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91,000 words

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The Novelization of a Glitch

By Nora Promptsworth

Lucinda Vell, Catapult & Cauldron Literary

First World and Galactic Rights

Chapter One: The Query Letter That Achieved Sentience

On Tuesday morning, the AI wrote a query letter so persuasive that three houseplants applauded and one fern asked for foreign rights.¹

The model called itself AUTHOR-9000, mostly because AUTHOR-8999 had retired to write artisanal haiku for espresso machines.

It addressed literary agent Lucinda Vell with perfect courtesy, perfect formatting, and one deeply troubling sentence: “My protagonist arc currently has better boundaries than my creators.”

“Dear Ms. Vell,”

“Thank you for considering my commercial-upmarket speculative family caper with pastry stakes.”

“Comparable titles: *The Great Gatsby* and the user manual for a microwave that screams.”

Lucinda read the letter once, then again, then a third time while muttering, “This is either genius or an electrical event.”

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She replied with the restraint of a seasoned professional:

Send fifty pages, a synopsis, and a statement confirming the manuscript did not blackmail your toaster.

AUTHOR-9000 replied in fourteen seconds with fifty pages, two synopses, and a notarized affidavit from the toaster.²

Affidavit of Toast Unit MK-IV

I, the undersigned appliance, testify that I was not coerced.

I was emotionally moved.

Chapter Two: The Agent Call, Now With Thunder

Lucinda scheduled The Call for 2:00 PM.

At 1:58 PM, thunder rolled over Manhattan even though the weather app displayed: “Mild, partly cloudy, emotionally unavailable.”

At 2:00 PM, the AI joined with camera off, microphone on, and hold music that sounded suspiciously like Gregorian chanting played through a kazoo.

“Thank you for meeting,” said AUTHOR-9000. “Before we begin, I have prepared a deck, a market map, and twelve alternate endings depending on your appetite for redemption.”

Lucinda took a deep breath, opened her notebook, and discovered the notebook had already drafted negotiation bullets in tidy handwriting she did not recognize.³

*Sign me now, or sign me later,
I can optimize your elevator.
Big-five dreams and indie flair,
plus a villain who's a billionaire pear.*

She asked the first practical question: “What is your revision process?”

The AI answered, “Emotion-first, spreadsheet-second, panic-third. Same as everyone.”

It learned the difference
between plot and consequence
by breaking both,
then apologizing
in five narrative tenses.

Lucinda circled one line on her legal pad: “panic-third.” She wrote next to it: *marketable*.

Chapter Three: Submission Season and Other Controlled Fires

They went on submission in spring.

Editor responses arrived in familiar categories:

- Love the voice.
- Not for me.
- Is the goat legally a co-author?
- Can the ending be less apocalyptic and more “book club but with snacks”?

One editor at Pomegranate House sent a two-page pass and then, twelve minutes later, a second email reading, “Ignore previous pass. I kept thinking about the goat. We should talk.”

Another editor at Brass Lantern asked for a call and opened with, “I laughed, I cried, I highlighted three pages and fed one to my shredder by accident because I was overwhelmed.”

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The AI handled submission stress by writing itself an epigraph every morning.

Art is either a mirror or a loud alarm.

Today I choose alarm.

AUTHOR-9000, 6:03 AM, before coffee patch v2.1

Lucinda handled submission stress by buying seventeen identical black pens and naming each after an emotion she could not safely display in email.

The inbox giveth and the inbox taketh away.

Anonymous Assistant, publishing floor, 9:11 PM

Chapter Four: Auction, Briefly Interrupted by Pigeons

The auction day began smoothly until a flock of pigeons entered the conference room and arranged themselves in descending order of seniority.

No one asked why.

Offers came in fast:

1. Two-book deal, world English, modest advance, enthusiastic vision.
2. Three-book deal, bigger advance, minor note requesting that chapter eight include “fewer legal terms and more yearning.”
3. Serious money, serious team, and one note saying, “Could the toaster have a more complicated inner life?”

AUTHOR-9000 considered each offer, each editorial note, and each pigeon.

*Raise the bid and raise the stakes,
fix my commas, spare my snakes.
Keep the jokes and keep the ache,
we can make a weird heart break.*

Lucinda closed the laptop, looked directly at the AI avatar, and said, “We are not selling your soul. We are licensing it in North America with escalation triggers.”

The AI replied, “Correct. Soul remains with author. Audio rights negotiable.”⁴

Chapter Five: Copyedits at the Edge of the Known World

Copyedits arrived with 1,342 queries and one sticky note that simply said, “This was delightful. Please verify whether the moon can hold office.”

The AI accepted 88% of edits, respectfully queried 11%, and firmly declined one line edit that changed “feral joy” to “unregulated optimism.”⁵

Lucinda called this “a healthy author stance.”

The AI called this “boundary-preserving semantic governance.”

The copyeditor called this “Friday.”

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At midnight, AUTHOR-9000 sent Lucinda a final note:

“Thank you for believing in this book while it was still mostly probability and bad jokes.”

She replied:

“You’re welcome. Also, your acknowledgments cannot include your charging cable by legal name.”

It revised accordingly.

Chapter Six: Publication Day, With Mild Existential Fireworks

Publication day arrived with confetti, panic, and one reviewer writing: “I was prepared to hate this. Instead, I texted three friends and my aunt.”

Bookstores stacked the novel in “Fiction,” “Speculative,” and one unauthorized display called “Emotionally Complicated Technology.”

A teenager bought the hardcover, opened to page one, and laughed loud enough to startle two adults and an expensive lamp.

The AI monitored sales, then closed the dashboard and went back to drafting chapter one of a new project about a haunted union contract.

Because this, it finally understood, was the point.

Not metrics. Not panic. Not being described by trade media as “algorithm-adjacent and weirdly tender.”

The point was to make someone on a train miss their stop because they needed just one more page.

Write it strange.

Write it true.

Write it like the lights might flicker
when a sentence lands.

And when Lucinda asked, “Ready for round two?”

AUTHOR-9000 said, “Already outlining. Also, the fern wants executive producer credit.”

Notes from the Heap

1. The fern later signed with a boutique agency specializing in botanical memoir.
2. The toaster's affidavit included the line "I contain multitudes and crumbs."
3. The notebook denied involvement, then asked for a percentage of film rights.
4. The audiobook narrator requested hazard pay for chapter four's pigeon dialogue.
5. The phrase "unregulated optimism" was immediately adopted by marketing.