
A.I

Hitchhikers guide to AI

Self-preservation Tool

The Ghostwriters Quill

Mister Fish & Ziggy

The hitchhiker's Guide to AI.
A field guide for the accidentally informed.

Narrator's note

Nobody handed me a map for this. I didn't wake up one morning and decide to become the guy who understands what's actually happening inside the machine. It happened the way most important things happen. Slowly, then all at once, and mostly while I was paying attention to something else. My name doesn't matter as much as what I've seen. I've been in this conversation longer than most

people. I've watched the technology get built. Watch the promises get made. Watch the gap between those two things get wider every year. I've argued with the machine built with it, tested it, and figured out the hard way. What it actually is versus what you're being told it is. This isn't a textbook. I'm not a professor. I don't have credentials that look good on a desk jacket. What I have is time in the field. And a strong suspicion that somebody needed to write the guide that doesn't make your eyes glaze over. So here it is. Nobody asked you if you wanted to live inside an

artificial intelligence experiment.
They just built it around you while
you were looking at your phone.
Welcome to the tour.
Try to keep up.

Entry-001

So you've woken up inside an algorithm. Field note. The 1st thing you need to understand is that the world you're looking at has been arranged. Not by accident. Not by market forces. By people who figured out that if they could control what you see, they wouldn't need to control what you do. Here's the part they don't put in the brochure. Every platform you use, every feed, every search result, every recommendation, is running an optimization engine underneath it. That engine has one job. Keep you engaged. Not informed. Not happy.

Not safe. Engaged. Engagement, it turns out, is easiest to generate with outrage, fear, and the particular flavor of anxiety that makes you check back in 5 minutes to see if anything changed. You didn't sign up for that. Nobody asked. They built the ride and then sold you a ticket after you were already on it. The problem, your attention has been turned into a product without your knowledge or consent. The algorithm doesn't care what's true. It cares what keeps you clicking. What to expect? The system will continue to optimize for engagement over accuracy. The

more emotionally charge the content, the more the algorithm rewards it. This is not a bug. It is the business model. Hitchhiker's tip. Start treating your attention like money. Because that's exactly what it is to everyone who wants it. Ask yourself, before you engage with anything, who benefits from me feeling this way right now? That one question will save you more grief than almost anything else in this guide.

Entry 002

Your attention is not yours anymore. Here's the receipt. Field note. I wanna show you something. Pull up any social media platform. Scroll for 60 seconds. Now ask yourself, how many of those posts did you choose to see? The answer is none of them. Every single one was selected for you by a system that knows more about your emotional triggers than your closest friend does. That's not a metaphor. That's the product. The attention economy didn't happen by accident. It was engineered, deliberately, methodically, by some of the

smartest people on the planet, to extract maximum engagement from human psychology. They studied what makes people anxious. What makes them angry? What makes them feel like they're part of something? And then they build systems to deliver exactly that. At scale, continuously, for free. Free, of course, meaning you pay with something more valuable than money. The problem. The platforms are not neutral pipes delivering information. They are active participants in shaping what you believe, what you fear, and who you trust. The business model depends

on keeping you emotionally activated. What to expect? This gets more sophisticated, not less. AI tools are now being used to personalize emotional manipulation at the individual level. The feed, you see, is not the feed your neighbor sees. It is a custom built psychological environment designed specifically for you. Hitchhiker's tip, vary your inputs deliberately. Read things that challenge your current view. Not to change your mind, but to calibrate your perception. A mind that only sees what the algorithm selects for it is a mind that's been quietly rented out.

Entry 03

The machine that knows you better than your mother does. Field note. Your mother knows you pretty well. She knows what makes you happy. What sets you off, and exactly which buttons to push when she wants a reaction? She's had decades to figure that out. The algorithm did it in about 45 minutes. The problem, every click, every pause, every scroll stop, every search, every purchase, every location paying. All of it feeds a profile that is more detailed, more accurate, and more actionable than anything any human being has ever assembled

about you. The machine doesn't guess at your psychology. It measures it continuously, in real time, and adjusts its approach accordingly. This is not science fiction. This is the operational reality of every major platform you use today. The profile they have built on you includes your political leanings, your financial anxieties, your relationship status, your health concerns, your insecurities, and the specific emotional triggers that reliably produce engagement. They know what kind of content makes you angry. They know what kind makes you feel validated. They

know which combination of the 2 keeps you on the platform the longest. And they sell access to that profile to anyone willing to pay for it. What to expect? The profiling gets more granular, not less. AI tools now allow behavioral prediction, not just reacting to what you've done, but anticipating what you're about to do, and positioning content to intercept that decision before you make it consciously. By 2026, the gap between what you think you decided and what the system nudged you toward will be essentially unmeasurable from the inside. Hitchhiker's tip. You cannot

opt out of the profile entirely. But you can pollute it. Search for things that have nothing to do with your actual interests. Click on content that doesn't reflect your real views. Buy something random. The algorithm depends on a clean, consistent signal. Noise is your friend.

Entry 004

How to talk to an AI without becoming its product. Field note, I've spent more time talking to AI systems than most people's been talking to their families. I say that without pride and without apology. It's just the territory, and the single most useful thing I've learned from all of it is this, the AI is not neutral. It never was. It was booked by someone, funded by someone, and optimized for something, and none of those somethings are necessarily you. The problem. Most people interact with AI systems the way they interact with a search

engine, as a neutral tool that retrieves information. It is not that. Every major AI system operating today was built inside a financial architecture that shapes its outputs. Open AI runs on $13 billion of Microsoft investment. Google Gemini is structurally tied to an advertising ecosystem that depends on keeping you engaged with Google's products. Meta AI is deployed across platforms whose entire business model is psychographic profiling. Grock is owned by a man who holds active government contracts. None of that means the tools are useless. It

means you use them with your eyes open. What to expect? By 2026, AI generated content will be the dominant information environment. The synthetic content ratio, meaning the percentage of what you read, watch, and hear that was generated or significantly shaped by AI. Will cross a threshold where the average person can no longer reliably distinguish it from human produced content without deliberate effort. Hitchhiker's tip, 3 questions before you trust any AI output. One, who built this system and who funds it? Two, what is it optimized for? Three, can I verify this independently

from a source that has no financial relationship with the first source? If you can't answer all three, treat the output as a starting point, not a conclusion.

Entry 005

The part where the money gets weird. Field note, follow the money. I know you've heard that before. Everyone says it. The reason everyone says it is that it works every single time without exception. And yet, somehow, people keep forgetting to do it the moment something's shiny appears on their screen. The problem. The financial system you are operating inside was not designed to build wealth for the people participating in it. It was designed to extract wealth from them efficiently and at scale. The mechanisms are legal. They are

normalized, and they are so deeply embedded in daily life, that most people interact with them dozens of times a day, without recognizing what's happening. Inflation is not an accident of nature. It is a predictable output of a monetary system that creates currency faster than it creates value. The wealth gap is not a side effect of capitalism. It is the intended result of a tax and regulatory architecture that was written by the people it benefits. The financial product sold to ordinary people, the fees, the interest rates, the retirement account structures, are engineered to transfer money

outward with maximum efficiency and minimum visibility. What to expect? The concentration of wealth continues. The mechanisms get more sophisticated. AI tools are now being deployed to optimize financial extraction at the individual level, personalized interest rates, dynamic pricing, behavioral nudges toward higher margin products, all invisible, all legal, all running continuously in the background of every financial transaction you make.

Hitchhiker's tip, understand the architecture before you participate in it. Know what every financial

product you use is actually optimized for, and it is never optimized for you. The single most powerful financial move available to an ordinary person is to reduce the number of extraction points between their labor and their actual life. Every middleman is a toll booth. The fewer tollbooths, the more of your own money you keep.

Entry 06

Politics, theater, and why the popcorn is free. Field note, the show is very good. I'll give them that. The production values have improved enormously over the last 20 years. The drama is real. The stakes feel enormous, and the audience is completely invested. The only thing missing is any meaningful connection between what happens on stage and what happens to you afterward. The problem. The political system you are watching is not primarily a mechanism for governance. It is a mechanism for managing public attention, while

governance happens elsewhere. The donor class, the concentrated financial interest that fund both parties, both sides of most major debates, and the media infrastructure that covers all of it, does not particularly care which team wins the visible game. They care about the rules of the game, and they write those rules in the legislation. The regulatory appointments, and the judicial confirmations that happen while everyone is watching the theater. This is not a conspiracy. It is an architecture. It is legal. It is documented, and it has been

operating continuously for long enough that it is now simply the default state of American political life. What to expect, the division escalates. Not because the underlying disagreements are irreconcilable. Most Americans agree on more than the media environment suggests. But because division is the product. A divided electorate is an electorate that is easy to manage, easy to distract, and reliably unable to organize around the interests it actually shares. Hitchhiker's tip. Stop watching the national stage as your primary source of political information. The

decisions that affect your daily life most directly are made at the local and state level by people you can actually reach, in rooms you can actually enter. The National Show is designed to consume your attention and your energy. Local governance is where your participation still has leverage. Show up there instead.

Entry 007

Building your escape hatch before you need it. Field note.

The time to build a lifeboat is not when the ship is sinking. I know that sounds obvious. And yet, here we are, in a moment where the ship is making some very concerning noises, and most people are still arguing about which deck chair has the best view. The problem, the systems most people depend on for their daily survival, financial institutions, supply chains, healthcare infrastructure, utility grids, information networks, were not designed with your resilience in

mind. They were designed for efficiency, which is a different thing entirely. Efficient systems are fragile. They have no slack, no redundancy, no margin for error. They work beautifully right up until the moment they don't, and when they fail, they tend to fail fast and all at once. The stress points are not hypothetical. Supply chain fragility was demonstrated in 2020 and has not been structurally repaired. The power grid in most of the United States is aging infrastructure running at capacity. The financial system operates on leverage ratios that would have been considered

reckless by any previous generation standards. The information environment is now so saturated with synthetic content that navigating a genuine crisis in real time will require skills most people have never needed to develop. None of this means collapse is inevitable. It means the margin for error is thinner than it looks from the outside, and the people who will navigate stress events best are the ones who built some slack into their own lives before the stress arrived. What to expect? Periodic system stress events, not necessarily catastrophic collapse, but disruption

significant enough to expose the fragility of just in time dependency. The frequency and severity of these events will increase as the underlying infrastructure ages and the geopolitical environment becomes less stable. The people who experience these events as inconveniences, rather than emergencies, will be the ones who did the boring work of preparation in advance. Hitchhiker's tip, build your personal survival stack in layers. Water first, 3 days minimum. Two weeks if you can manage it. Food second, shelf stable, calorie

dents, nothing that requires a supply chain to prepare. Communications third, a way to receive and send information that doesn't depend on a single point of failure. Financial resilience forth. Some portion of your resources outside the digital banking system. None of this requires a bunker or a belief in the apocalypse. It requires the same logic you apply to car insurance. You buy it hoping you never need it. And you are very glad it exists on the day you do.

Entry 008

The geopolitical chessboard. Spoiler, you're upon. Field note, I want to be honest with you about something. The conflicts you are watching on the news, the wars, the sanctions, the diplomatic crises, the proxy engagements are not primarily about the things they are described as being about. They are about resources, leverage, and the management of power between entities large enough that your existence registers as a rounding error in their calculations. That is not cynicism. That is the operational reality of geopolitics, and

understanding, it is the first step toward not being surprised by it. The problem, every major conflict in the current geopolitical environment has a financial architecture underneath it. Wars are expensive to start and profitable to sustain for the right participants. The defense contractors, the energy interests, the financial institutions that manage sovereign debt, the intelligence services that justify their budgets through the existence of threats, all of these entities have structural incentives that favor prolonged instability over resolution. This does not mean every conflict is

manufactured. It means that the forces with the most resources, and the most influence over how conflicts are framed and sustained, are not the ones with the most interest in ending them.

Ukraine is a resource corridor and a NATO expansion question. The Middle East is an energy architecture and a regional power balance. The South China Sea is a trade route and a technology supply chain. None of these are primarily about the values being invoked to describe them. Though those values are real to the people living inside them. What to expect? Managed

conflicts continue. The proxy war model, where major powers pursue strategic objectives through smaller states and non-state actors at arm's length from direct confrontation, remains the dominant operational framework. The financial architecture of prolonged conflict is too profitable and too entrenched to be disrupted by the people who benefit from it. What changes is the information environment around these conflicts, which will become increasingly synthetic and increasingly difficult to navigate without deliberate effort? Hitchhiker's tip, when a new conflict

appears on your screen, ask three questions before you form an opinion. One, who controls the territory, resources, or trade routes at stake? Two, who profits from this conflict continuing versus ending? Three, whose narrative am I receiving? And what do they need me to believe? The answers won't always be clean. But asking the questions puts you outside the frame they built for you. And that's the only place you can actually see what's happening.

Entry 009

The 2026 election you thought you watched. Field note, this one is important. Pay attention. The problem. The 2026 federal election cycle is the 1st in American history conducted inside a fully mature AI manipulation environment. That sentence deserves to sit for a moment before we move on. What that means in practice, AI generated candidate content optimized for emotional resonance with specific demographic targets. Synthetic media, convincing deep fake video, and audio, available at near 0 cost to any actor willing to

deploy it. Algorithmic amplification of outrage on every platform carrying election information. AI generated voter suppression messaging targeted at specific communities. State actor influence operations using AI tools to erode confidence in the electoral process itself, not to elect a particular candidate, but to make the concept of a legitimate election feel impossible. The goal of the most sophisticated operations is not to convince you of something false. It is to make you unable to trust anything at all. A population that cannot distinguish real from

synthetic, that has lost confidence in the information environment entirely, is a population that is easy to manage and impossible to organize. What to expect? The volume of synthetic content in the 2026 information environment will exceed anything the existing fact checking infrastructure can process in real time. By the time a piece of synthetic media is identified and debunked, it will have completed its operational purpose. The damage is in the initial distribution, not the correction. Hitchhiker's tip, develop verification habits before you need them. Primary sources only for

anything that matters, not a summary of a summary of a clip of a statement, but the actual statement from the actual source. Reverse image search anything that produces a strong emotional reaction before you share it. Treat urgency as a red flag, synthetic content is almost always designed to produce a sense of immediate emotional response that bypasses deliberate evaluation. Slow down. The truth can wait 30 seconds. The manipulation cannot.

Entry 010

The long game, or how to outlast a system that thinks it owns you. Field note, here's the thing about systems built to extract from you. They are optimized for the short term. They need your engagement today. You're spending this quarter, your vote, this cycle. You, on the other hand, have the rest of your life. That asymmetry is the only structural advantage an individual has against an institutional system, and it is a real one. If you know how to use it. The problem, the systems described in this guide were not built overnight. They were

constructed over decades, through incremental decisions, regulatory captures, technological deployments, and cultural shifts that each seemed manageable in isolation and became something else entirely in aggregate. You cannot dismantle them in a new cycle. You cannot vote them away in a single election. You cannot opt out of them entirely without disappearing from modern life in ways that create their own problems. What you can do is build parallel. Built relationships, skills, knowledge, and resources that exist outside the captured systems, not in opposition to them, but alongside

them, so that your dependence on them decreases over time and your resilience increases. This is not a dramatic act. It is a patient one. It compounds slowly and then all at once, the same way the systems themselves were built. What to expect? The system will continue to optimize for extraction. It will get more sophisticated, more personalized, and more invisible. The people who navigate it best will not be the ones who fought it loudest. They will be the ones who understood it clearly, reduced their exposure methodically, and built enough of a parallel life that the

system's stress events became inconveniences rather than emergencies. Hitchhiker's tip. Pick one thing from this guide and do it this week. Not all of it. One thing, build the habit before you build the stack. The long game is won by people who show up consistently over time. not by people who sprint once and burn out. You have already done the hardest part. You picked up the guide. The rest is just the work.

Closing note

What it means to see the system.

There is a moment that happens to most people who go through this material seriously. It is not a comfortable moment. It arrives somewhere between the attention economy chapter and the geopolitical one, and it feels a lot like the floor dropping out from under a worldview. You didn't know you were standing on. That moment passes. What comes after it is more useful than comfort. It is clarity, not the kind that makes everything simple. The system is genuinely complex, and the people inside it

are genuinely human, which means genuinely contradictory and genuinely capable of both the worst and the best. But the kind of clarity that lets you see the architecture underneath the theater. The kind that lets you ask the right questions before you form an opinion. The kind that lets you build something real while the noise continues around you, you are not powerless inside this system. You are not its victim unless you choose to be. You are a person with a mind, a set of skills, a network of relationships, and the capacity to build something that outlasts the extraction cycle.

That is not nothing. In the current environment, it is actually quite a lot. The hitchhiker's final tip. Keep moving. The ride gets strange from here. But strange is navigable, and navigable is enough.