

# The Locksmith Who Works For Us

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*Why the scariest AI story of the year might actually be the most hopeful one — if you read it the right way.*



Picture this.

A locksmith walks into your neighbourhood one morning. Quiet man. Thick glasses. He carries a small leather pouch of tools. And within an hour, he has opened every front door on your street.

Your first instinct? Panic.

But pause for a second. Ask the question nobody asks when the panic arrives.

**Who does the locksmith work for?**

Because if he works for the burglars, yes — you should be terrified. But if he works for *you*... then for the first time in your life, every weak lock on your street is about to be replaced before a single thief knows they existed.

That's the story almost nobody is telling about AI right now. And it's the story your grandchildren will wish you had understood first.

## The part of the news nobody puts in the headline

Here is something strange about how the world works.

For as long as computers have existed, the bad guys have had an unfair advantage. A hacker only needs to find **one** weak door. A defender has to protect **every** door — in every building, in every city, forever.

One crack. One forgotten window. One outdated lock. That's all it takes.

This is why your bank gets breached. Why hospitals go dark. Why entire pipelines shut down because of a password someone typed in 2009 and forgot.

The attackers didn't get smarter. The game was rigged.

Now ask yourself: what would happen if, for the first time in history, the defenders got a tool as powerful as the attackers already have?

That is the real story. And nobody's shouting it from the rooftops — because fear sells faster than hope.

# The "scary" AI, re-examined

So there's this new AI. Let's not get caught up in names. Let's just describe what it actually does.

It reads code. A lot of code. The kind of code that runs your bank, your electricity, your hospital's heart monitor, your country's traffic lights.

And it finds the cracks.

Now — your gut reaction, if you've been reading the news, is: *"Oh no. An AI that can break things."*

But flip the sentence. Just flip it.

An AI that can find cracks **before** criminals do. An AI that can find cracks **faster** than criminals can. An AI that can find cracks in systems that have been quietly broken for **twenty years** and nobody noticed.

Suddenly, this isn't a monster. It's a smoke detector. A very, very good smoke detector — one that can sniff out fires that have been smouldering in your walls since before your children were born.

Would you be scared of that? Or grateful?

# The silent war your retirement is already in

Let me tell you something that will sound like science fiction. It isn't.

Right now, today, adversaries of democratic nations are quietly copying encrypted data off the internet. Your bank's data. Your hospital's data. Government files. Love letters. Tax returns. *All* of it.

They can't read any of it yet. The encryption is too strong.

But they're saving it. For later.

Why? Because they're betting that in ten or fifteen years, a new kind of computer — a *quantum* computer — will be able to crack today's encryption like an eggshell. And when it does, they'll have two decades of your secrets ready to read.

This is called "harvest now, decrypt later." It is the slowest, quietest heist in human history. And it is happening *right now*, while you read this.

So here's the Socratic question: who is going to rewrite the locks on a billion computers before that day comes?

Not humans alone. There aren't enough of us. There aren't nearly enough of us.

An AI that deeply understands code — truly understands it, the way a master carpenter understands wood — is not a monster. It might be the only reason your grandchildren's bank accounts survive 2040.

## The quiet miracle of a hospital that doesn't get hacked

Forget nations and spies for a moment.

Think about your local hospital.

In the last few years, hospitals around the world have been paralysed by ransomware. Ambulances diverted. Surgeries cancelled. In several documented cases, **patients have died** because the systems that kept them alive went dark.

Why? Because hospital software is a tangled mess of old programs, rushed updates, and devices built in 2003 that were never designed to face modern attackers. Nobody has the time — or the money — or the people — to audit all of it.

Nobody, that is, until now.

Imagine an AI that quietly walks through every line of code in every medical device in every hospital. Finds the weaknesses. Writes the fixes. Hands them to the engineers. And does it in a week, not a decade.

How many lives is that? Think about it seriously. How many?

The same logic extends to power grids that heat your home in winter. To water treatment plants. To the systems that keep planes from colliding. To voting machines. To the pensions of retired steelworkers.

All of it, today, is held together by software that is older, creakier, and more exposed than anyone outside the industry would believe.

A tool that can fix this is not a weapon. It is a public health intervention on a scale we've never imagined before.

# "But isn't this dangerous in the wrong hands?"

Yes. Of course. So is electricity. So is a kitchen knife. So is a car.

Here's a better question: is it *more* dangerous in good hands, or in *nobody's* hands?

Because the alternative isn't a world where nobody builds this. The alternative is a world where the *only* people who build it are the ones who won't tell you they did.

Think about that slowly. Read it again if you need to.

The choice is never "powerful tool, yes or no." The choice is always: **who gets it first, and what do they do with the head start.**

When responsible builders move first, they get to set the rules, build the defences, patch the systems, warn the governments. When they don't, someone else does — and we only find out after the damage.

So when you read that a company is being careful about who it shares a powerful AI with, don't hear "they're hoarding something dangerous." Hear something closer to the truth: **they're giving the good guys a head start in a race the bad guys didn't know had begun.**

## The reframe that should calm your Sunday lunch conversations

If you're of a certain age — and this article is partly for you — you've lived through this pattern before.

You remember when people were terrified of electricity in homes.

You remember when the television was going to rot children's brains.

You remember when the internet was going to end civilisation.

Each of those fears had a grain of truth in it. Electricity *does* kill people. Television *does* waste time. The internet *has* made some things worse. But each one also built a world richer, healthier, and longer-lived than the one before it.

The pattern is always the same. A powerful new tool arrives. The first stories are about its dangers — because danger is more interesting to write about than quiet progress. Then, slowly, the tool gets woven into ordinary life. And twenty years later, nobody can remember what we were so afraid of.

AI is in the "scary stories" phase. That's fine. That's normal. That's even healthy — because the fear makes us cautious, and the caution makes the rollout safer.

But don't confuse the phase with the ending.

## One last question to sit with

Here's what I'd gently leave you with.

The next time someone at dinner says *"this AI thing is going to destroy us"* — don't argue. Don't defend. Just ask one quiet question:

**"Who do you think the locksmith is working for?"**

Then watch their face change. Because nine times out of ten, they've never been invited to consider the possibility that the answer might be — *us*.

The locksmith is already walking down the street. The only real question left is whether we stand on our porch and shout at him, or invite him in to check the locks before the burglars arrive.

I know which one I'd choose. I think, once you've thought about it, you'll choose the same.

*If this article changed how you see the AI conversation, share it with someone over 60.*

*They're the ones being scared the most — and they're the ones with the least patience for fearmongering dressed up as news.*