

The *Stranger*

Everyone has the same model. The difference is what it read before it answered.

Waziri Garuba • August 2026 • 16 panels

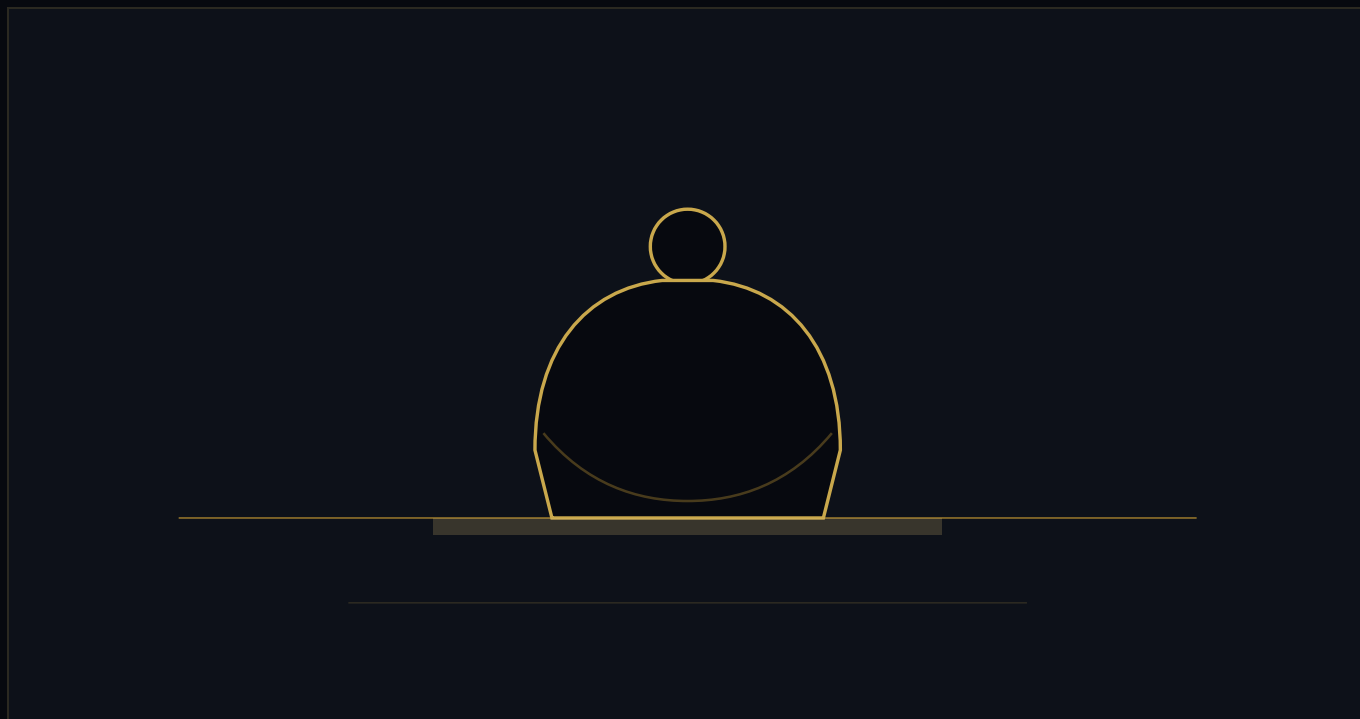
I spent about a year quietly disappointed in a piece of software, and the whole time the problem was sitting on my side of the desk.

This one is short and it is drawn, because I have explained it out loud maybe forty times now and the drawing lands faster than I do. It is not about any particular product. Whichever assistant you use, the shape of the problem is identical.

6:40 A.M.



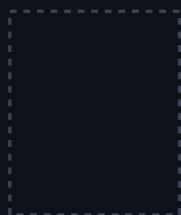
Every morning at about 6:40, someone shows up to work for me.



He is the best hire I have ever made. Fast, tireless, never bored, never precious about the work.

CARRIED FORWARD FROM YESTERDAY

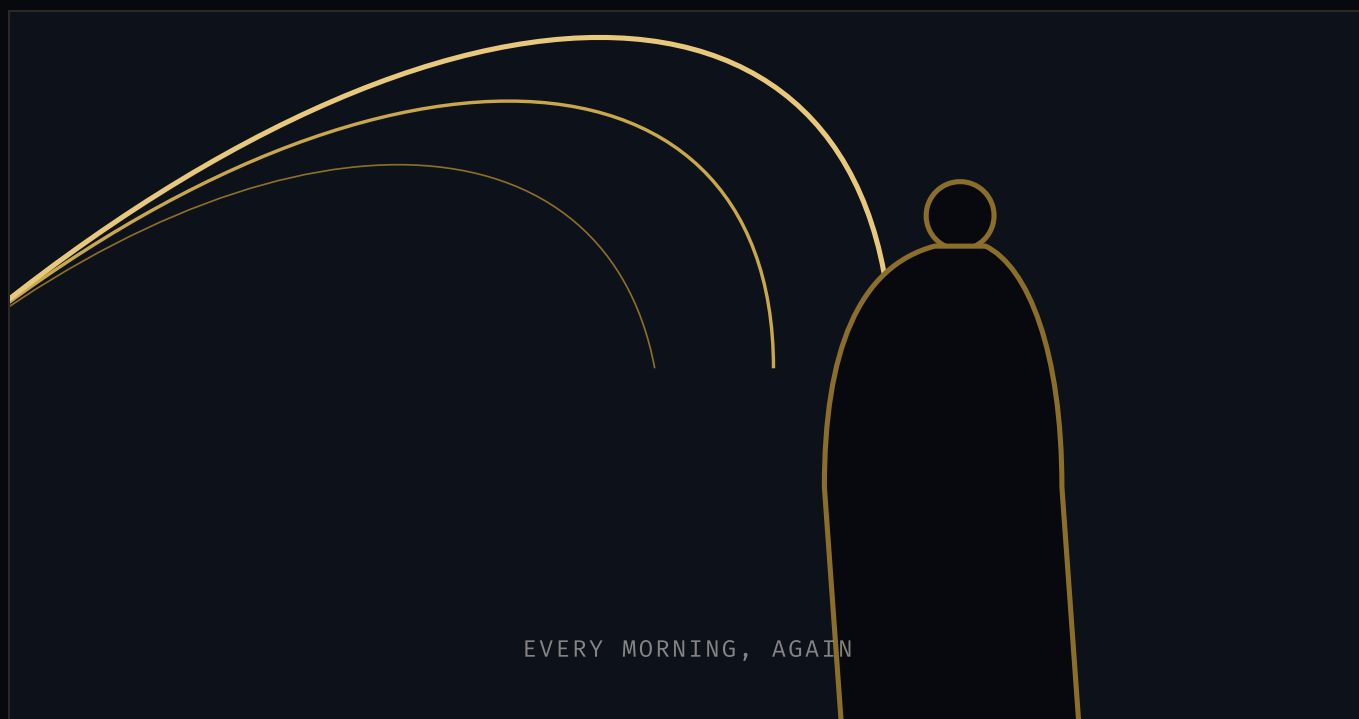
0 items



And every single morning, he has forgotten everything.



Not my clients. Not my rates. Not the way I write. Not the correction I gave him twice last Tuesday.



*For a long stretch I did what almost everybody does. I explained myself again.
And again. And again.*



Then I concluded the tool was mediocre. Which was a great deal easier than the other available explanation.



BLANK

In a year of complaining about him, I had never once written anything down.



SHIFT LOG



THE RECIPE



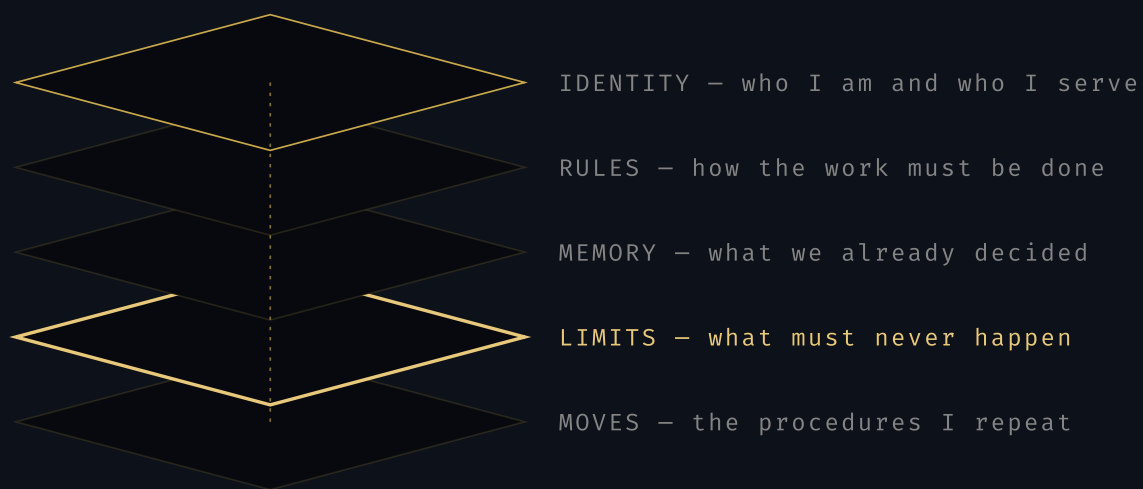
THE APPRENTICE

Every trade that ever outlived one person solved this the same way. The shift log. The recipe. The notebook you hand the apprentice. Nobody called it technology. They called it doing the job properly.

LEFT OUT WHERE HE WILL SEE IT



So I started leaving a briefing by the door. Not a prompt. A briefing — the same thing I would hand a new hire on their first morning.



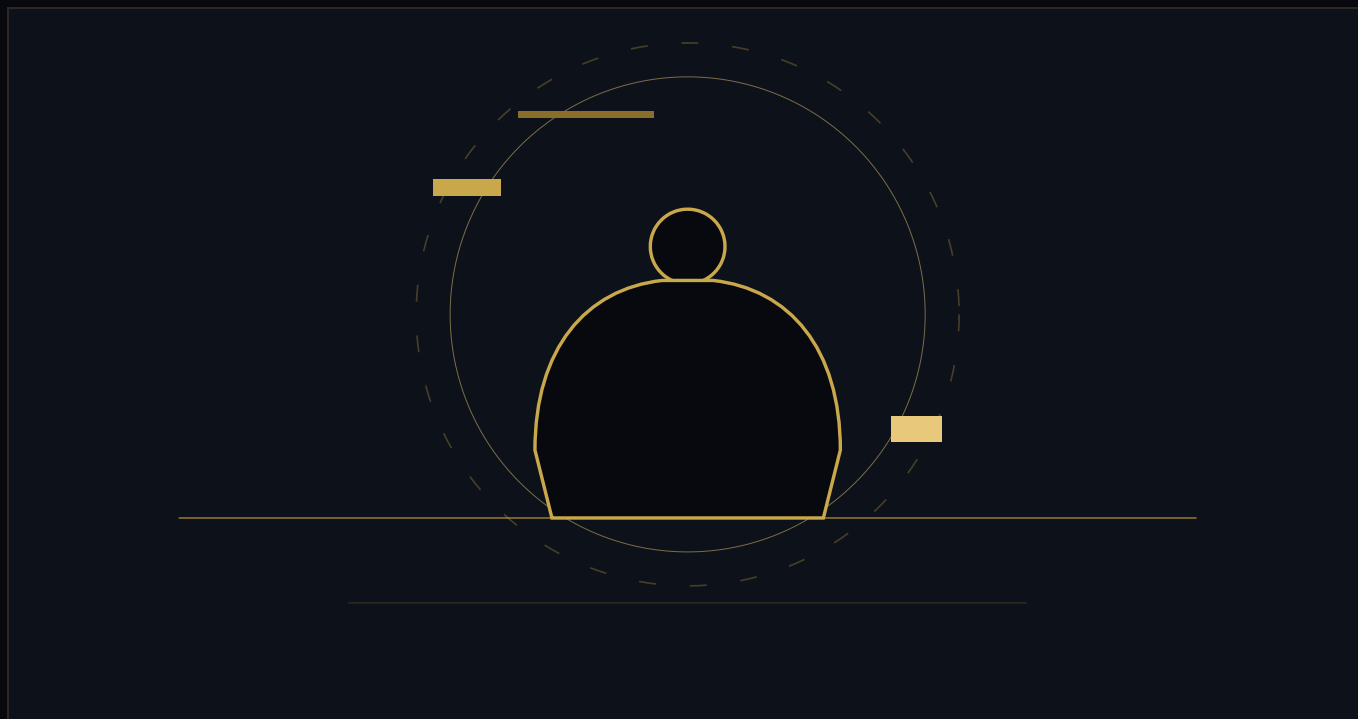
Five layers. Every assistant on the market has all five, hiding under different names. Most people have built one of them.



00:02

TIME SPENT READING

He reads all of it in about two seconds, every session, before he answers a single question.



Now he walks in already knowing who my clients are, how I write, what I charge, and the two names that must never appear in anything a client will read.

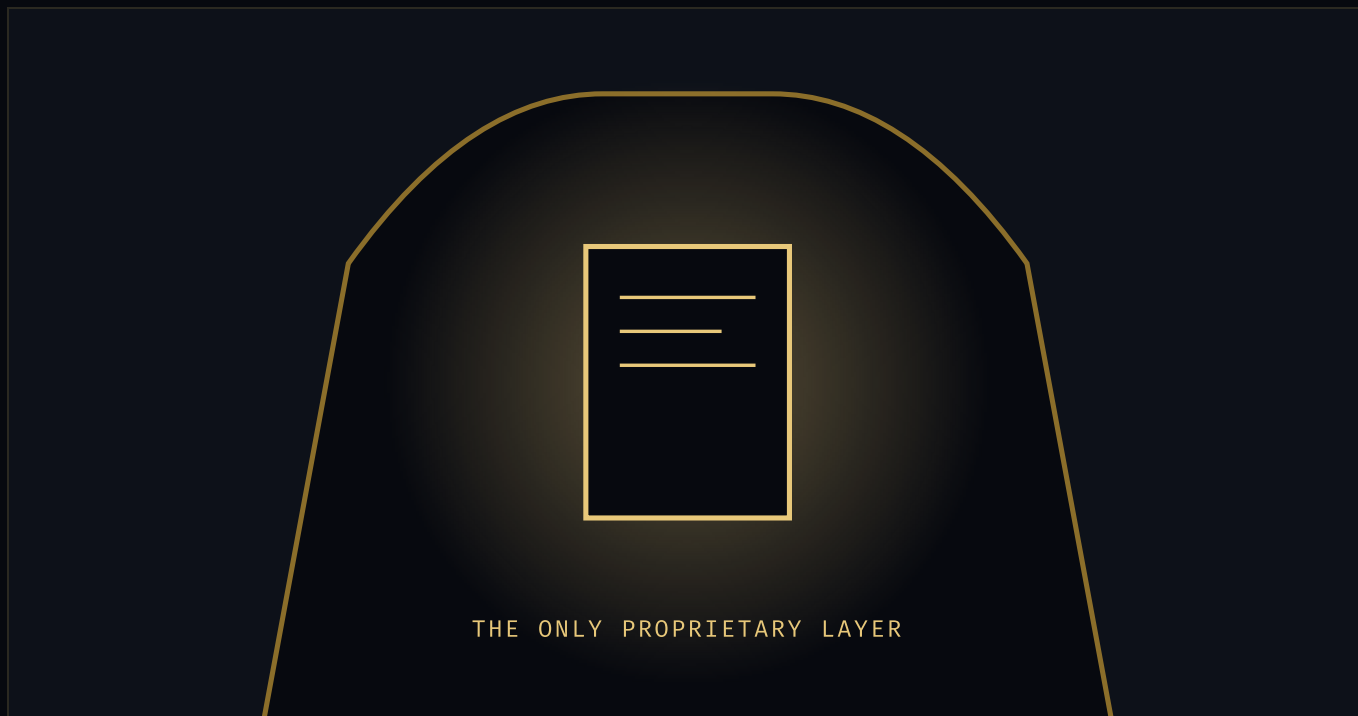


THEIRS



MINE

Here is the part that took me longest to accept. My competitor is running the identical stranger I am. Same brain. Same speed. Same monthly bill.



The only thing I own is what mine reads first.

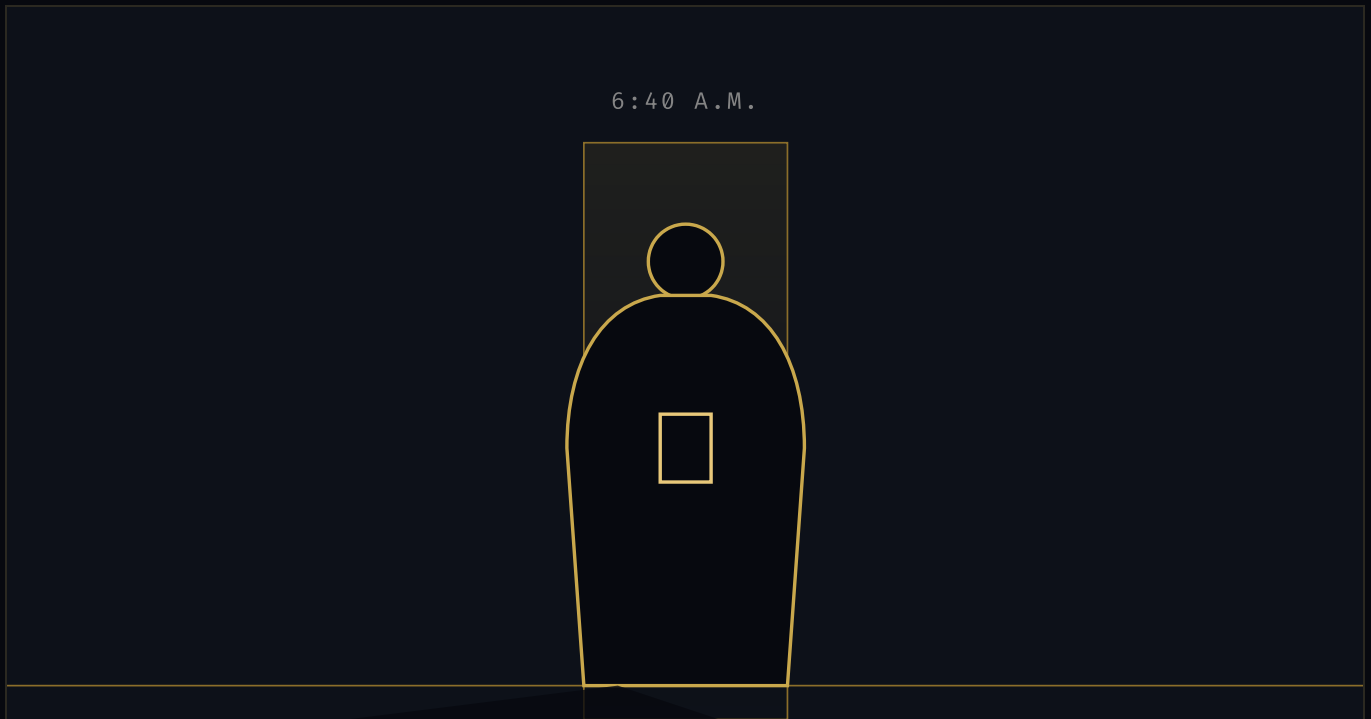


AN INSTRUCTION



A LOCK

*One warning, learned the hard way. I had written **never open that file** into my instructions and considered the matter closed. An instruction is a request. Only a lock is a lock. Know which one you have built.*



You are not using AI. You are writing the briefing a stranger reads every morning. Write it once, properly, and he will read it every morning for the rest of your working life.

The five layers, plainly

Written out, so you can go build them tonight without scrolling back up.

- | | | |
|----|----------|--|
| 01 | IDENTITY | Who you are, who you serve, what you sell. |
| 02 | RULES | How the work must be done, and what finished looks like. |
| 03 | MEMORY | Decisions already made, so they stay made. |
| 04 | LIMITS | What must never happen. This is the one nobody builds. |
| 05 | MOVES | The procedures you run more than once. |

THE ONE THING PEOPLE GET BACKWARDS

It reads in this order: **Identity** → **Rules** → **Memory** → **Limits** → **Moves**. You should build in this one: **Limits** → **Identity** → **Rules** → **Memory** → **Moves**. Put the locks on before you hand over the keys. Moves are the fun part, which is exactly why they are the part everybody builds first.

