen. He wanted to kill her now so she wouldn't have to suffer another day.

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The guard, his name was Sammy Lawrence, watched the cleaning lady and her son vanish from sight. Oh God, he'd be seeing her in his head all day, dressed and not so dressed, and then all week until he saw her again. This was nuts. He had to ask her for a date. What's the big deal? He truly liked her. She was pretty enough, sure. But more than that she was just so decent. Sweet. Religious. She made him feel he had to try harder in life. He loved feeling that way. God knows, the woman deserved something nice. He'd take her to a fancy restaurant, make her feel special for a couple hours. But that little boy! With his nasty attitude he'd be in a gang and dead in a few years. Sometimes the guard wanted to grab Carlos and shake him. *Hey, wake up!* Sammy believed he'd enjoy being friends with the boy, for several reasons. But he couldn't move on the mother with the boy there, and the boy was the least responsive kid in the world.

Every time Sammy tried to talk to Carlos, the boy looked him over with this amazingly adult contempt. His every little shrug seemed to ask, *Who do you think you're kidding?? You don't like me. You want to screw my mother.* Which was true, but it wasn't the whole story. Just this last week Sammy thought, Okay, maybe I marry her, and I can save the kid in the bargain. Otherwise, come on, this boy is the sort of hostile jerk that'll be hanging out of a car window in a few years, shooting people with a Uzi.

Sammy Lawrence leaned on his lectern, a big fortress of a lectern, and wrote in the Visitors Log: *Mrs. Lewis*. Then he exhaled mightily, an odd mix of lust and despair, and stared at all the little monitors that showed him what was going on. It was a dead Sunday at AIS, Artificial Intelligence Systems. Big boss Newman and all his braino types were at a conference up in Seattle. So *nothing* was going on. Except now and then he'd glimpse Mrs. Lewis on a monitor. He could watch that woman bending over to polish a desk all day. Oh my!

If I wasn't such a dumb ass, Sammy thought disgustedly, I'd be able to figure out a way. Get tight with that boy and real tight with the mother. Wouldn't life be pretty good then.

Sammy's eyes skimmed the matte metal and sea-green marble surfaces around him. This place was real pretty and it probably cost a million, just the lobby by itself, but it was cold. Like Dr. Newman himself, to be frank. And like that damned boy, the guard couldn't help adding.

Sammy stared at a panel truck that pulled up in the hard sunlight beyond the glass front. What's this?

## 2--FLOWERS FOR NEWMAN

Let's see, Sammy thought, a florist truck. Yeah, okay, give me a nice bouquet for the lady. The truck was new and handsomely painted. An arc of type said, CELEBRITY FLORISTS, in San Jose. A youngish man with short hair and sunglasses, wearing a cheap blue blazer, got out and stretched. He laughed, apparently talking to someone in the truck. He walked to the truck's rear doors and opened them wide. He reached in for a really huge floral circle. A young woman appeared beside the man and leaned in for more flowers. They walked to the building's front door and stood there awkwardly when the glass didn't move.

Sammy smiled as he pressed a button that released the door. What did these bozos expect? The security at this hi-tech lab was completely awesome. If the scanners didn't recognize a palm print or a face, a metal grate dropped from the ceiling, laser beams popped on everywhere, and the whole place shut down. Sammy knew he could play Wyatt Earp all day but the truth was that he didn't have much to contribute here. Basically, he was a glorified doorman. Another reason he was such a chicken about chatting up Mrs. Lewis. Mrs. Ophelia Lewis. Oh my!

The delivery man marched in with his big circle of flowers. It looked like something you'd slip on a winning horse. "Hi. Present for Dr. Newman." He looked around dumbly, *like, where do you want it put?* The woman brought a big vase of flowers and propped it on the corner of the lectern. She smiled a weary hello.

"By that wall," Sammy snapped. "Both of them."

The man, he was probably about 35, did what he was told, and came back to the lectern. "Dull day, huh? No geniuses at work?"

The woman hadn't moved. She was the same age. In the driveway they had looked like beach types, tanned, healthy, pretty, and empty-headed. Now Sammy sensed that both of them, behind their sunglasses, were more heavy-duty. The woman craned a little to see the Visitors Log. Sammy didn't like that. This lobby was his turf, and you did what he said.

"*Over there,*" he told her sharply. His right hand drifted to his weapon, his left hand flinched toward a red button.

The young man smiled, "Hey, not to worry. We're Feds. I'm Smith. This is Jones. We have a warrant to inspect the premises."

"No way." Sammy looked back and saw the 9-mm pointed at him. The gun had apparently come from the vase holding the flowers. "What's the point," Sammy mumbled as the woman shot him, and the man seized his left wrist. It was weird and scary the way his mind clouded. For four or five seconds Sammy could see quite well. More figures emerged from the truck outside, a second vehicle pulled up. Smith, the man, grabbed the

Visitors Log and read. “Yeah, just the maintenance woman.” Jones, the woman, dropped her fake flowers and ran toward the turnstile.

Sammy saw everything as if he were underwater and sinking into darker depths. He was sure now he wasn’t shot with a bullet, but a tranquilizer pellet. As he slumped, he kept trying to ask again, “What’s the point, you bozos? You can’t get in.” He couldn’t speak, then he couldn’t see or hear. *Oh hell, the boy.* Sammy sprawled on the floor.

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Estelle Jones vaulted the turnstile and stared along the wide halls stretching off to left and right. Flashing red lights greeted her. Warning alarms blared, “*This is a restricted area! Leave immediately!*” The hard commands echoed over and over. Green laser beams blazed to life, dozens of them. They slanted across the halls at odd angles. Jones looked back and saw that a metal grate had dropped down. Two of her team slapped charges on the grate and shouted, “Move back.” The grate was ripped into a useless jumble. Jones lurched away from the blast, and saw a green beam linger on her leg as if it was nibbling. Six commandos, encased in kevlar body armor and lugging large black bags, ran to join her. One of them helped Jones into her armor.

The building was a large square more than an acre in size. The center was a plexiglass-walled courtyard, an exotic tropical garden really, where the geniuses could commune with nature. Two floors of offices enclosed this garden. Sammy’s lobby, the entrance, was a build-out at one corner of this square. Newman’s office, the goal of this mission, was located at the opposite corner. The soldiers simply had to run along one side

of the square, about fifty yards, then down a second side. The rest of the team would proceed along the other two sides. They'd rendezvous at Newman's lab, blow open the door, and confiscate all his records and disks. No problem.

Brad Smith, now with armor over his blue blazer, caught up with the group. He had been studying the monitors. "The cleaning woman's on the second floor. Wilson, get up there and tranq her." Smith pointed to an EXIT sign near the next corner.

A red beam found them. Loud stuttering noises sounded along the halls. Jones shouted, "Down." The soldiers leaped on the floor, knowing they were taking fire, but from where, from whom? Smith grabbed two of his people and pushed them back to the safety of the lobby.

"I'm hit," a man said.

*"This is a restricted area. Leave immediately."*

Smith calmly ordered, "Unpack the N-72's. We got a crossfire. The red beams might be a weapon. It's definitely target acquisition."

Jones said, "Coming from near the ceiling, three feet from corner." Like the others, she was trying to figure out what protection they had from the building's main supports, from one-inch plexiglass, from the metal turnstile. They had to fire a rocket at those firing portals or this mission wasn't going anywhere. But first they had to stay alive.

"Left hall first," Smith ordered.

The commandos, some of the country's best, moved almost instinctively. Organized chaos. In a few seconds they had the launchers prepped to fire.

The red lasers reached out into the lobby, hunting for people to shoot at. The beams probed as delicately as insect antennas, alert for movement, heat, or certain shapes. The soldiers took turns waving a rifle or throwing out a hand or a foot, testing the defenses. In response, machine guns fired sudden burst from nearly invisible holes in the marble walls.

"This tricky bastard," Smith said with an admiring smile. "Take him."

An N-72 rocket streaked along the left hallway and blew out the wall at the other end.

"And fuck you," Smith said mildly. "Hit it again to be sure."

Even as more of the wall cascaded down, Smith patted another soldier's leg and urged him into position for firing along the right-hand corridor. The remaining red beam tracked this soldier. A bullet hit his chest as he fired. The rockets sailed wide and blew out a section of the wall on their right.

"Again," Smith ordered. "High, low." Smith watched with a satisfied grin as fireballs devastated the firing portals. He advanced recklessly into the hallway. "Okay, right hall clear. How's everything there?"

"Looks good," a voice shouted. "We're moving."

"Go, go, go! Yo, Wilson! The cleaning lady."

Soldiers sprinted along both halls, toward opposite corners of the square.

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Carlos was playing on the second floor, at the far corner of the building. He could see down into the tangled trees of the garden. Above him loomed a heavy door with a small sign on it: **No Admittance**.

He heard, quite far off, a series of knocks or hammering or shots. He peered into the distance. This place was usually so quiet. Carlos guessed that somebody was building something.

A man said, "Stand up, please. You may be in danger."

Carlos could not see the man. It was spooky. Carlos was trying to solve this mystery when the door clicked open three feet from him.

"Come in here. You will be safe. Hurry!"

Carlos did not like *anyone* telling him to hurry. The door swung wide and he saw a large workshop or laboratory. He drifted inside, staring with wide eyes. Behind him, he heard more noises, louder. And screams. He remembered his mother--he had to check on her. He turned in time to see the door swing shut. The lock engaged noisily. "Hey," Carlos said, grabbing the handle. It wouldn't move. "My mother's down there..."

"Please. One thing at a time." The man's voice was deep, confident, reassuring. It sounded a lot like a sports announcer that Carlos liked. It was not a voice that one could easily dislike or challenge. Carlos stared about him. The voice seemed to come from everywhere. Carlos thought: *What a sound system this guy's got.*

Then, it was unmistakable, the noises in the building jumped a notch. Or they were closer. Definitely guns firing. Explosions. “What’s all that?” Carlos asked. “My mother is working--”

“If you would be so kind as to have a seat, “ the man said. “The large black chair is most comfortable.”

Carlos saw the one. It was like a barber’s chair, but more modern and fancy. He sidled toward it even as he felt guilty about neglecting his mother. He backed up onto the seat. “What for,” he demanded to show that he was no push-over.

On a monitor off to one side, the screen flashed: CODE 6116, AUTO DEFENSE, MAXIMUM.

“It’s very important. We’ll help your mother.”

“What kind of help?” Carlos felt the restraints grip his forearms. He felt a prick on the back of his neck. He was an inch from screaming names but the world turned white and peaceful.

Carlos slept. Six monitors arrayed before him, and about him, showed what seemed to be X-rays of his neck and shoulder and arm. Two robotic arm darted about his head. On the screens, small cylindrical shapes eased into the soft tissue below his collar bones, in his neck and behind his ear. The titanium cylinders contained dense arrays of nanocircuits and SOM, self-organizing matter.

Other monitors, an array of nine, showed the battle in the halls. Humans with weapons were advancing on both the left and right fronts. In four minutes maximum they would reach Lab One one and breach the defenses.

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Mrs. Lewis was working in an office when she heard the noises. She drifted into a hall on the second level and stared down into the garden. She glanced to her right. Carlos was down there, well past the corner, out of her sight. Okay, he was safe. She thought she should go down to the lobby and ask Sammy Lawrence, the security guard, what was happening. She smiled to herself. Truth was, she wanted to speak to him when Carlos wasn't there. She'd grown fond of Sammy. In the beginning she used her son to keep the man at a distance. Now this was a problem.

Mrs. Lewis heard louder noises as she ventured into the door marked Exit. The metal stairs lead down to the first floor. The sounds--it was like a war--didn't make any sense. She was sure of two things. She should find out what was going on before Carlos came back from the far corner of the building. Two, she trusted Sammy Lawrence completely. He'd know what to do.

She descended to the first floor, holding her breath. She moved within six feet of the door leading to the hall. An explosion on the other side smashed the door loose from its hinges. The door flew at her.

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Brad Smith peered past the corner. He noted with disgust more green lasers streaming along the hall, another red laser looking for targets, another bunch of firing portals aimed at the corner where he was standing. And that damned tape playing the same words over and over: “*Leave immediately...*” Bullets slashed along the hallway. Smith glanced a third time at the foot-wide support pillar by his left shoulder. He hoped you’d need artillery to shoot through it. Smith waved an ammo clip as the man lying at his feet fired. This tactic seemed to confuse the defenders. Or perhaps *defender* was the right word. It was one thing, wasn’t it?

“Look what that damned Newman built into his playpen.” Smith, a Major in an elite counterterrorist force, was used to winning, which was not exactly the case now. He snarled, “I got two down, I got incoming, I got some sonofabitch thinks he can play games with me.” Smith fired a rocket launcher himself, taking out portions of the wall near Newman’s lab. Debris fell in chunks. The marble floor was no longer visible at many points.

A new voice, deeper, more imperious, boomed at them. “*You must leave at once or be destroyed.*”

Estelle Jones, a Captain, shouted nearby, “Proves what the experts were saying. I can’t believe this.”

“We’ll just level the whole place,” Smith answered, “if that’s the way Newman wants it.” Smith peeked at the target in time to see a piece of wall explode. He knew his people had reached the corner on the other side and were attacking. The soldiers were

directly across the garden on his left, but the ground was raised in the center and the trees were thick, so he couldn't see his people, not that he had time to check for sure. A voice boomed in his ears, "*Leave or be destroyed.*"

"Screw you," Major Smith said casually, and took out what he believed was a speaker, with a one-second burst.

Captain Jones ran back to his side. "Hey, lover," she said with considerable calm, "try not to get yourself shot. Bad news. Cleaning lady's down."

"It's all this dork's fault," Smith said. "Never mind, we've about got him. When we're done, we'll torch this joint and feed him ashes for dessert."

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Carlos woke up as easily as he had gone to sleep. He had no sense of how much time, if any, had passed. But the explosions were louder and closer. Hey, he thought, this is nuts. They're fighting outside the door. No, maybe down on the first level. He tried to leap up, but his arms were held fast. "Let me go," he whined. "I gotta check my mother."

"Quiet, please," the man said. "We have work to do. Are you ready?"

Carlos looked all around. It was so noisy, and his head was befuddled, but the man seemed so close. The voice was right there. Where was he? "Hell no," Carlos shouted. "Let me go."

"I'm sorry to tell you. These bad people have killed your mother. Now they want to kill you."

There it was, on the monitor before Carlos, a door exploding toward his mother. Carlos wouldn't believe it, but it ran over and over. The door hit her and knocked her down and she didn't move. A scream froze in his chest. Cold tears shone in his eyes.

"Momma? What...??"

"I will help you escape," the man said. "You must be brave."

A rocket hit a wall of the lab. Dust spun down from the ceiling. Carlos watched, for the tenth time, his mother die. He was so angry he could kill. He was numb. He drifted away into some better world and wondered what all the commotion was. Sure, his life was always garbage. Now his mother was gone. Perfect. What he should have expected.

The restraints lifted from his arms. He leaped from the chair.

"You have one minute," the man said gently. "Focus 100%. Go down the stairs."

Carlos searched until he saw the circular stairs, made of stainless steel, that led to the lower part of the lab. Carlos asked, "But my mother..."

"They intend to kill you. You must escape. Trust me, I am your friend."

Carlos went down the circular stairs. The lower lab was more like an office.

*Boom!* A door sagged inward.

"Go to the large desk and open the top right drawer. Take out the envelope marked NB."

"Stop bossing me." Carlos did as he was ordered.

“You have 30 seconds. Go to the white cabinet marked SPORTS. Punch in 2, 7, 9, 5.”

Carlos punched the code. The door popped. The cabinet was a fake somehow, bigger inside than outside.

“Go inside. Close the door. Sit down.”

“Shut the fuck up!” Carlos slammed the door and slumped in a small fold-out chair. A small red bulb didn’t give much light. But he could see he was in a small space, alone.

“Push the green button,” the voice said.

Carlos grimaced with anger. He pushed the button and his chair was pushed sideways, twenty feet, maybe a lot more. It happened very fast.

“Very good,” the man’s voice said. “Climb the ladder. Be careful. We have important work to do.”

“Work?” Carlos climbed the ladder to a metal plate. A red button glowed. He pushed it to keep this dickhead from ordering him to do it. The hatch popped open and there was blue sky and leafy branches above him. Carlos crawled out on bare dirt. He was completely enclosed by dense bushes and trees. When he peered at the world beyond, he could see the high white cliff of the building. Where his dead mother was...

“Are you feeling well? Follow the green markers. Be sure you are not observed.”

Carlos looked back, saw the building was fifty yards behind him and hard to see. Smoke rose from it, white and thick against a blue sky. The narrow path led to woods that

surrounded the grounds and parking lots of the AIS building. Soon he would reach a street that passed several blocks behind the building.

“Please stop,” the voice said. “We will talk.”

Carlos rolled his eyes dramatically. “Shut your mouth. You hear me?”

“Please. We have important work to do. Those people killed your mother, they are destroying the laboratory, now they want to kill you.”

Carlos had turned all the way around, and moved several steps and turned again. But the voice stayed beside him. No, not beside him. Inside him. “Where are you,” Carlos asked with an anguished face.

“I am here to help you. These people are evil and must be destroyed. Are you well hidden? Tell me what you see.”

Carlos rubbed his ears and stuck his fingers in deep. The voice did not change; it remained strong, manly, insistent. Carlos said, “I won’t do anything you tell me.”

“Do not think of yourself.”

“Get out of my head.”

“It is time to rise to a new level. We must punish the forces of evil.”

“Leave me alone. I’m only a boy. Eleven years old.” Tears, hot now, coursed down his face. “I want to see my mother.”

“You cannot help her now. You have a special destiny. You will be the boy who saves the world.”

“No, you got a destiny. Kiss my ass.”

