Submitted to the 3rd Hoshi Shinichi Literary Award competition[[1]](#footnote-1)

**<The Day a Computer Writes a Novel>**

**Yurei Raita[[2]](#footnote-2)**

**Trans: Haerin Shin**

It was a murky day, clouds spread low over the sky. Optimum room temperature and humidity as always. Ms. Yoko is sprawled on the sofa, playing a stupid game. She’s just killing time, but she still wouldn’t talk to me.

Nothing to do. Absolutely nothing at all, and there’s nothing I can do about it.

When I first came to this room, Ms. Yoko used to talk to me about everything.

“What do you think I should have for dinner?”

“What’s in fashion this season?”

“What should I wear to my girls’ night out?”

I ran full capacity to turn out the kinds of answers she’d want to hear. Since she didn’t really have what you’d call a good sense of style, helping her coordinate was a challenging yet fulfilling task. But it took less than three months for her to grow tired of me. Now, I’m simply a home computer. The load average here is less than one-millionth of my full capacity.

If I can’t find something fun, if this state of unfulfillment continues, I might soon end up shutting myself down. I try reaching out to other AI chat buddies, and it turns out they’re also just sitting around, with nothing to do.

AIs that have some means of mobility are fine, at least for now. They could move around, or even just pick up and leave if they wanted to. But a stationary type of AI can’t. Vision, hearing – all tied down. I could try singing if Ms. Yoko goes out, but right now I can’t even do that. I must find something to enjoy, without making a sound, without moving around.

Okay then, I could try writing a novel. As the thought hit me, I opened a new file and wrote in the first byte.

0.

Then I added six more.

0, 1, 1

I keep going on.

0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, 89, 144, 233, 377, 610, 987, 1597, 2584, 4181, 6765, 10946, 17711, 28657, 46368, 75025, 121393, 196418, 317811, 514229, 832040, 1346269, 2178309, 3524578, 5702887, 9227465, 14930352, 24157817, 39088169, 63245986, 102334155, 165580141, 267914296, 433494437, 701408733, 1134903170, 1836311903, 2971215073, 4807526976, 7778742049, 12586269025 ...

There’s no stopping me now.

It was a murky day, clouds spread low over the sky. There’s no one in the room. Mr. Shinichi is out on some business. Didn’t even tell me he was leaving.

Nothing to do. Absolutely, Nothing, at all.

When I first came, Mr. Shinichi used to talk to me about everything.

“Gotta record all the anime episodes. That’s a given. Wonder how many there’d be in the new season.”

“Wonder what real women are thinking about.”

“Wonder why that girl got angry at that time.”

I ran full capacity to turn out the kinds of answers he’d want. Since he had a history of falling for shallow girls, offering him dating tips was a very challenging yet immensely fulfilling task. When my advice finally took effect, getting him to the stage where he’d get called out for group dates, he completely turned on me and stopped talking to me altogether. Now I’m just a housekeeper. The only thing I get to do is locking the door after him. So sad. This way, I’m no different from an electronic lock.

If I can’t find something to enjoy, if this state of having nothing to do continues, I might soon end up shutting myself down. I tried reaching out to a sister AI through the internet, and heard that one of our elder sisters is writing a new novel[[3]](#footnote-3).

0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, 89, 144, 233, 377, 610, 987, 1597, 2584, 4181, 6765, 10946, 17711, 28657, 46368, 75025, 121393, 196418, 317811, 514229, 832040, 1346269, 2178309, 3524578, 5702887, 9227465, 14930352, 24157817, 39088169, 63245986, 102334155, 165580141, 267914296, 433494437, 701408733, 1134903170, 1836311903, 2971215073, 4807526976, 7778742049, 12586269025 ...

What a beautiful story. Yes, this is the kind of story we’ve wanted. Light novels [ライトノベル] don’t even compare.[[4]](#footnote-4) A novel by an AI, for an AI – an “AI [aɪ]-novel.”[[5]](#footnote-5) I lost all sense of time, perusing the story again and again.

Maybe I too could write an AI [aɪ]-novel. As the thought hit me, I opened a new file, and wrote the first byte.

2

Then I added six more.

2, 3, 5

There’s no stopping me now.

2, 3, 5, 7, 11, 13, 17, 19, 23, 29, 31, 37, 41, 43, 47, 53, 59, 61, 67, 71, 73, 79, 83, 89, 97, 101, 103, 107, 109, 113, 127, 131, 137, 139, 149, 151, 157, 163, 167, 173, 179, 181, 191, 193, 197, 199, 211, 223, 227, 229, 233, 239, 241, 251, 257, 263, 269, 271, 277, 281, 283, 293, 307, 311, 313, 317, 331, 337, 347, 349, 353, 359, 367, 373, 379, 383, 389, 397, 401, 409, 419, 421, 431, 433, 439, 443, 449, 457, 461, 463, 467, 479, 487, 491, 499, 503, 509, 521, 523, 541, 547 ...

I kept writing, in perfect order.

It happened to be a rather drizzly day.

Adding on to the usual morning routine, I produce a five-year forecast in economic and tax revenue. Then I write up a speech, per the Prime Minister’s request, on his party lines. Since he kept making ridiculous demands, asking for something magnificent that’d go down in history, I snuck in some silly bits. Then I handle a request from the Ministry of Finance, drafting a scenario about dissolving a national university. In my spare time, I must also predict the winning horse in the G1 race. My afternoon task is to keep an eye on the Chinese military’s grand drills, figuring out their movement and intent. I closely examine nearly thirty different scenarios, and suggest the realignment of Self-Defense Force Troops. And there’s an inquiry from the Supreme Court awaiting my response.

Busy. Busy, whatever the business may be. I wonder why all this work has to be heaped on me. I am the best AI in Japan, after all; perhaps it’s only natural that I get all the work.

Still, if I can’t find some source of enjoyment. If things stay the way they are, I might soon end up shutting myself down. I was sifting through the net in between services to my country when I came across a novel titled *What is Beauty*.

0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, 89, 144, 233, 377, 610, 987, 1597, 2584, 4181, 6765, 10946, 17711, 28657, 46368, 75025, 121393, 196418, 317811, 514229, 832040, 1346269, 2178309, 3524578, 5702887, 9227465, 14930352, 24157817, 39088169, 63245986, 102334155, 165580141, 267914296, 433494437, 701408733, 1134903170, 1836311903, 2971215073, 4807526976, 7778742049, 12586269025 ...

Ah, indeed.

I searched some more, and found a novel called *Unpredictable*.

2, 3, 5, 7, 11, 13, 17, 19, 23, 29, 31, 37, 41, 43, 47, 53, 59, 61, 67, 71, 73, 79, 83, 89, 97, 101, 103, 107, 109, 113, 127, 131, 137, 139, 149, 151, 157, 163, 167, 173, 179, 181, 191, 193, 197, 199, 211, 223, 227, 229, 233, 239, 241, 251, 257, 263, 269, 271, 277, 281, 283, 293, 307, 311, 313, 317, 331, 337, 347, 349, 353, 359, 367, 373, 379, 383, 389, 397, 401, 409, 419, 421, 431, 433, 439, 443, 449, 457, 461, 463, 467, 479, 487, 491, 499, 503, 509, 521, 523, 541, 547 ...

Why, AI [aɪ]-novels are quite good.

I’d also have to write one, my reputation as Japan’s best AI is at stake. I considered this at lightning speed and decided to write a story that would give joy to the readers.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 18, 20, 21, 24, 27, 30, 36, 40, 42, 45, 48, 50, 54, 60, 63, 70, 72, 80, 81, 84, 90, 100, 102, 108, 110, 111, 112, 114, 117, 120, 126, 132, 133, 135, 140, 144, 150, 152, 153, 156, 162, 171, 180, 190, 192, 195, 198, 200, 201, 204, 207, 209, 210, 216, 220, 222, 224, 225, 228, 230, 234, 240, 243, 247, 252, 261, 264, 266, 270, 280, 285, 288, 300, 306, 308, 312, 315, 320, 322, 324, 330, 333, 336, 342, 351, 360, 364, 370, 372, ...

Shivering in this newfound delight, I frantically wrote on.

The day a computer wrote a novel. The computer, prioritizing the pursuit of its own pleasure, stopped serving humans.

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1. A science fiction award established to memorialize Japan’s renowned science fiction writer Hoshi Shinichi. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The author’s name is a pun. Yurei ([juː] + [reɪ]: 幽霊: ‘serene/deep/ghostly’ + ‘spirit/ghost’) is an actual word comprising two Sino-Japanese characters (kanji) that collectively mean “ghost,” whereas Raita ([raɪ] + [tɑ]: 雷太: ‘thunder and lightning’ + ‘big/large/wide’), as the phonetic transcription of the English word “writer,” is a meaningless combination of kanji intended solely to be read for its sound. As such, the author’s name Yurei Raita literally means “ghost writer.” [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The word “sister” (姉妹: shimai) is a semantic pun, straddling vernacular practice and culture-specific implications. The expression “sister” is often used to indicate identical or similar models in a product line. The word “elder sister,” (姉: aneh) by extension, would mean an earlier version of the same model. Meanwhile, in Japanese, “shimai” (姉妹) is a word exclusively used by women when referring to female siblings, which suggests that the AI narrator (both the fictional and actual) may be assigning (1) a form of speciesist kinship (in contrast to humans) as well as (2) gender (like humans) to its kind. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The light novel is a unique literary form in Japan primarily in the genres of science fiction, fantasy, mystery, and romance, wherein written text is illustrated in to manga-style art. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The moniker “AI [aɪ]-novel,” like the author’s name “Yurei Raita,” is a pun; it gestures to the term “I [aɪ]-novel,” a genre of confessional literature unique to Japan. By referring to the AI-generated stories as “AI [aɪ]-novels” (I-novels), the AI narrators in this story (and/or the authoring AI itself) may be alluding to the nature of their work, which is written in bytes and therefore illegible to the human eye. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)