

PORTFOLIO CASE STUDY

The Red Omen

AI-Assisted Science Fiction Novel: From Concept to Publication

March 2025 – January 2026

54 Copies Sold	\$154 Revenue	12 Reviews (4.9★)	119 Pages Published
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Section 1: What Was Built

The Red Omen is a science fiction novella spanning 119 pages and 12 chapters, officially published on Amazon on January 20, 2026, as both a Kindle ebook (\$2.99) and a physical paperback (\$9.99). The work represents a complete creative pipeline — from initial concept through drafting, iterative editing, and final commercial publication.

The project is available on Amazon in both digital and print formats, making it a fully realized, commercially accessible creative product.

Section 2: Why It Was Built

This project was driven by a personal problem: a long history of starting creative writing projects and abandoning them at pages 2 or 3, stalled by the slow pace of prose development and the frustration of lost momentum. The central question was:

Core Question

"Can AI be used to break through the traditional roadblocks that cause creative projects to stall — and sustain enough momentum to reach a complete, polished conclusion?"

The purpose was personal and experimental: to prove self-capability, to develop a repeatable AI-assisted creative workflow, and to add a completed long-form project to a growing portfolio. The project also fed directly into adjacent work, including website development (luminariexpanse.com) and an associated advertising and marketing campaign.

Section 3: Starting Competence

Prior AI Experience	Near zero — limited to awareness of social media algorithms and search engines
Prior LLM Use	No meaningful prior experience with any large language model
Prior Publishing	None — The Red Omen is the first completed long-form creative work
Writing Background	Ideas and storytelling instincts, but chronically stalled at early pages
Technical Background	Strong organizational and planning skills applied to a new domain

This project was simultaneously a first attempt at fiction publishing and a first real exploration of AI as a creative collaborator — making its successful completion a meaningful proof of capability.

Section 4: How AI Was Used

Ideation & Early Drafting

The initial approach was direct and experimental: describe the story, characters, settings, and scene action out loud, then allow the AI to translate that description into evocative prose. The AI produced writing that was more descriptive and imagery-rich than what the author could generate solo — and that quality was genuinely inspiring enough to sustain continued work.

Identifying the Limitation — and Solving It

Early reader feedback revealed a critical flaw: the AI defaulted to repetitive phrasing, rigid structure, and — critically — story inconsistency when asked to re-edit entire chapters. The model would substantially alter the narrative when given full-chapter editing tasks without a structured framework.

The solution came from applying a skill the author already had: outlining. By returning to a structured, scene-by-scene architecture — including a continuity document tracking character descriptions, backstory, and plot details — the AI became significantly more accurate, controllable, and useful.

Editing & Polishing

Every chapter went through multiple editorial passes. The AI handled grammar, flow, and language refinement while the author retained full control over plot direction, character voice,

emotional tone, and all major narrative decisions. Specific word choices were regularly overridden; the AI served as a skilled editor, not a co-author.

Key Workflow Distinction

Every plot decision, character motivation, and narrative direction was authored by the human.

The AI served as a language-elevation and consistency tool — translating intent into polished prose.

The continuity document was the single most important structural tool for maintaining story integrity.

Section 5: Timeline & Conditions

Project Start	March 2025
Publication Date	January 20, 2026
Total Duration	Approximately 9–10 months
Work Rhythm	Intensive bursts during inspiration; deliberate return to project during low-energy periods
Deadline Structure	Self-imposed — no external forcing function
Competing Projects	AI Laboratory podcast, website development, advertising campaign, and other portfolio work

The project was not continuous. Significant pauses occurred when other inspired projects demanded attention. However, a deliberate personal framework governed the workflow: pursue inspiration aggressively when it exists, but immediately return to incomplete committed projects the moment inspiration fades. No project was allowed to sit untouched for more than a few weeks.

AI played a key role in re-entry: using the model to summarize progress and review prior work made it significantly easier to pick up where the project had paused, reducing the friction that typically kills long-duration personal projects.

Section 6: Outcome & Evidence

The Product

The Red Omen is a complete, commercially published science fiction novella. It is available on Amazon as both a Kindle ebook and a physical paperback. The story is designed for a reading time of 1.5 to 2.5 hours depending on reading pace.

Reader Response

Within the first month of publication, the book exceeded all initial expectations. The original sales target was approximately 12 copies — the project achieved 54 copies sold. Feedback from readers and other published authors has been overwhelmingly positive, with consistent demand for a longer, deeper follow-up.

Specific reader feedback highlights:

- Strong overall narrative and plot — particularly the central plot twist
- Desire for longer runtime and deeper character backstory development
- Motivation behind character decisions was partially withheld intentionally to protect the plot reveal — this will be expanded in the sequel
- Published authors in the reader community have expressed genuine support and enthusiasm for the story direction

Section 7: Key Metrics

Format	Ebook + Physical Paperback (Amazon)
Length	119 pages, 12 chapters
Reading Time	1.5 – 2.5 hours
Ebook Price	\$2.99
Paperback Price	\$9.99
Copies Sold	54 (as of ~2 weeks post-launch)
Revenue	~\$154
Review Count	12 total (11 five-star, 1 four-star)
Average Rating	4.9 / 5.0
Original Sales Goal	12 copies — exceeded by 350%
Publication Date	January 20, 2026
Project Duration	~10 months (March 2025 – January 2026)

Section 8: Lessons Learned

Lesson 1: AI Enables Momentum — Momentum Enables Completion

The single greatest contribution of AI to this project was velocity. When early prose came back more vivid and evocative than expected, it created a feedback loop of inspiration that carried the project forward. For a creator who had historically stalled at page 2 or 3, generating pages of quality output in a single session was genuinely transformative. Momentum is the fuel — AI provides it.

Lesson 2: Structure Is What Makes AI Effective

Vague prompting produces inconsistent, repetitive output. The breakthrough came when the author applied a structured planning instinct to creative work: build the architecture first. A full story outline, scene-by-scene chapter structure, and a continuity document tracking every character detail made the AI dramatically more precise and controllable. The lesson: AI is not a replacement for planning — it is a force multiplier on top of good planning.

Lesson 3: Polish Is Iterative and Never Wasted

Each editorial pass — and there were many — produced measurable improvement. The willingness to revise repeatedly, particularly with an AI-assisted workflow that made editing faster than traditional methods, was directly responsible for the quality of the final product. The polish phase is not optional; it is where good work becomes great work.

Lesson 4: Re-Entry Is a Skill That Can Be Systematized

Long-duration projects will be interrupted. The key is building a re-entry system rather than relying on memory or motivation. Using AI to summarize project status and review completed chapters allowed the author to get back up to speed quickly and reconnect emotionally with the work. A project that is touched — even briefly — every few weeks stays alive. A project ignored for months dies.

What This Project Proves

Concept-to-execution capability: An idea became a published, commercially available product.

Sustained persistence: A 10-month project with no external deadline was seen through to completion.

Adaptive problem-solving: When AI limitations appeared, structured frameworks were developed to overcome them.

Strategic work rhythm: Multiple competing projects were managed using deliberate prioritization — not emotion.

AI fluency under uncertainty: With near-zero prior experience, effective LLM workflows were developed through iteration.

— END OF CASE STUDY —

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