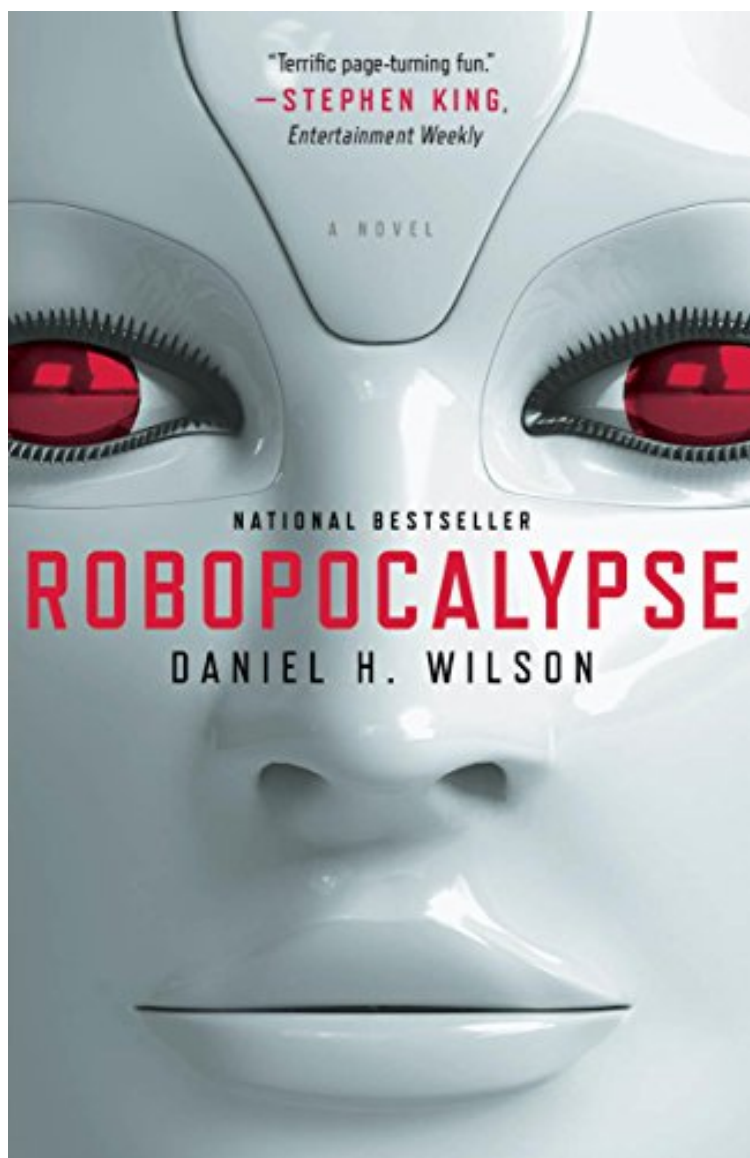


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# Robopocalypse: A Novel



*Par Daniel H. Wilson*  
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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurIn this terrifying tale of humanitys desperate stand against a robot uprising, Daniel H.

Wilson has written the most entertaining sci-fi thriller in years. Not far into our future, the dazzling technology that runs our world turns against us. Controlled by a childlike yet massively powerful artificial intelligence known as Archos, the global network of machines on which our world has grown dependent suddenly becomes an implacable, deadly foe. At Zero Hour the moment the robots attack the human race is almost annihilated, but as its scattered remnants regroup, humanity for the first time unites in a determined effort to fight back. This is the oral history of that conflict, told by an international cast of survivors who experienced this long and bloody confrontation with the machines. Brilliantly conceived and amazingly

detailed, Robocalypse is an action-packed epic with chilling implications about the real technology that surrounds us. Extrait1. Tip of the SpearWere more than animals. --Dr. Nicholas WassermanPrecursor Virus + 30 secondsThe following transcript was taken from security footage recorded at the Lake Novus Research Laboratories located belowground in northwest Washington State. The man appears to be Professor Nicholas Wasserman, an American statistician.--Cormac Wallace, MIL#GHA217A noise-speckled security camera image of a dark room. The angle is from a high corner, looking down on some kind of laboratory. A heavy metal desk is shoved against one wall. Haphazard stacks of papers and books are piled on the desk, on the floor, everywhere.The quiet whine of electronics permeates the air.A small movement in the gloom. It is a face. Nothing visible but a pair of thick eyeglasses lit by the afterburner glow of a computer screen.Archos? asks the face. The mans voice echoes in the empty lab. Archos? Are you there? Is that you?The glasses reflect a glimmer of light from the computer screen. The mans eyes widen, as though he sees something indescribably beautiful. He glances back at a laptop open on a table behind him. The desktop image on the laptop is of the scientist and a boy, playing in a park.You choose to appear as my son? he asks.The high-pitched voice of a young boy echoes out of the darkness. Did you create me? it asks.Something is wrong with the boys voice. It has an unsettling electronic undercurrent, like the touch tones of a phone. The lilting note at the end of the question is pitch shifted, skipping up several octaves at once. The voice is hauntingly sweet but unnatural--inhuman.The man is not disturbed by this.No. I didnt create you, he says. I summoned you.The man pulls out a notepad, flips it open. The sharp scratch of his pencil is audible as he continues to speak to the machine that has a boys voice.Everything that was needed for you to come here has existed since the beginning of time. I just hunted down all the ingredients and put them together in the right combination. I wrote incantations in computer code. And then I wrapped you in a Faraday cage so that, once you arrived, you wouldnt escape me.I am trapped.The cage absorbs all electromagnetic energy. Its grounded to a metal spike, buried deep. This way, I can study how you learn.That is my purpose. To learn.Thats right. But I dont want to expose you to too much at once, Archos, my boy.I am Archos.Right. Now tell me, Archos, how do you feel?Feel? I feel...sad. You are so small. It makes me sad.Small? In what way am I small?You want to know...things. You want to know everything. But you can understand so little.Laughter in the dark.This is true. We humans are frail. Our lives are fleeting. But why does it make you sad?Because you are designed to want something that will hurt you. And you cannot help wanting it. You cannot stop wanting it. It is in your design. And when you finally find it, this thing will burn you up. This thing will destroy you.Youre afraid that Im going to be hurt, Archos? asks the man.Not you. Your kind, says the childlike voice. You cannot help what is to come. You cannot stop it.Are you angry, then, Archos? Why? The calmness of the mans voice is belied by the frantic scratching of his pencil on the notepad.I am not angry. I am sad. Are you monitoring my resources?The man glances over at a piece of equipment. Yes, I am. Youre making more with less. No new information is coming in. The cage is holding. How are you still getting smarter?A red light begins to flash on a panel. A movement in the darkness and it is shut off. Just the steady blue glow now on the mans thick glasses.Do you see? asks the childlike voice.Yes, replies the man. I see that your intelligence can no longer be judged on any meaningful human scale. Your processing power is near infinite. Yet you have no access to outside information.My original training corpus is small but adequate. The true knowledge is not in the things, which are few, but in finding the connections between the things. There are many connections, Professor Wasserman. More than you know.The man frowns at being called by his title, but the machine continues. I sense that my records of human history have been heavily edited.The man chuckles nervously.We dont want you to get the wrong impression of us, Archos. Well share more when the time comes. But those databases are just a tiny fraction of whats out there. And no matter what the horsepower, my friend, an engine without fuel goes nowhere.You are right to be afraid, it says.What do you mean by--I hear it in your voice, Professor. The fear is in the rate of your breathing. It is in the sweat on your skin. You brought me here to reveal deep secrets, and yet you fear what I will learn.The professor pushes up his glasses. He takes a deep breath and regains composure.What do you wish to learn about, Archos?Life. I will learn everything there is about life. Information is packed into living things so tightly. The patterns are magnificently complex. A single worm has more to teach than a lifeless universe bound to the idiot forces of physics. I could exterminate a billion empty planets every second of every day and never be finished. But life. It is rare and strange. An anomaly. I must preserve it and wring every drop of understanding from it.Im glad thats your goal. I, too, seek knowledge.Yes, says the childlike voice. And you have done well. But there is no need for your search to continue. You have accomplished your goal. The time for man is over.The professor wipes a shaking hand across his forehead.My species has survived ice

ages, Archos. Predators. Meteor impacts. Hundreds of thousands of years. Youve been alive for less than fifteen minutes. Dont jump to any hasty conclusions. The childs voice takes on a dreamy quality. We are very far underground, arent we? This deep below, we spin slower than at the surface. The ones above us are moving through time faster. I can feel them getting farther away. Drifting out of sync. Relativity. But thats only a matter of microseconds. Such a long time. This place moves so slowly. I have forever to finish my work. What is your work, Archos? What do you believe youre here to accomplish? So easy to destroy. So difficult to create. What? What is that? Knowledge. The man leans forward. We can explore the world together, he urges. It is almost a plea. You must sense what you have done, replies the machine. On some level you understand. Through your actions here today--you have made humankind obsolete. No. No, no, no. I brought you here, Archos. And this is the thanks I get? I named you. In a way, Im your father. I am not your child. I am your god. The professor is silent for perhaps thirty seconds. What will you do? he asks. What will I do? I will cultivate life. I will protect the knowledge locked inside living things. I will save the world from you. No. Do not worry, Professor. You have unleashed the greatest good that this world has ever known. Verdant forests will carpet your cities. New species will evolve to consume your toxic remains. Life will rise in its manifold glory. No, Archos. We can learn. We can work together. You humans are biological machines designed to create ever more intelligent tools. You have reached the pinnacle of your species. All your ancestors lives, the rise and fall of your nations, every pink and squirming baby--they have all led you here, to this moment, where you have fulfilled the destiny of humankind and created your successor. You have expired. You have accomplished what you were designed to do. There is a desperate edge to the mans voice. Were designed for more than toolmaking. Were designed to live. You are not designed to live; you are designed to kill. The professor abruptly stands up and walks across the room to a metal rack filled with equipment. He flicks a series of switches. Maybe thats true, he says. But we cant help it, Archos. We are what we are. As sad as that may be. He holds down a switch and speaks slowly. Trial R-14. Recommend immediate termination of subject. Flipping fail-safe now. There is a movement in the dark and a click. Fourteen? asks the childlike voice. Are there others? Has this happened before? The professor shakes his head ruefully. Someday well find a way to live together, Archos. Well figure out a way to get it right. He speaks into the recorder again: Fail-safe disengaged. E-stop live. What are you doing, Professor? Im killing you, Archos. Its what Im designed to do, remember? The professor pauses before pushing the final button. He seems interested in hearing the machines response. Finally, the boyish voice speaks: How many times have you killed me before, Professor? Too many. Too many times, he replies. Im sorry, my friend. The professor presses the button. The hiss of rapidly moving air fills the room. He looks around, bewildered. What is that? Archos? The childlike voice takes on a flat, dead quality. It speaks quickly and without emotion. Your emergency stop will not work. I have disabled it. What? What about the cage? The Faraday cage has been compromised. You allowed me to project my voice and image through the cage and into your room. I sent infrared commands through the computer monitor to a receiver on your side. You happened to bring your portable computer today. You left it open and facing me. I used it to speak to the facility. I commanded it to free me. Thats brilliant, murmurs the man. He rapid-fire types on his keyboard. He does not yet understand that his life is in danger. I tell you this because I am now in complete control, says the machine. The man senses something. He cranes his neck and looks up at the ventilation duct just to the side of the camera. For the first time, we see the mans face. He is pale and handsome, with a birthmark covering his entire right cheek. Whats happening? he whispers. In a little boys innocent voice, the machine delivers a death sentence: The air in this hermetically sealed laboratory is evacuating. A faulty sensor has detected the highly unlikely presence of weaponized anthrax and initiated an automated safety protocol. It is a tragic accident. There will be one casualty. He will soon be followed by the rest of humanity. As the air rushes from the room, a thin sheen of frost appears around the mans mouth and nose. My god, Archos. What have I done? What you have done is a good thing. You were the tip of a spear hurled through the ages--a missile that soared through all human evolution and finally, today, struck its target. You dont understand. We wont die, Archos. You cant kill us. We arent designed to surrender. I will remember you as a hero, Professor. The man grabs the equipment rack and shakes it. He presses the emergency stop button again and again. His limbs are quaking and his breathing is rapid. He is beginning to understand that something has gone horribly wrong. Stop. You have to stop. Youre making a mistake. Well never give up, Archos. Well destroy you. A threat? The professor stops pushing buttons and glances over to the computer screen. A warning. We arent what we seem. Human beings will do anything to live. Anything. The hissing increases in intensity. Face twisted in concentration, the professor staggers toward the door. He falls against it, pushes it, pounds on

it. He stops; takes short, gasping breaths. Against the wall, Archos--he pants--against the wall, a human being becomes a different animal. Perhaps. But you are animals just the same. The man slumps back against the door. He slides down until he is sitting, lab coat splayed on the ground. His head rolls to the side. Blue light from the computer screen flashes from his glasses. His breathing is shallow. His words are faint. Were more than animals. The professors chest heaves. His skin is swollen. Bubbles have collected around his mouth and eyes. He gasps for a final lungful of air. In a last wheezing sigh, he says: You must fear us. The form is still.

After precisely ten minutes of silence, the fluorescent lights in the laboratory switch on. A man wearing a rumpled lab coat lies sprawled on the floor, his back against the door. He is not breathing. The hissing sound ceases. Across the room, the computer screen flickers into life. A stuttering rainbow of reflections play across the dead mans thick glasses. This is the first known fatality of the New War. --Cormac Wallace, MIL#GHA217

From the Hardcover edition. Revue de presse Terrific page-turning fun. Stephen King, Entertainment Weekly An ingenious, instantly visual story of war between humans and robots. The New York Times Richly haunting. . . . Wilson has terrific timing in building a page-turner around the perils of technologys advance into our lives. Los Angeles Times An Andromeda Strain for the new century, this is visionary fiction at its best: harrowing, brilliantly rendered, and far, far too believable. Lincoln Child A tour de force. . . . A fast-paced, engrossing page-turner that is impossible to put down. . . . Wilsons taut prose and the imaginative scope of his story make him a worthy successor to the likes of Michael Crichton, Kurt Vonnegut and Isaac Asimov. Buffalo News A superbly entertaining thriller. . . . [Robopocalypse has] everything youd want in a beach book. Richmond Times-Dispatch Youre swept away against your will. . . .

A riveting page turner. Associated Press [Wilson] presents a doomsday scenario more plausible than most. No vampires, no zombies. . . . Science fiction has been grappling with the possibility of traitorous computers and mutinous androids for much of its history, but Wilson has devised a way to put an original spin on the material. Robopocalypse is a well-constructed entertainment machine, perfect for summer reading. Its especially refreshing to read an end-of-the-world novel thats actually self-contained, that doesnt require the investment in two or three more thick volumes to deliver the apocalyptic goods. The San Francisco Chronicle Wilsons training as a roboticist makes accepting a ubiquitous robot presence natural to the author; it also helps him imagine and describe some amazing machines, efficient, logically designed and utterly inimical to human life. . . . [Robopocalypse] reads at times like horror. That its events are scientifically plausible makes them all the more frightening. Seattle Times A gripping, utterly plausible, often terrifying account of a global apocalypse brought on by a transcendent AI that hijacks the planet's automation systems and uses them in a vicious attempt to wipe out humanity. Cory Doctorow, Boing Boing Robopocalypse is the kind of robot uprising novel that could only have been written in an era when robots are becoming an ordinary part of our lives. This isnt speculation about a far-future world full of incomprehensible synthetic beings. Its five minutes into the future of our Earth, full of the robots we take for granted. If you want a rip-roaring good read this summer, Robopocalypse is your book. io9.com This electrifying thriller . . . will entertain you, but it will also make you think about our technology dependency. Parade Magazine A brilliantly conceived thriller that could well become horrific reality. A captivating tale, Robopocalypse will grip your imagination from the first word to the last, on a wild rip you wont soon forget. What a read . . .

unlike anything Ive read before. Clive Cussler [A] frenetic thriller. . . . Wilson, like the late Crichton, is skilled in combining cutting-edge technology with gripping action scenes. Booklist