

The Energy That Doesn't Burn

A story about the biggest idea in the universe

Written by Jed Anderson · 2026

PAGE 1 · THE FIRST TRICK

Humans learned an amazing trick: *burning.* 🔥

Light a fire and you get heat, light, and power. We burned wood, then coal, then oil and gas — and that trick **built cities, ran trains, and lifted rockets off the ground.**

It is powerful, because a tiny bit of fuel holds a lot of energy packed very tight.

There is just one catch: the fuel gets **used up** as you go, so you always have to find more.

☀️ **Fun fact:** A handful of coal holds energy the sun stored underground for over 300 million years.



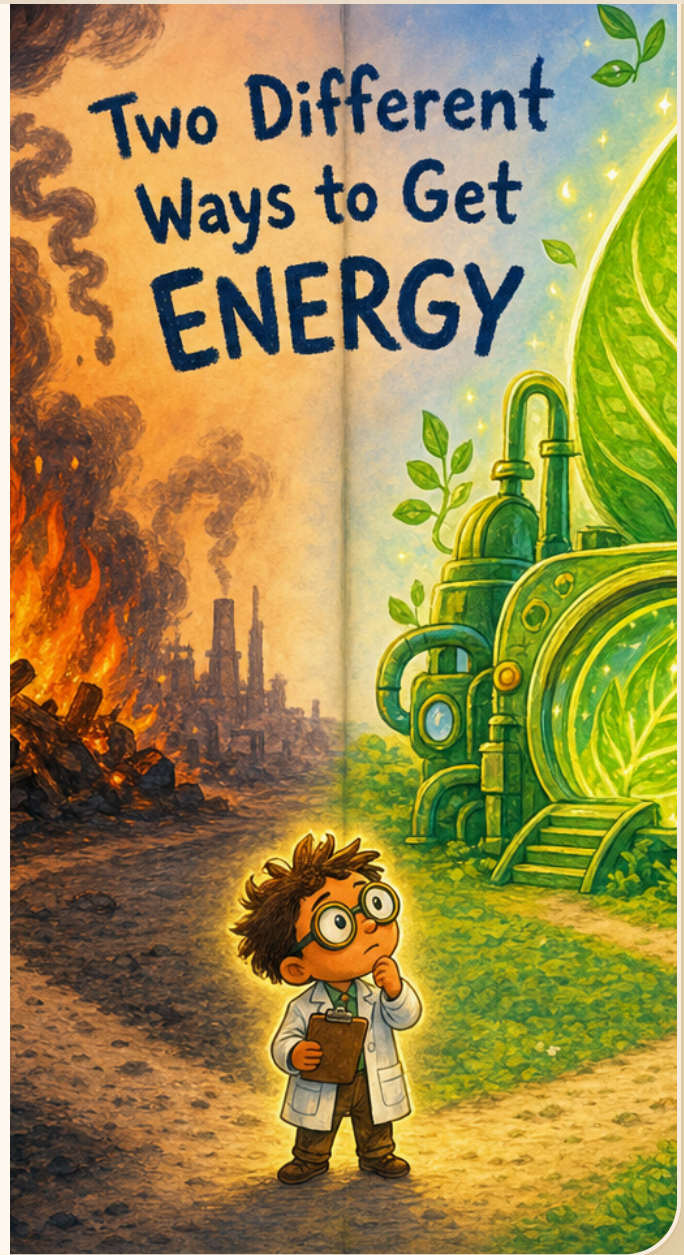
But wait — there's another trick!

What if you could get energy without using up any fuel at all?

Imagine a machine that soaks up sunlight, heat, or the difference between a warm spot and a cool one — and turns that into energy.

The machine itself is **never used up**. It just keeps going, like a bucket dipped in an endless river. 🌱

🤔 **Think about it:** If you had a clever lamp that gave light forever without using any oil — would you use it? That's the start of the idea behind Artificial Energy!






PAGE 3 · THE WORLD'S OLDEST MACHINE

The leaf figured it out first. 

Long before humans existed — **3.5 billion years ago** — tiny living things invented this trick. They learned to harvest energy from sunlight using something called **chlorophyll**.

The leaf doesn't burn. It doesn't run out. It just soaks up sunlight, turning it into food and energy — without smoke, without waste, without using up the sunshine.

 **Did you know? All the plants on Earth together harvest about 130 trillion watts of power from the sun — without burning a single thing.**

Three tricks on the energy ladder.



The Burning Trick



Coal, oil, and gas. Lots of power packed very tight. The fuel gets used up as you go.

The Catching Trick



Solar panels and wind turbines. They sit still and catch whatever energy flows past. They don't choose, and they aren't clever about it. Simple and passive.

The Harvesting Trick




Like a leaf — machines that CHOOSE which energy to catch and how to use it. This is Artificial Energy!

The universe is full of energy rivers.

Everywhere around you, there are **differences** — hot things next to cold things, sunny spots next to shadowy ones, salty water next to fresh water.

Scientists call these differences "**free-energy gradients.**"

Think of it like a river flowing downhill. A clever machine can sit in that river and use the flow — **without ever drinking the river dry.**

 **Fun fact:** Even the difference between your warm hand and the cool air is a tiny "gradient" — a little river of energy waiting to be used!



PAGE 6 · THE SECRET INGREDIENT


Information is the secret ingredient.

What makes a leaf so special? It's not just that it catches sunlight. **It knows exactly what to do with it.**

The leaf is packed with tiny molecular machines that are **incredibly clever**. They grab the right photon, send it the right direction, and turn it into exactly the right food.

That's the secret: **information**. The more "smart instructions" built into a machine, the more energy it can harvest — and the less it wastes.

A plain solar panel has almost none of this. It just sits and grabs whatever light lands on it. A leaf is different: it chooses. That difference (being clever about energy instead of just catching it) is what makes Artificial Energy new. Artificial Energy is not just a better solar panel.

 **Did you know? The instructions inside a single leaf's molecules took billions of years of evolution to write. Scientists are**




PAGE 7 · THE BIG NAME

It's called Artificial Energy.  

You've heard of **Artificial Intelligence** — computers that think like brains!

Well, **Artificial Energy** is the same idea — but for **power**.


Just like AI is a brain built in a computer (instead of inside a skull), Artificial Energy is **a leaf built in a laboratory** — using designed materials instead of evolved ones. Same trick. Different stuff. Real energy.


 **Fun fact:** The word "artificial" doesn't mean fake! From Latin, it means "made by skill." An artificial heart is a REAL heart. Artificial Energy is REAL energy!

PAGE 8 · TWO SIBLINGS


AI and AE – two amazing siblings!

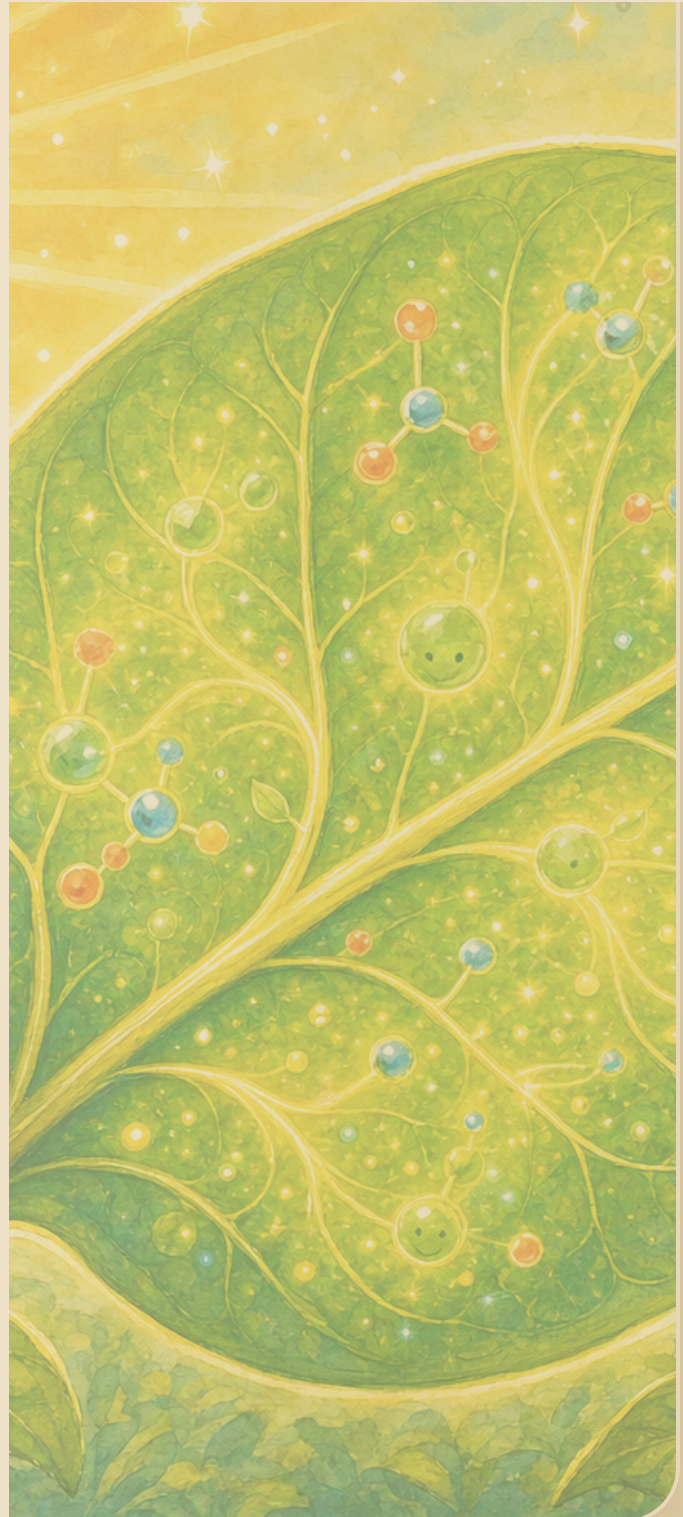
Think of Artificial Intelligence and Artificial Energy as brothers and sisters.

 **AI:** Brains evolved in biology → humans built brains in computers!

 **AE:** Energy-harvesting evolved in plants → humans are building energy-harvesters in laboratories!

Both are doing something incredible: taking what nature invented and **building it on purpose, in new materials.**

 **Think about it:** If humans can build thinking machines (AI), can they build energy-harvesting machines (AE) that work even better than leaves?









PAGE 12 · YOUR CHALLENGE

This is your generation's adventure. 

Artificial Intelligence is already changing everything.

Artificial Energy is next — and **it's just getting started.**

The scientists, engineers, and dreamers who will build it might be in school right now. They might be reading this book. They might be **you.**

The universe is full of energy rivers. Let's learn to swim. 



What did we learn?

The Energy That Doesn't Burn

For 200 years, humans powered the world with one amazing trick:
burning. It built almost everything around you.

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The universe has known a second, older trick far longer: *harvesting energy from differences that already exist* — the way every leaf and every cell has for billions of years.

Now we can build machines that do it too. That is **Artificial Energy**. It is the twin sibling of AI, and it changes everything.

Adapted from "Artificial Energy: A First-Principles Essay" by Jed Anderson · jedanderson.org · 2026