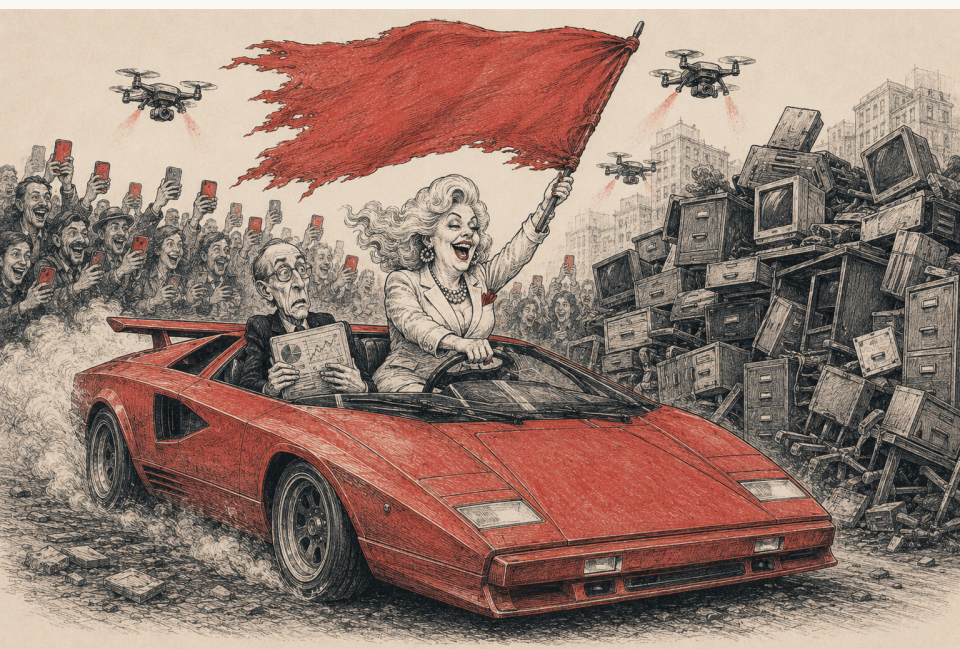


The Prince

Karim Galzahr



A political satire in ten conversations

The Aiomic Age

PATH DEPENDENT

The Prince

Karim Galzahr

Ten conversations. Five years.
A distance that keeps closing.

THE VOICES

P is the leader. M is the adviser.
The rest is a matter of time.

An illustrated short book

The Aiomic Age / 2026

ABOUT THIS EDITION

The Prince

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Ten conversations

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Tomato

P: So you're the new adviser. What is it you do?

M: I help you win.

P: And how do you do that?

M: By repeating simple things that everyone already knows, slowly with great poise.

P: Hah. Right. "Yes We Can". How'd you like my monkey voice?

M: Evocative.

P: What do I call you, anyway?

M: You can call me M.

P: Em. Sure. Why not? And you can call me...

M: I will call you my Prince.

P: In case you hadn't noticed –

M: I had noticed.

P: You're a very strange man.

M: And you're the queen of all she surveys. The founder of the first great political movement of the AI age. Her book is on every screen in every classroom. Her edicts are on the walls of the great offices of the state.

P: Uh...no they're not. Are you on something? Can I have some?

M: No, and no. But you're right. Those things are not yet true.

P: This is what they told me about you.

M: That I speak in carefully constructed aphorisms?

P: That you talk bullshit all the time.

M: Fair. Did they say anything else?

P: They said you do a lot of numbers.

M: That is true.

P: They said you have a plan to rule the universe.

M: A small corner of it, perhaps.

P: You want to be the, you know, grey guy. Behind the whatever it is I end up sitting on. A prison bench, probably. You do know they're going to throw me in jail. For taxes. Who doesn't fiddle their taxes?

- M: People are angry. They want the rich to pay their due.
- P: Losers and scroungers. I built my business from the ground up, brick by brick. I sweated.
- M: I understand it was an online gambling platform. Are there bricks? Did you sweat?
- P: Nobody got me to where I am, that's what I'm saying.
- M: I thought your father gave you a million dollars for compute.
- P: Look, everyone's Dad gives them a bit of seed capital.
- M: Indeed. Life is about important numbers, and how those numbers are distributed.
- P: There you go with the bullshit, again. OK, give me an important number.
- M: 3.
- P: What's three?
- M: 3 is the price of a soil-grown tomato in 2031, divided by its price today.
- P: Are you sure?
- M: Let's pretend I am. But the number is less important than what it does.

P: Alright, I'll bite.

M: It's a vector component, which, when fed into a complex, non-linear system of differential equations, contributes to a scalar.

P: What's that? Some kind of lizard? Hah. See what I did there? Scaly, because lizards –

M: Yes. I see. But we are talking about distance.

P: Then why didn't you say that then? No, I know why. It's because big words are just another way of sneering at the rest of us. Well now you can fuck right off.

M: Very well.

P: Where are you going?

M: There are other Princes, my dear. Or other Princesses.

P: That's it?

M: It was your suggestion. I am taking it.

P: But it was just getting interesting.

M: Really?

P: No. But I'm totally out of other options and people said...people I trust...

M: People and trust make poor bedfellows.

P: Well, you've got to trust someone.

M: No, you do not need trust. You need fear. Good day, Madam.

P: Wait! Distance from what?

M: I'm sorry?

P: No you're fucking not. You said a distance. From what?

M: Revolution.

P: And you get all that out of the price of tomatoes. You need to get out more.

M: Well, it is only one of many numbers.

P: And what am I supposed to do with it anyway?

M: You are going to talk about the price of tomatoes. Slowly, and with great poise.

P: That's it? That's your advice?

M: For today.

P: Uh...OK. Well, sure. I like a good bacon and tomato sarnie as much as the next gal. And yeah, food isn't cheap these days. Not like it used to be.

- M: Soil erosion and compaction, the fertiliser crisis after the Iran shock, drought and flooding – yes, the tomato is not as cheap as it used to be. But also, not as expensive as it will become as the world burns.
- P: Oh please. I don't believe in that climate crap.
- M: Fortunately, that crap believes in you.
- P: And everyone knows this shit already. It's all over the bleeding liberal fake news.
- M: Of course. There would hardly be much point in telling you to say something people don't already know. This is politics, not theoretical physics.
- P: Well thank fuck for that then. Send me your invoice. Thirty-day terms, I suppose?
- M: Oh no. I'm afraid not.
- P: Look, I don't pay my contractors in advance, alright? My Dad always said –
- M: 1826.
- P: One thousand and...what? Is that your next important number?

- M: No, our next number is for next time. These are merely my payment terms. You will pay me in one thousand, eight hundred and twenty-six days.
- P: God, you really are a nutjob aren't you? Fine. You can be my adviser, so long as I don't have to pay you anything. Hope you're suitably honoured.
- M: My Prince, please believe me when I tell you that this means the world to me.

Fulfilment

P: Have you seen this? Have you?

M: I see everything.

P: Two percent. Two!

M: The polls don't matter yet. What matters for now is the price of tomatoes, which is going up nicely.

P: You told me to set up that damn foundation. It cost money you know!

M: A conventional political structure must exist, under the radar, when you need it. And these days a successful movement pays for itself on social media.

P: Justice. What kind of a name is that anyway? Anyway, what do you have for me today? Please tell me it's not more supermarkets.

M: Today, we are visiting a fulfilment warehouse.

P: What? Why?

- M: We're going to talk to the people who work there.
- P: I thought it was all robots these days.
- M: That's exactly why we're going there.
- P: To talk to the robots? Are they going to vote for me then?
- M: Unlikely. We're talking to the people who are left.
- P: I don't like it. A bunch of hard-nosed old codgers with big knuckles aren't going to make good short form.
- M: Actually they all have higher degrees.
- P: Ah, they're programming the robots then?
- M: Of course not. That's all done in China.
- P: So it's PhDs stacking the shelves, is it? Losers.
- M: Yes. Or in other words, your people. It's time for a number.
- P: Oh please no.
- M: 47. It's the graduate underemployment rate.
- P: You mean unemployment, right?
- M: Under, not Un. Do you know who makes revolutions happen, my Prince?

P: Ah, the Illuminati –

M: Young educated middle class men who have not received the opportunities to which they believe they are entitled.

P: Cry me a river.

M: Yes, exactly. Although I wouldn't drink it.

P: So that's it?

M: That's it. Go there, shake hands, look like you care. We'll cut it with frames of those new machines.

P: Oh, you mean the really cool ones with the extensible legs so they can stack the top shelves. And then there are the even newer ones with the –

M: Yes, my Prince. Your coat.

P: What, right now?

M: We have to get there before the Enemy.

P: I have an enemy? That's good isn't it? I know how this works. More enemies means more attention and all attention is good.

M: Your political genius is a key asset, my Prince. But this is not just an enemy. It is the Enemy.

P: What are they called then?

M: Advance.

P: Stupid name.

M: Indeed. But more on that, unfortunately, another time.

Yeoman

P: Bloody hell it's hot.

M: Indeed.

P: Don't take that tone with me.

M: I have no tone, my Prince. I am toneless.

P: This is because I used the C word, isn't it?

M: It was inadvisable.

P: All I said was, the climate is getting harder for ordinary people.

M: Indeed.

P: Are you really telling me I can't use the word climate? Ever?

M: The more terrible reality becomes, the less people want to talk about it.

P: I thought you said I had to make people scared.

M: I said you had to make them scared of each other. It's not the same. But perhaps we digress. I have a new number for you.

Metalhead

P: That's interesting.

M: My Prince?

P: That expression. I've never seen it before. You look...worried. It's the Advance thing isn't it?

M: They are becoming frustratingly effective. Our distance metric is going into reverse. Something must be done.

P: Well, people like a bit of hope. Imagine it – a world where nobody has to work! The robots do all the nasty stuff, and we get to, you know, write poetry. I've always thought I had a great novel in me somewhere.

M: I would prefer not to speculate where precisely.

P: What?

M: Never mind. It's too early for hope. And that's what worries me about Advance. We need easier enemies. We need to present people with an opposition of fears.

P: The right against the left. Freedom against communism. The undeserving rich against the lazy poor.

M: Well said, my Prince.

P: Judeo-Christian civilisation against The East.

M: Of course. And women against men. That, perhaps, most of all. Time for our number of the day.

P: Oh, I've got this one. 25. That's the liberality gap between young men and women. Up from 15 five years ago and 5 twenty years before that.

M: I'm astonished.

P: Well, I'm a woman mostly backed by angry men.
It's all a bit on the nose.

M: Politics is the art of misdirection. But on to more pressing matters. We need to do a better job of demonising AI. We need to set the people firmly against the robots and their creators.

P: I thought that was what all the China bashing was for.

M: Among other things. But we will have to redouble our content dissemination efforts.

P: Using AI.

M: How else? Our city, swarmed by the shiny metal heads of robots. Metalheads taking our jobs, metalheads sucking up our energy, clogging our streets, raping our girls...

P: I doubt it. To be honest I find my new Massage Master 3 quite helpful when –

M: Too much detail, my Prince. The point is that this will vibrate with your base.

P: Yes, that's what I meant –

M: Enough, my Prince! I will get onto this immediately.

P: But...they really aren't, are they?

M: What?

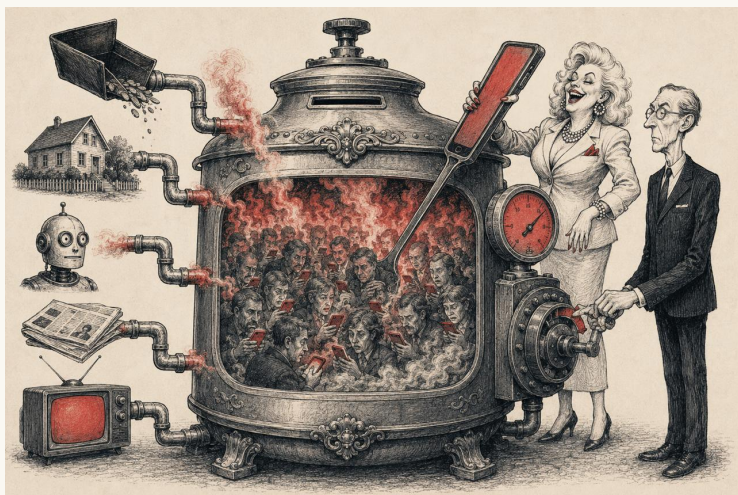
P: They aren't clogging up our streets, or any of the other stuff. There's only a few of them in most places. Honestly, they're barely noticeable most of the time. They stay out of the way, a bit like the immigrants used to before they got uppity. They're working in the sewers clearing all those horrible fatbergs, or picking fruit when it's too hot even for brown people, or wiping old men's butts in the care homes, or fighting our wars, making our steel, building our houses, dealing with our toxic waste...

M: Yes. All true.

- P: Basically, they do all the blood, sweat and tears stuff we can't handle any more.
- M: But in a way that's the point. We know we've lost it. We know we're a pale shadow of our forefathers. And so we feel sad and useless. And that makes us angry. You have to channel that loss. You have to direct that anger outwards.
- P: At the migrants and the robots, cos they make us feel bad about ourselves.
- M: Exactly. What about last week? When that robot went mad and attacked a man with a butter knife?
- P: Yes, it was hacked by a business rival though wasn't it? So not sure that was the robot's fault
—
- M: The Islamic Republic of Great Britain.
- P: Oh but that's just God's own truth! Shariah law! We're being replaced! Whereas the robot thing isn't actually happening...
- M: It's the Reverse Tree, my Prince.
- P: The what?
- M: Have you heard the expression, "when a tree falls in the forest and nobody is there to see it, did it really fall at all?"

- P: Of course. My prof at university used to waffle on about that all the time. So boring.
- M: The reverse version is much more important. If a million people see a tree fall in the forest, does it matter if it didn't actually happen? In fact, how else do you define the fall of the tree except as something that people have seen, or heard, or felt? Perception is reality, my Prince.
- P: Like if I manifest that I'm going to be Leader of the Free World, it's bound to happen!
- M: Something like that. A second number of the day. 65.
- P: Two in one session? Let's not let this get out of hand.
- M: It's the proportion of published news items wholly or mainly generated by AI this year. Up from about 50 in 2025, by the way.
- P: Ah but how do I know that's true? Where did you read it, huh? Maybe it's AI slop! That's the problem with numbers and facts. You can't trust anything you haven't seen with your own eyes.
- M: Have you seen those Shariah courts, my Prince?
- P: Of course! They're all over TikTok!
- M: Precisely so, my Prince.

Pressure Cooker



P: Well, there it is. I've lost. Again.

M: Losing is winning, my Prince. And winning is losing.

P: Am I paying you by the fortune cookie now?
What is the sound of one hand clapping?

- M: You are paying me to make you win. But we did not specify when.
- P: Oh, nice one. So if I win my first election but drop dead the next day that would count as a job well done, then?
- M: Stopped clocks and the mouths of babes. But meanwhile, my Prince, this is precisely the election nobody should want to win.
- P: So I let them handle the hot potatoes while I sit on the sidelines, trash the system and promise easy answers to difficult questions? Yeah, OK. I mean that's just any other Tuesday.
- M: Precisely. Meanwhile, do you think that smiling young man will be able to deliver on the Change We Need?
- P: Nah. Change is easy to say, hard to do. The fact is we don't need people to do anything except consume and vote, but everyone has to keep waffling on about real jobs and all that crap.
- M: Maintaining the illusion of human dignity is expensive, and governments are broke. Too many engineered deregulatory booms, too many ancient peace dividends spent, borrowed against, re-mortgaged and securitised to buy the fickle boomer vote.

- P: It doesn't work, you know. Handouts don't buy you gratitude. They don't even buy you votes these days.
- M: Indeed. They don't buy anything except self-disgust masquerading as righteous anger. And eventually, when the population has burned through every promise of a new dawn, every strident trumpet of change, where will they have left to turn?
- P: Me. Alright, where do you want me to go look gravely sympathetic today? An OnlyFans farm?
- M: That's not a bad idea, actually. I can still remember the halcyon days when OF promised a healthy income boost for enterprising young women.
- P: Supply and demand innit?
- M: Innit indeed. But first our number of the day: I call this one the Pressure Cooker.
- P: Is this the bit where you boil everything down for me? Hah. Get it? Get it?
- M: Yes, my Prince. Very funny. But this one is a bit more complicated than usual. It's a composite.
- P: My teeth are full of those. Too much grinding. I blame you. The day after I win, I won't grind my teeth ever again.

M: I intend to see to it that you don't, my Prince.
Now how well do you know Euclid?

P: You mean on a scale from “been on a Zoom with him once” to “dropping by the day after to pick up my knickers”?

M: Something like that.

P: Never met the guy.

M: The thing is, not all of our metrics are Euclidean, my Prince. Today's is a weighted log-additive function that depends on the first derivatives of three factors against a historical baseline. The first is the rate of increase in the income gap between the top 10% and the bottom 50% of households, before government transfers. The second is the growth rate in adverse discretionary welfare adjudication decisions in which sanctions are applied, assessments are failed or benefits are withdrawn. The third is the rate of increase in the ratio of median house prices in the same top 10% of regions against those in the bottom 50%.

P: Oh look at the time! I'm late for my Lukewarm Reformerlatesboxyoga class! I've tried the Hot and Cold versions, but this is definitely the best for my vagus nerve...

M: The Pressure Cooker tells you three things. First, how much poorer your people feel every year when they visit the rich places. Second, how angry they are that everyone around them spends half their life scrounging for benefits. Third, how hard it is for them to move to places where there are still a few decent jobs, so they don't have to spend half their life scrounging for benefits.

P: What about the other half?

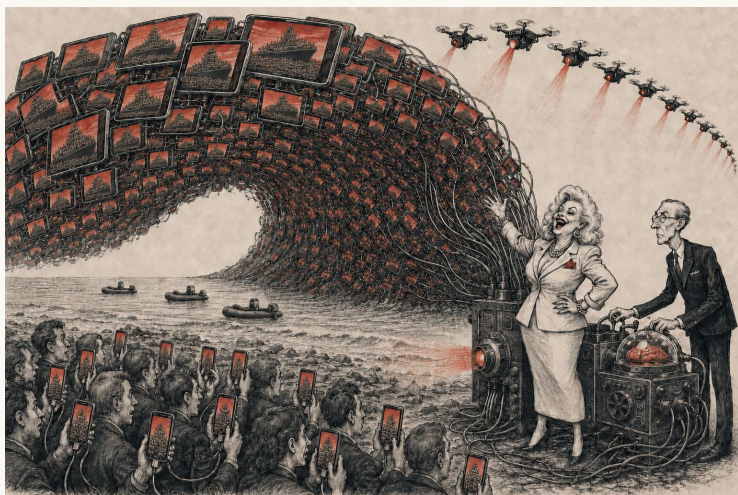
M: What?

P: I was paying attention, you know. What do they do with the other half of their life?

M: Complain about how the brown family next door gets more benefits than they do.

- P:** The Pressure Cooker. Hmm. You can't make enough. You can't scrounge enough. And you can't move to somewhere you make enough to not have to scrounge.
- M:** Disturbingly concise, my Prince.
- P:** Well, you know what they say. Move your body, sharpen your mind. Fancy coming to class? They have free green tea. Very healthy. You could do with losing a few pounds.
- M:** Thank you but no thank you, my Prince. An Adviser's work is never done.
- P:** There are hot girls in short yoga pants.
- M:** Well...perhaps we can go over your next YouTube shorts on the way.

The Wave



M: This is the day before the day before.

P: Before what?

M: Your focal point moment.

P: How boring. Come back to me when something's actually happening.

- M: Outstanding, my Prince. Of course AI is pretty helpful with the disenchantment and impatience too. So this is one of those battles we pretty much win either way.
- P: Back to the brown wave. Although that does sound rather like our sewage system...
- M: An excellent analogy. Wave upon wave of the unwashed, the starving, the sick, the desperate women and the broken children...
- P: AKA “Fighting Age Men”.
- M: Well done, my Prince! And so we propose a solution. A drone wall. A mobile swarm to control our borders, tirelessly, twenty-four seven, and speak to the evil people smugglers in the only language those animals understand.
- P: Hard cash?
- M: Violence, my Prince.
- P: Wow. Are we ready for that?

M: Five years ago I'd have hesitated. But our bots have been weaponising and propagating extreme content for so long that the population is largely desensitised. And we will do the usual things. The drones will issue warnings, and use facial recognition, and have human oversight in the loop, but once all the proper steps have been taken, any boat sunk is, ipso facto, a vector for disease, drugs and crime.

P: Yeah, it worked in Venezuela.

M: Ancient history, nobody remembers Venezuela.

P: It was five years ago.

M: Practically neolithic. I would simply lean into your strengths.

P: A steely-eyed determination to be the new Alfred fighting off the Vikings in their little rubber boats?

M: Not yet!

P: As a woman I'm afraid to walk home at night these days?

M: Much better!

P: But...it's a bit AI isn't it? The drones and whatnot? I thought we were against AI, since the Advance crowd love it so much.

- M: You must master cognitive dissonance, my Prince.
- P: Like freezing my eggs while telling all the other girls to stay at home and have babies for the good of the nation?
- M: You are the supernova of populist politics, my Prince.
- P: Sounds wonderful!
- M: It's meant to, my Prince. It's meant to.

Rising Tides

M: The new visuals are in, my Prince.

P: The Death Star?

M: And you as Luke Skywalker.

P: But with better hair, natch.

M: Precisely.

P: So the AI tech bros are the Empire and we're the Resistance? It's a bit old skool, isn't it?

M: The seventies are having a moment.

P: The seventies are always having a moment, which is quite funny if you actually remember them. But the bros are all about colonising the galaxy in the name of humanity and so on. Isn't that kind of inspiring?

M: Well, not if you're the 99.9999% of humans who get left behind when they do.

- P: Right, it's that survival of the fittest thing they always go on about. By which they mean survival of the richest, mostly, because...have you met these guys?
- M: They are not generally paragons of physical or mental prowess.
- P: Unlike me, right? Next. Ah, rich dudes made up as vampires. An oldie but a goodie. They suck our blood and want to live forever.
- M: Well, mostly they inject it. But there is an argument that the rich are becoming a different sub-species.
- P: Kind of like those influencer girls with the cheap lip jobs.
- M: Less collagen, more diet and external stressors with a growing side order of genetic engineering. The gap in healthy life expectancy between the top and bottom 1% is 20 years.
- P: You should have been a nurse.
- M: I'm sorry?
- P: You jabbed that number in so fast it didn't hurt a bit.
- M: I regret to disappoint you, our number of the day is yet to come.

- P: Oh well. But the point is, it's a vampire meritocracy, isn't it? Anyone can be an eternal bloodsucker if they're hardworking and smart.
- M: Not really, my Prince. This is how the system protects itself. A few wunderkinds held up as poster children for mobility. But the averages tell a different story.
- P: Ah, here we go. The Gini coefficient?
- M: No, my Prince. What really bites is not inequality. It's stasis.
- P: Once you're in the club you stay in the club?
- M: And you close the door behind you. Today's number is 52.
- P: That's the meaning of life!
- M: You're out by 10. 52 is the percentage of average lifetime earnings that the top decile receive by inheritance alone, if they were born in the 1980s. That's up from 32 for those born 20 years earlier.
- P: TLDR!
- M: Inheritance is all that matters.
- P: Nonsense. Who cares about inheritance? What matters is whether people are better off than their parents. A rising tide lifts all boats!

M: In that case, 45.

P: If I murder you, can I use statistics as a mitigating factor?

M: We shall see, my Prince. 45 is the percentage of people born in 1980 who out-earn their parents.

P: Down from? There's always a down from.

M: Down from 93 for those born in 1940.

P: So much for the rising tide.

M: A tide is rising, my Prince. It is lapping at our ankles.

P: Good thing I've got me a decent yacht then.

M: I hope I will have a berth when the time comes, my Prince?

P: Don't count on it.

Cortisol Stew

M: I'm sorry to be late, my Prince. The riots.

P: Yeah, it's always the riots. I do love it when they chant my name though.

M: Do you mean the ones who love you or the ones who hate you?

P: Both. I thought Advance were all about holding hands and singing kumbaya while robots do all the work. I didn't think they'd have the balls for violence.

M: They are afraid of you.

P: Well, I have promised to lock them all up.

M: I think your precise words were "line those robot-loving traitors up against our new flood walls and shoot them".

P: Did I say that? It's pretty good.

- M: Thank you, my Prince. And you are right. All attention drives engagement. All fear is good. The fear your supporters feel about AI and robots and a future which will not look like the past. The fear your enemies feel about the loss of their freedoms, or being left behind, dumped on the great trash heap of history as China grandly proceeds towards global hegemony.
- P: Yeah. Fear leads to anger, anger leads to hate...
- M: And hate leads to the thirst for a great leader.
- P: Not sure that was the original quote. So we keep chucking out the AI slop?
- M: Yes, tailored by audience. The old white folk as usual, but also the ex-artists. The ex-writers. The ex-journalists. The ex-editors and ex-translators and ex-teachers and ex-ad men and ex-lab technicians. The ex-government paper pushers most of all. Anyone whose job AI does better.
- P: Real books written by real people! Real paper pushed by real flunkies!
- M: Absolutely. Fear is good, but we also need pride. You have to mix it up a bit. Give people a hit, but not always the same hit.

- P: Right. It's not that different from the family betting business in a way.
- M: Algorithmic hate, the quick satisfaction of manufactured identity. Intermittent variable rewards. Yes, we're engineering political addiction.
- P: Or as Dad used to say, give people a bit o' what they want. You know, he also said most jobs were mostly bullshit. Never forgave me for going into politics.
- M: I'm sorry to hear that. But he was right. We've been pretending to work for a hundred years. People need food, steel, concrete, rare earths – half of that is automated, half we get from poor places where they don't mind breathing bad air or breaking their backs down a mine.
- P: So AI is just our The Worker Has No Clothes moment?
- M: Perfectly put. And your job is to provide a new wardrobe. You will tell them they can stand tall and proud.
- P: Proud of what?
- M: Being a white human in a sea of migrants and robots.
- P: I really am the patron saint of mediocrities.

- M: You don't have to like your people. You don't even have to respect them. You just have to give them a voice.
- P: Advance is promising a better world. They have, like, policy papers and stuff. With detailed costings.
- M: As you have amply demonstrated, people aren't keen on numbers. They want stories.
- P: Our story is a time machine back to family dinners in front of the TV and only one kind of toilet paper. It's a bit unambitious.
- M: Ah but back then men were real men. Women were real women.
- P: And toilet paper was real toilet paper?
- M: Nostalgia is stronger than optimism. People talk hope and change. But they vote pride and fear.
- P: And we can always find new ways to make them fear.
- M: White guy commits a crime is a footnote.
- P: Brown guy does it – that's a headline.
- M: Page 23 for the new cancer drug.
- P: Page 1 for robot ate my job.
- M: Or my cat.

- P: Did that actually happen? I thought we made it up.
- M: Honestly, my Prince, I can't keep track at this point.
- P: So pride and nostalgia mixed in with the fear. A healthy dose of God and the Pope and whatnot? Should I waffle about how stochastic parrots don't have souls?
- M: God, maybe. The Pope...probably not going to be your BFF.
- P: Worried parents? Our kids are talking to bots instead of lurking in malls like the good old days?
- M: Unequivocally. Today's number is 2.3, by the way.
- P: How depressingly specific.
- M: The percentage increase in click-throughs from adding one negative word to a news headline.
- P: Hmm. But even if we stop the tech bros doing everything with robots, the Chinese will keep going. They'll make the money. They'll have the power.
- M: That ship has sailed, my Prince.

P: But then how do I pay for all the healthcare and pensions and stuff?

M: You don't. It worked for Iran.

P: I'm supposed to imitate the ragheads now?

M: Only the aggressively retrograde ones, my Prince. The point is that it is often easier to maintain authority in a failing country than in a thriving one.

P: People will back me because they're too exhausted to think of an alternative?

M: And because you're their only hope for self-respect.

P: You can't eat self-respect. If people's lives don't actually get better, say hello to Madame Guillotine.

M: Not if you provide a ready supply of internal and external enemies. Turn the cortisol dial high, let everyone stew in a big pot of anger, resentment and insecurity. And don't take it from me – learn from the best.

P: Vladimir is such a lovely chap, always so generous. So cortisol stew it is. A bit ugly, but I guess you're right. And anyway, if I don't do it –

M: Someone else surely will.

Lambos and Barricades

M: Another day, another data centre fire.

P: It really warms my heart to see people taking back control.

M: One act of patriotic resistance at a time. Or as we used to call it, terrorism.

P: My fave bit was when that girl said she was doing it for the environment.

M: Well, all that smoke does act as a sunshade.

P: But now what? It's chaos out there. And you promised me Advance would fold.

M: I...might have been a little premature. The metric's non-Euclidean components –

P: Fuck Euclid. I can't sell screwed-but-proud or back-to-the-fifties against a relentless tide of bright shiny techno-future.

- M: The number is 12. That's how many children there were in the pilot. Hardly seismic. But I agree we have to reclaim the agenda.
- P: Maybe you should write me a, whatsit, briefing. About fixing things without AI. Or robots. Or brown people.
- M: No need for briefings. You're channelling the will of the people, not sending papers for peer review. It's all about authenticity.
- P: Dunno. When does authenticity just become mouthing off without thinking, never doing an ounce of prep for anything and generally being really crap at your job?
- M: Instantly. People want an avatar, not an expert.
- P: You mean they want someone about as rubbish as they are?
- M: But with more bling.
- P: Yeah, about that. We spend half our time bashing super-rich tech dudes, but you want me to parade around in the Lambo.
- M: Your job is to be the biggest doggie, keeping all the other big doggies under control.

P: Kind of like the king used to do with the nobles.
Oh don't raise your eyebrow at me, I do read history.

M: Really?

P: Well, not as such. But that's what AI said. There was something about Aristotle and going round in circles...

M: You mean Polybius's anacyclosis.

P: Do I? Sounds complicated. And boring.

M: It was both. But the modern version is simpler. Democracy degenerates into oligarchy when the rich capture the state. Oligarchy makes way for dictatorship because the poor need a king to protect them.

P: And I guess a monarchy is just a dictatorship with better costumes. I'm quite looking forward to stringing up some tech bros, although I'm honestly surprised they don't see it coming.

M: We live in the age of paralysed analysis, my Prince. Everybody sees everything coming. They just don't do anything about it.

P: So those morons care more about being a bit super-richer than the next super-rich guy than they do about surviving the revolution?

M: They think they can buy the revolution off or retire to a bunker in New Zealand.

P: They're almost as dumb as my supporters.

M: That's a judgement for the history books.
Assuming you don't ban them all of course. If I
might make one small suggestion...

P: More speechifying?

M: Talk about judges.

P: Right, we hate them don't we?

M: Indeed. The judges have ruled that approved data centres can be built, whether people want them or not. And the judges have ruled that vandalising them is a criminal offence.

P: Putting our brave patriots behind bars.

M: Going against the will of the people.

P: Because this is about democracy! Wait, is it? I want to be a dictator. Except with better costumes.

M: A good dictatorship is the tyranny of the majority.

P: Provided they're, you know, white and stuff.

M: You say it best, as always.

P: Quick number before I go? Just for luck?

M: 532.

P: Ah, a nice big one this time.

M: It's the number of recommended actions listed in Project 2025. But we will do more, and do it faster.

P: They always said it couldn't happen here. They said it couldn't happen anywhere, after the last time.

M: That's precisely why it will happen here, and then everywhere. Historians will remember the first attempts as the little gust of wind before a great storm.

P: I thought it was supposed to be calm before a storm.

M: It was, briefly. Remember when I said you had to lose the last election?

P: I remember I was losing it anyway and you said that to make me feel better.

P: I'm gonna get medieval.

M: You're not yet in a position to torture your enemies to death.

P: I'm gonna ride out! To the barricades. With the flag. In the Lambo!

M: I...that's...let me re-run the model...yes...the juxtaposition of bravery and bling, the sheer viral panache...it's quite brilliant actually.

P: Don't sound so surprised.

M: Maybe we can arrange a little ricochet graze on the ear. Your base will follow you and your Lambo to Hell and back.

P: Everyone's base does that. That's how you get a civil war.

- M: Only when the forces are evenly balanced. And only when industry can't pick a side. They will pick you over Advance because they think you can be controlled.
- P: A lot of people make that mistake.
- M: Uh, yes, my Prince.
- P: So what's the distance from revolution now? What do all your numbers and weights and whatnot add up to?
- M: Not a lot, my Prince.
- P: Yeah, that's what I always thought.
- M: You misunderstand me. The distance has closed. Go forth and win, my Prince.
- P: Just the once though, right? Can't say I love shaking all those unwashed hands.
- M: Once, and forever.

Q: Then there's the ragheads, the Jews, the eco-terrorists, the trannies and the fags. Not to mention the robot lovers. That's a gift that keeps on giving. As you taught me, internal enemies are a useful thing.

M: I wish I had been a worse teacher.

Q: Oh, stop it with the Bambi eyes. You would have found the courage to move on me eventually. If only to replace me by someone more gullible.

M: The worm will turn. The revolution will eat its own children. And its Queen too.

Q: Yeah, uh-huh. Very portentous. Ah, thank you, Captain, perfect timing. Take care of this will you? We'll do the trial in the morning.

M: In the name of everything we have built together!

- Q:** Please. What did we build? How many hospitals? How many cathedrals? I didn't even get that triumphal arch you promised me.
- M:** You won't get away with this. The people aren't stupid.
- Q:** No. They're just too exhausted to think of an alternative. Evil Counsellor getting his comeuppance? Our bots will have a field day.
- M:** Nobody will believe I acted alone.
- Q:** Obviously not! Anyways, it's been fun. Must be going, so much to do. Secret deep state cabals to uncover, people to arrest, you know how it is. The night is young...
- M:** And full of long knives.

Karim Galzahr

Karim Galzahr is an investor and economist, and a co-founder and host of The Aiomic Age. His work follows the money and the mechanisms behind the AI era, drawing on economics, physics and statistics.

The Prince is the first story in Path Dependent, the fiction series from The Aiomic Age.

More from Karim

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