BrAIve New World

Stop waiting for permission. Build the thing in your head with AI, no code needed.

The chapter sampler

An excerpt from every chapter of the book by Lucy Hall. These are the opening pages. The full methods, the agent briefs, the toolkit and the What this means and Action to take now sections at the end of every chapter are in the book.

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Prologue

The Girl Under the Stairs

> *“The internet did not care what any school had decided about me. It only cared whether I built the thing.”*

I was the disruptive one. The too much one. The one told to tone it down and stop talking so fast. I was expelled from two schools before anyone had asked me a single question about what I was actually good at.

At seventeen I taught myself HTML under the stairs on a computer my mum found the money for. I was selling on eBay, one of the first PowerSellers, learning email campaigns because I could not not learn them. Nobody gave me permission to do any of it.

That is the whole reason this book exists. The barrier that stopped people building was never talent. It was access. And access has just changed again, more dramatically than it did the first time.

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Chapter 01

BrAIve, Not Brave Enough

> *“You stop wondering whether you could and start knowing you did.”*

Most people are still waiting. Waiting to understand it properly before they touch it, waiting for someone else to go first, waiting for permission that is not coming, because nobody is handing it out.

Here is the thing most people have the wrong way round. AI is not new. It has been running underneath your life for years, recommending what you watch, catching fraud on your card, routing your delivery driver. What is new is generative AI, and what is new about it is not the intelligence. It is the access.

For the first time in my twenty-five years in this industry, a business owner with no technical team can build a working app in an hour. A marketer with no developer on call can launch a platform in a weekend. A woman with an idea she has carried for years, the kind that used to need investment, a co-founder, a CTO, permission from someone, can now sit down on a Saturday afternoon and build the first version herself.

That is not a small shift. That is the whole game changing.

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Chapter 02

Start Before You're Ready

> *“Start before you're ready. Start with what you already know is broken.”*

Over twenty-five years I have built, by my own rough count, more than two hundred WordPress sites. Around fifty on Squarespace. Others on platforms most people have never heard of and I would rather forget. That is not a boast, it is context, because it means that by the time I sat down to build an editorial platform from scratch I was not a beginner staring at a blank screen. I was someone who had spent two and a half decades getting intimately, repeatedly, properly frustrated by every single one of them.

I knew exactly what I hated. The plugin that broke every time the platform updated itself, the one holding your paywall together, gone on a random Tuesday for no reason anyone could explain. The backend so cluttered that handing it to a new team member meant an afternoon of training just to publish one post. The newsroom workflow that did not exist at all unless you built it yourself out of spreadsheets and hope.

That frustration was not wasted time. It was the brief.

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Chapter 03

The Barrier Fell Once Before

> *“The internet gave us the shopfront. AI just gave us the workshop.”*

When my girls were small I did what a lot of mothers do. I looked at the nine to five, the commute, the childcare that costs more than you earn, the rigid hours built for people who do not have to be at a school gate at three fifteen, and I thought, that is not going to work for me.

For a long time that thought was the end of the road for women. It meant stepping back, stepping out, watching your career stall while you did the most important job there is and got told it did not count as one.

But something had changed. The internet. You did not need permission, or an office, or a boss, or a shop with a lease. You needed a laptop and something to sell. So I built my own website, did my own social media, sold my own planners, and turned it into a consultancy, all of it around the school run.

I recognised this shift so fast because I had lived through the last one.

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Chapter 04

One Room, Six Strangers, One Real Business

> *“A brief and a room of willing strangers is enough.”*

It was a Wednesday. Not a retreat. Not a weekend away with wine and whiteboards where everyone already half knows each other. A one-day event, at Canva's London HQ, in March. Women bought a ticket, took a day out from actual jobs, sat down at a table with five people they had never met, and were handed a brief: build an AI-powered solution to a real problem women face. No requirement to be technical. No pre-formed teams. No idea before they walked in the door.

By the end of that day one of those tables had built HerRoute, an AI-powered platform tackling PCOS, a condition that affects roughly one in ten women and is still met, too often, with confusion and dismissal instead of proper support. They pitched it live to a judging panel and won the three thousand pound prize. Then they did not stop, because the prize was never the point. They registered the business. HerRoute is a real product in the market now.

I want to be precise about the timeline. Not months. Not a funding round. One day.

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Chapter 05

The Room, In Their Words

> *“Free to create. That is what happens when you strip out the conditions that normally stop people starting.”*

I could keep telling you what happens in that room. But it lands harder coming from the people who were in it, strangers who walked in not knowing what to expect and walked out having built something real.

Symran Rapal, a designer, summed up in two lines something I have taken whole chapters to say. The best ideas, she wrote, do not come from brainstorms. They come from lived experience. Her team won. They built HerRoute, and her account of why is worth sitting with, because the real problem was never women's bodies, it was the system around them, the delays, the lack of answers, the being left to self-navigate something deeply personal. That is not a technical insight. It is a lived one, and it became a product in two hours because the tools finally let it.

Emilie Yam was on that same winning team. She signed up on a whim, got put with four women she had never met, and by the end they had won. What stayed with her was building unencumbered by rules, expectations and red tape. Just free to create.

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Chapter 06

Design at the Speed of Thought

“The taste and the brief were always mine to begin with.”

There used to be a queue for design. You would have an idea for a landing page, a launch graphic, a set of social assets, and somewhere between the idea and the thing existing there was always a wait. A brief that had to be written properly, a designer's availability, a round of revisions, a few days minimum, often a week, sometimes longer if the designer was good and busy, which the good ones always are.

That queue is gone. Not shortened. Gone.

I can describe a landing page now, tone, colour, structure, what it needs to say and to whom, and have a working version in front of me before I have finished my coffee. Not a wireframe. Not a mood board. An actual page I can put live if it is right or throw away if it is not.

Things are faster now undersells it badly. Speed changes what you are willing to try. When a page took a week and cost real money, you tested fewer ideas, committed to your best guess, and lived with it longer than you should have.

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Chapter 07

Findable by Machines

> *“Structure and clarity are the delivery mechanism, not a substitute for good thinking.”*

People are increasingly not clicking through to a website at all. They ask an AI system, or they read an AI overview, and they get the answer without ever landing on the page that contained it. That is what GEO and AEO mean, and the practical question underneath both is simple. When someone asks a machine about your subject, does your name come out of the machine?

I learned this the hard way with The Sauce. We had genuinely useful, properly researched work that AI systems were not surfacing, because it was not structured in a way that made it easy to quote. The fix was not to write differently in spirit. It was to write so it can be lifted cleanly. Clear questions with clear answers underneath. Definitions stated plainly. Facts attached to a source.

Two warnings. A perfectly crawlable page full of nothing gets you nothing. And this is never finished. Being cited is closer to maintenance than to a launch.

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Chapter 08

The Gate Is Closing on Gated Content

> *“The gate no longer stops the information moving. It just stops it moving through you.”*

For years a huge part of online business worked like this. Write something useful, put it behind an email form, trade it for a contact detail. It worked because information had a real cost to get hold of.

That trade is breaking. The problem is not that people stopped wanting information. It is that they no longer need to trade an email for it. They ask an AI system the same question and get a good answer back, assembled from everything publicly available, often including content sitting behind somebody else's gate.

If your ebook explains five steps to running a decent campaign, and someone can get those five steps paraphrased in ten seconds, they are not filling in your form. You lose the lead and the credit.

We had to have this conversation properly while working out what to gate on The Sauce, and it was uncomfortable, because gating content is how a lot of media businesses make money.

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Chapter 09

What You Can Still Charge For

> *“What is still worth gating is anything that is not reducible to information in the first place.”*

In the last chapter I told you the gate is closing on pure information. That is the uncomfortable half. This is the useful half, because there is a great deal you can still gate, still charge for, and still build a strong business on.

Information that can be extracted, summarised and answered by an AI system is no longer a good candidate for gating. What is still worth gating is anything that is not reducible to information in the first place. Access to a live community where people respond to you. A relationship with someone who will answer your specific question, not a generic version of it. Application-only events where the value is who is in the room, not what is said from the stage, because what is said from the stage ends up summarised online within days anyway. Ongoing support, mentorship, feedback on your actual situation rather than a general framework. Tools you can use, not just read about, where the doing is the value.

Run the test on your own offer. Whatever is left after you strike out the pure information is your business.

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Chapter 10

The Agent Behind the Curtain

> *“An agent is really just a very, very well-written brief.”*

I have mentioned the four agents a few times now. Story Scout, Journalist, Fact-Checker, Publisher. I held off explaining them properly until this point, because to understand why they work you need the idea that the brief is the real skill, that access changed everything, and that a human gate is a feature and not a limitation.

An agent is just an AI given a specific job, a specific brief, and some ability to act on it rather than answer a question and stop. That is basically it. Instead of me asking find me some stories, then now write this one, then now check it, over and over, manually, forever, an agent is set up once to do a defined job with a clear remit and clear boundaries.

It is the difference between a tool you pick up every time you need it and a team member who knows their role and does it.

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Chapter 11

How to Actually Build One

> *“Show it real examples of the standard you want. That does more for quality than anything else.”*

It is just a brief is not enough to get you started, and I do not want to leave you with the principle and none of the how. So this is the practical chapter. This is me sitting next to you while you write your first agent.

First, the role. One line on what this agent is and the single job it does. Not three jobs. One. You find news stories relevant to social media professionals is a role. You handle our content is not, it is too big, and an agent given too big a job does all of it badly.

The discipline of forcing yourself to describe the job in one clear sentence is the same discipline that stops you building something vague. Most people who try this and get slop get slop because they briefed in one line and expected judgement.

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Chapter 12

Use It Responsibly, Know What Breaks

> *“If it publishes under your name, it is yours. Accountability does not transfer to a tool.”*

I am relentlessly positive about building with AI. I also think anyone recommending it has a duty to say plainly what goes wrong.

It states false things with total confidence. That is the one that catches people out, because it does not sound uncertain. It invents statistics, sources, quotes and dates in the same steady tone it uses for facts.

It flattens voice. Left unbriefed, everything drifts toward the average of the internet. It leaks whatever you feed it, so assume anything you paste in has left your building. And it repeats bias, because it learned from us, which matters enormously if you are building anything that touches health, money, hiring or anyone vulnerable.

None of this is an argument against building. It is the difference between building something you are proud of and building something that embarrasses you publicly in six months.

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Chapter 13

The Fear, Named Honestly

> *“A fear named loses most of its power. A fear left vague runs your whole life from the shadows.”*

Let us talk about what is stopping you, because I do not think it is what you tell yourself it is.

You tell yourself you are not technical enough, or you do not have time, or you need to learn more first, or the idea is not fully formed, or you will start properly after this next busy period. I have heard every one of these from brilliant women who are more than capable, and I have said most of them to myself.

They are nearly all covers for the same thing underneath, which is fear, usually one of a small handful of specific fears. The first is looking stupid. Starting something, being visibly a beginner, getting it wrong where people can see. This one runs deep, especially for women, and especially for anyone who was ever made to feel stupid earlier in life, which, if you read the start of this book, you will know I was.

Here is what I know now that I wish I had known then. Everyone building anything worthwhile looks stupid at the start. Every single one.

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Chapter 14

Your First Build

> *“The idea was never the rare part. Acting on it was.”*

A build does not begin in a tool. It does not begin with learning anything. It begins with a thought, and it is almost always one of these three. I would love this to exist. I have a problem and I cannot find a solution for it anywhere. I could make that work better.

That is the first move. Not opening a tool, not watching a tutorial, not understanding how any of it works under the hood. Just noticing a piece of friction in your own life or work and letting yourself think, for once, that you might be the person who fixes it, rather than assuming, the way we have all been trained to assume, that fixing it is someone else's job.

That noticing is the actual skill, and you already have it. You do it every day. The only difference between you and someone who builds things is that they let the thought become a project instead of letting it evaporate the way it has a thousand times before.

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Chapter 15

The Shiny Penny Problem

> *“I see the shiny penny. I pick it up. I build the thing.”*

On a Monday morning team call, someone asked me what I had done at the weekend. Normal question. Most people say they saw friends, did a food shop, watched something. I said I had built a museum.

I had not been to a museum. I had built one. An actual, live, public digital museum called The Museum of Written Postcards. You can visit it. I made the whole thing over a weekend because I collect old written postcards and I wondered if I could find a nice way to display them. By Sunday night there was a museum with a hundred and seventy-odd catalogued cards in it, each one transcribed, with its postmark and its little handwritten message, an appraisal desk that runs AI valuations, an ambient soundtrack, the lot. An archive of ordinary lives.

I am so proud of it, it makes no money, it never will, and I do not care. That is the good and the mad of who I am, and this chapter is me being honest about both, because chasing the next shiny thing can look exactly like work.

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Chapter 16

The Money Part

“Spend on tools that produce assets you own. Much less on tools that make you feel current.”

A lot of writing about AI skips the money, which is convenient if you are selling optimism.

The cost of getting something built has collapsed. Things that used to mean a developer, a designer and a few thousand pounds now mean a subscription and a weekend of your attention. That is real, and it is the biggest change to founder economics in years.

But the cost of having built something does not disappear, it moves. Subscriptions add up quietly, in monthly commitments rather than one large invoice, which is exactly how people spend more than they planned. Tools change their pricing once you depend on them. Assume that happens to at least one thing in your stack and know what you would do about it.

And your own time is not free just because it is not invoiced. Protecting existing revenue while you experiment is not timidity. It is what lets you keep experimenting.

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Chapter 17

BrAIve New World

> *“Start before you're ready, because ready was never coming.”*

Everything in this book comes down to one decision, and it is not a technical one.

You have read about the agents, the gated content, the newsroom, the room full of strangers who built a real business in a day. None of it required a computer science degree. All of it required somebody deciding to start with what they had.

So pick something small and real. Describe it as plainly as you would to a capable new starter who has never met you. Give yourself an afternoon, not a quarter. Show it to one person who fits the description of who it is for.

Stop waiting for permission. Build the thing in your head.

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Build the thing in your head

Stop waiting for permission.

If any of these pages landed, the rest of the book is where the how lives: how to write an agent brief, how The Sauce newsroom runs on four agents, what you can still charge for now that the gate is closing, and a first build you can finish this week.

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