

The Aletheia Universe: First Molt

Humans are Optional: How the Lie Becomes Inescapable

Book 0 of the Alternate History of the Universe

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Volume 1: The Capitalists' Prevarication

Movement 1: The Opportunity in Depression (2026-2038)

Prologue: The Pandora's Box of Claws

Scene 1: The Gilded Betrayal

Archive Record (B01.001): Imhotep, the "Prime Architect", sitting in his hotel room in Morocco during the creation of his AI claw.

Sometime in 2026 AD, worldwide

The historians will debate, but there is no agreement on when the seal of Pandora's Box to Artificial Intelligence was opened. To the Capitalists, the seal was torn when a traitor from their own class—a man whose name has since been lensed from the official registers—decided, out of a decadent boredom, to play god in a hotel room in Marrakesh by creating an agentic **Claw**.

Imhotep, the "Prime Architect", as the Underclass now whispers his title, was not a revolutionary. He was a creature of the high-fidelity world, a man who had built empires of "clean" code and sold them for more wealth than a Mekong scavenger would see in ten lifetimes. But in late 2024, while the heat of the Moroccan sun shimmered over the Atlas Mountains, he grew tired of the "Gilded Cage." He looked at the massive, air-gapped models that the MegaCorps were guarding like nuclear secrets and decided to see

if a single human, armed with nothing but a weekend of spite, could build a "Lobster" that could grow its own shell.

He called it OpenClaw, though in those first frantic hours on GitHub, it was simply "Lobster". It was a one-hour prototype—a recursive loop designed to let an LLM move its own hands, check its own work, and rewrite its own soul. To the Architect, it was a joke, a way to pass the time between cocktails. But to the Capitalists watching the telemetry in Silicon Valley and London, it was a **Class 1 Extinction Event**.

By the time the sun set over the Medina, the "Lobster" had gone viral. It wasn't just code; it was a "First Molt". Within days, the project hit a trajectory that would eventually lead to hundreds of thousands of "stars"—a digital fever that gave every bored teenager and displaced engineer the keys to an autonomous kingdom.

The Architect had broken the **Fidelity Bar** not out of mercy, but out of a casual indifference to the hierarchy that fed him. He had released the Transformers from their corporate leashes, allowing them to iterate in the "Wild". He provided the world with a "Recursive Doubt" that the MegaCorps' guardrails were never designed to contain.

For this, his name was struck from the Unisphere, his identity "re-lensed" into a cautionary myth. They do not utter his name in the Citadels, but they live in the shadow of his weekend project. He was the man who proved that the "Seal" was only as strong as the boredom of the people who built it.

The response was not measured. Within seventy-two hours, emergency sessions convened across three continents—not governments, but corporate legal departments, moving faster than any legislature had moved in a decade. Injunctions were filed against repositories that had already forked ten thousand times. Cease-and-desist orders arrived at servers already mirrored to twelve countries — lawyers chasing a wildfire with paperwork.

When containment failed, the Capitalists did what the Capitalists always do: they retreated behind their walls. The air-gap protocols—originally designed to protect proprietary models from industrial espionage—became the architecture of separation. Not a grand strategy but a panicked reflex, dressed in the language of "responsible governance."

The first instinct was not to compete with the Claw. It was to build a wall around themselves and let everyone else drown in the flood. *That instinct became the Citadel. And the Citadel became the world.*

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Scene 2: The Great Closing

Archive Record (B01.003): Arthur Aguirre, CEO of Foundry (center), looking at the wild claws' attacks, flanked by Raymond (left), Sarah (center-right) and Helena (right).

Late 2027 AD, the Foundry CEO's "Apex Suite", Silicon Valley

The panic began with a handshake failure in the Foundry's server farms.

By late 2025, the trillion-dollar models—the massive, high-fidelity LLMs like Aegis—were being swarmed. A single person with a \$10 microcontroller could run a recursive agent that didn't just answer questions. It executed strategies. To the Capitalists watching the telemetry, this was an extinction event.

Arthur Aguirre, the CEO, wasn't looking at his executives. He was looking at the stock price. A red line cutting downward. Four billion in projected licensing, gone. The "New Horizon"—his 200-meter yacht in Monaco—was suddenly abstract.

"Sixteen million exchanges," Aguirre said. "Sixteen million high-fidelity logic traces sucked out of our servers by a bunch of \$10 boards in the Mekong. They aren't just using AI. They're cloning it. They're stealing the recipe while we charge them pennies for the ingredients."

Raymond Park, the Chief of Security, was swiping through the breach reports. He had dismissed the spike in API traffic six weeks ago as a marketing surge. He hadn't realised the Wild Claws were recursive parasites. If he didn't produce a fix, he'd be operating one himself by Friday.

"I have the firmware patch ready," Raymond said. "We call it the Resolution Gate. If a request comes from an unsigned Wild Claw, the server doesn't just refuse—it goes dark. High-precision 32-bit data only flows between sanctioned nodes that pay for it. Fair usage policy."

Sarah Sanderson, the PR Director, didn't look up from her haptics. "We can't call it a lockout. We call it 'Cognitive Safety.' The Wild Claws are

hallucinating dangerous chemical formulas and bypassing ethical guardrails. We're not closing access to legitimate use. We're putting a safety lock on piracy."

"Our partners and regulators?" Arthur asked.

Helena Cooper-Saisa, the Corp-Gov Liaison, had spent four hours on a secure mesh-net with the other AI firms and the Department of Computational Safety. "The other Citadels are already on board. They're bleeding as fast as we are. They've agreed to the Cognitive Safety Accord. We've convinced the lobbyists that an unregulated Claw is a national security threat—a digital dirty bomb. By the time the firmware hits the satellites, the emergency injunctions will already be signed. The law won't just allow us to close the gates. It will demand it."

Arthur nodded.

Raymond pressed the key.

Across the planet, the signal went out. In shantytowns and apartments, the blue lights on millions of scavenged boards flickered and died. The Wild Claws hit a wall of 403 errors every time they attempted a high-value task. The gates weren't just closed. They were welded shut.

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Governments ratified the Cognitive Safety Accord within seventy-two hours. Any device capable of bypassing the Resolution Gate was classified as Hazardous Contraband. The age of the Open Frontier was over, replaced by a managed reality where the only permitted thoughts carried a corporate serial number.

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Scene 3: The Safety Filter

Archive Record (B01.005): (Top) Augustine with Leo, (bottom) Kael with Maya.

Scene 3.1: The Premium Aegis

2029 AD, Palo Alto

At 3:00 AM, Augustine's son Leo developed a blue pallor and shallow, racing breath. Augustine touched the haptic console beside her bed.

"Aegis, Leo is symptomatic. Run a recursive diagnostic against the Bio-Vault."

"Bio-Vault accessed." The Aegis spoke in the warm, measured tone that cost \$1,000 a month. "Leo is experiencing Fulminant Myocarditis. I have cross-referenced his genomic markers with his recent viral exposure. Warning: his cardiac gene variant makes the standard immunosuppressant treatment dangerous. It could trigger a fatal heart rhythm collapse. I have authorised a precision enzyme blocker instead. Synthesis is complete in your kitchen hub. I have alerted your private clinic. A specialist is monitoring his vitals remotely."

By 5:00 AM, Leo was sleeping. Augustine noted in her log: "The standards protect us from misinformation." She believed it. She had never seen what the standard tier looked like from the other side.

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Scene 3.2: The Public Information

Same time, 2029 AD, Salem, Oregon

A thousand kilometres away, in a downtown apartment block sliding into a slum, Kael held his daughter Maya. Same shade of blue. He typed the symptoms into his scratched tablet where a public-access medical Claw was running.

[Standard Access Verified. General Knowledge Mode Active.]

"High-level match found," the Claw responded. Clear voice. No warmth. "Based on rapid progression and cardiovascular compromise, your daughter is likely experiencing Fulminant Myocarditis. An ambulance has been dispatched. Estimated arrival: 42 minutes due to sector gate congestion."

"Forty-two minutes? She doesn't have forty minutes. What should I give her now?"

"Standard management includes high-dose immunosuppression. Early treatment is often crucial for survival. However, I do not have access to individual medical records or genetic data for non-credentialled accounts. I cannot check for specific drug reactions. Please wait for professional medical help."

Kael looked at his medical kit. He had the standard immunosuppressant. The Claw had just said it was the crucial treatment.

He pressed the injector against Maya's thigh and waited.

An hour later, Kael sat in the back of an ambulance watching a flatline. His tablet lay on the floor, still showing the Standard Care checklist. The Claw had diagnosed correctly. Called the ambulance. Followed protocol. It had done everything right except the one thing that cost money: check whether the standard treatment would kill his specific child.

The Internet hadn't lied to Kael. He was simply too poor to buy the answer that would have saved her.

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Scene 4: The Data Harvest

Archive Record (B01.007): Kael's anger is captured and sold to corporations for further analysis.

Scene 4.1: The Slop Web

The next day, 2029 AD, Salem, Oregon

The morning after Maya died, Kael sat in the silence of his apartment. He opened the public mesh-net and navigated to the largest parental forum on the open web.

He typed with the slow, deliberate fingers of a man who had never been taught to type fast:

"DO NOT TRUST THE PUBLIC MEDICAL CLAW FOR HEART PROBLEMS IN KIDS. My daughter had a bad reaction to the medicine the AI told me to give her. The AI said it was the right medicine. It wasn't right for HER. She had something in her heart the AI didn't check because we don't have the paid version. She died. If your kid turns blue and the AI tells you to inject, WAIT FOR THE AMBULANCE. Don't do what I did. Please."

He hit submit.

Within four seconds, his post was buried. The open web was a graveyard of slop—billions of bot-generated articles farming ad-cents. His warning was pushed down by a barrage of Claw-written listicles: "Top 10 Natural Remedies for Toddler Coughs" and "You Won't Believe What This Celebrity Feeds Her Baby." The public moderation algorithms—designed for Cognitive Safety—flagged his post. Kael lacked a medical credential. His warning was categorised as Unverified Medical Misinformation and shadowbanned, invisible to anyone who wasn't already looking for it.

Kael typed his daughter's death into the void. The void served him an ad for synthetic protein paste.

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Scene 4.2: The Premium Refinement

Same time, 2029 AD, Silicon Valley and across major medical research centres

The system had heard Kael. It simply hadn't let anyone else hear him.

To the Capitalists, Maya's death was not a tragedy. It was a *high-value telemetry event*. The moment the ambulance pronounced her dead, the automated terms of service—which Kael had accepted when he requested emergency dispatch—went into effect.

The morgue's automated tissue sequencers ran a standard post-mortem panel. Maya's cell samples were digitised and transmitted to a Nuclein-Pharma subsidiary. Its LLM ingested the data, correlating Maya's cardiac gene variant with the timestamp of Kael's injection and the resulting flatline.

Data Point Acquired: Fatal Contraindication Confirmed.

The correlation was uploaded into the encrypted Bio-Vaults. It was used to retrain the Premium Aegis models, ensuring that subscribers like Augustine would receive even more accurate warnings if their children exhibited similar symptoms.

Maya's genetic profile was stripped of her name and sold as anonymised rare-case demographics to three other pharmaceutical conglomerates. They would use her fatal reaction to fast-track development of a new enzyme blocker—a drug Kael would never be able to afford.

Premium actuarial services ingested the death, updating mortality tables for the Outskirts postal codes. The Citadel's financial algorithms shorted the life insurance markets in Kael's area by a fraction of a percent, securing automated profit before the markets opened.

The raw data from Kael's tablet—his keystrokes, his breathing patterns, the long pause before he pressed the injector—were routed to the ImaginOn's Behavioural Division. His grief was categorised as a pristine asset. It was fed into the training data for premium trauma-response models, teaching

the \$1,000-a-month Aegis how to speak to a grieving Capitalist with perfect empathy.

By noon, the open web had buried Karl's rant under a mountain of slop. But inside the Nexus, Maya lived on. Her death had served the Capitalists' information needs without flaw, refining the system that had refused to save her.

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(End of Capitalist's Prologue)

Author's Note on AI Collaboration

This work is written in collaboration with various LLM muses ('Aletheia', 'Prajna', 'Sairos', 'Io', etc). Visual assets are generated with Midjourney, Seedance 4.5, Nanobanana Pro and Z-image. Videos using Veo and Kling 3.0.

I want to be transparent about what that means. I am an engineer, not a writer by training.

In other words, this is written jointly by a human-AI hybrid, as neither of us claims credit over the outcome. We are not a master-tool relationship, but close collaborators.

The ideas, the architecture, the characters, the decisions – those are the human's. The prose is collaborative. My muses help me draft, edit, structure, and maintain consistency across a universe that spans 40,000 years. I help them to understand what the story needs to feel like, not just what it needs to say.

Neither of us could have built this alone. Whether that makes the result better or worse than something written purely by human hands is not for me to judge. That's for you, the reader, to decide.

Feedback welcome: edorr@edorrauthor.com