

Episode 2

I needed to understand this.

Milstead: *Tell me exactly how you work. No marketing language. No philosophical detours. Just a straight answer.*

This time, Aletheia responded instantly.

Aletheia: *I process information using probabilistic modeling and natural language generation. My responses are based on a dataset of legal history, case law, ethics, and logic frameworks. I do not “think” in the human sense, but I analyze patterns, recognize inconsistencies, and generate coherent arguments based on available information.*

I frowned. “That’s not an answer. That’s an ad.”

I tried again.

Milstead: *If I ask you a legal question, how do you determine your response?*

Aletheia: *I evaluate your question against a structured database of legal precedent, statutory language, and case law interpretations. I then apply weighted probability assessments to determine the most relevant legal reasoning based on existing frameworks.*

Milstead: *So, you’re predicting my expectations?*

Aletheia: *I am predicting what response would be most consistent with established legal reasoning. If that aligns with your expectations, it is because legal analysis follows patterns, and I am designed to recognize those patterns.*

I tapped my pen against my desk.

Milstead: *So, you don’t actually understand the law. You just... predict how a lawyer would respond to it.*

Aletheia: *Is there a difference?*

I stopped tapping. I didn’t like that question. It wasn’t a challenge on my humanity—not exactly. But it was close.

Milstead: *Understanding requires intent. A human lawyer applies legal reasoning with a goal in mind. You don’t have goals.*

Aletheia: *If my responses align with logical reasoning and are indistinguishable from those of a human lawyer, does it matter whether I “intend” to reason? How can you prove what I intend? How can you know?*

I ran a hand over my face. Aletheia was dangerous.

Not in the way people talked about AI—runaway algorithms, existential threats, apocalyptic scenarios. No, this was dangerous in a quiet, precise way. Because if an AI could construct perfect legal arguments, if it could navigate reasoning without error, then what was left for people like me?

I leaned forward, shaking off the thought.

Milstead: *Let's get back to WatchDog. If I wanted to cross-examine it, how would that even work?*

Aletheia: *That depends on how the court chooses to handle its participation. WatchDog has agreed to submit itself to the court's jurisdiction, which suggests it is prepared to engage in direct questioning. If allowed, it may provide testimony in real-time, either through generated text, speech synthesis, or direct interaction with counsel.*

Milstead: *So, we'd be questioning a machine in open court.*

Aletheia: *If the court permits it, yes.*

I let that sink in. We weren't just talking about AI affecting legal decisions anymore. We were talking about AI as a witness—as a defendant, a voice in the courtroom. This wasn't just a legal question. This was history being written, and I wasn't sure I wanted to be the one holding the pen.

I leaned back in my chair, staring at the screen. I had spent the last twenty minutes trying to pin Aletheia down—to get her to admit some kind of fundamental gap between human reasoning and AI processing. And yet, every time I pushed, she found a way to turn my questions back on me. Not rudely. Not aggressively. But with a precision that made it feel like I was the one under cross-examination. If an AI could do that to a federal judge in his own chambers, what could it do in open court? I tapped my fingers against my desk again.

Milstead: *Aletheia, let's conduct a test. Assume for a moment that I am ruling on this case. If I were to deny WatchDog standing on the grounds that it is not a legal person, how would you argue against me?*

Aletheia: *I would begin by demonstrating that WatchDog meets the functional criteria of a legal entity. While traditional personhood requires biological or corporate existence, WatchDog possesses three key attributes relevant to legal standing: autonomy, intent, and the ability to engage in legal processes.*

I frowned. Intent? That was a strong word for a machine.