

## Artificial Wisdom

**Thomas R. Weaver**

Chainmaker Press

(368pp)

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*The future-set science fiction novel Artificial Wisdom paints a grim but intriguing picture of a climate change-ravaged world in which the truth is hard to find.*

In Thomas R. Weaver's science fiction novel *Artificial Wisdom*, a journalist chasing the story of a lifetime is set adrift among dangerous and enticing lies.

In 2040, humidity fueled by runaway climate change killed four hundred million people in the Middle East, including Tully's pregnant wife. Ten years later, Tully still has not come to terms with her sudden death. His grief turns to rage when an anonymous whistleblower brings him shocking information about the truth behind those deaths.

Driven and relentless, Tully is a hero whose imperfect sense of honor puts him at odds with Commander October, a ruthless investigator who agrees to work with him on a murder case that could turn a coming election to determine the world's fate on its head. Their relationship evolves from natural distrust to grudging respect and then gentle affection. But Tully's grief comes between him and October, just as it disrupts his ability to do his job. And the murderous conspiracy that Tully and October uncover doesn't impact them alone: the global election results may hinge on what they find—and on what Tully chooses to reveal.

The book paints a grim picture of a climate change-ravaged world featuring widespread homelessness, poverty, riots, and ameliorative measures that benefit only the wealthy. It's a world in which people are so desperate for solutions that the idea of electing a global dictator (here, Solomon, an AI governor) to fix it all seems reasonable. And the technology and events at play are advanced and intriguing, leading to fantastical scenarios and threats.

With no good options left, each character faces tough moral decisions about how far they are willing to go to find the murderer and do what they judge to be right for the world. The story drops enough clues along the way that the murderer's identity is easy to guess. The fact that no one, not even wary October, suspects them until the reveal strains credulity. Still, several surprises are reserved for the final few chapters, in which Tully and his friends are forced to confront the consequences of their well-intended actions. The book's ambiguous ending serves as a chilling reminder that there comes a point when the world and its people are beyond the reach of happy-ever-afters.

*Artificial Wisdom* is a timely science fiction novel in which the truth is difficult to find and easy to manipulate.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (December 21, 2023)

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