



THE GLITCH HUNTERS

THE THREAT OF
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

JAUME FIGUERAS

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THE ORIGIN OF THE GLITCH HUNTERS

This book comes from my passion for technology, my curiosity about the unknown, and, most of all, the people around me who give meaning to my life.

As a computer scientist and a lover of artificial intelligence, I have always enjoyed exploring the challenges of this fast-changing world. But what has truly inspired me and shaped this book is my family and the values we share. In *The Glitch Hunters*, I wanted to show not only my fascination with technology but also my love and appreciation for the people I care about most.

Sandra and Erik, my children, are the heart of this story. Their cleverness, courage, and endless curiosity are reflected in the characters of Laura and Aleix.

Grandpa Avi Jaume, so wise and kind, is a tribute to my father, with whom I spent my first twenty years working in computing. From him, I learned not only the foundations of my knowledge but also the values of hard work and perseverance. His brilliant mind, together with

his great humility, has made him one of the most important people in my life.

And, of course, this book would not exist without the constant support of Alicia my wife and journey companion. Her patience and understanding during the many hours I spent working on this project have been my greatest strength in this wonderful adventure.

The Glitch Hunters is, for me, a tribute to my family and the values they represent: love, respect, determination, and the importance of facing challenges together.

I hope you enjoy this adventure as much as I enjoyed creating it.

To my family, this book is for you. I love you.

1

The First Glitch

Silence filled the hallways of Sant Martí School, broken only by the distant laughter from the playground. At this time of day, with classes over and the corridors almost empty, the computer lab still had some activity from a small group of students.

In the centre, Laura was going over her notes for the university entrance exams. She wanted to study medicine, and nothing was going to stop her.

Next to her, her fourteen-year-old brother, Aleix, was focused on his laptop. Laura looked up and watched him for a moment. He was athletic, with a natural talent for technology and a gift for solving codes.

—Are you still working on your research? —she asked, resting her chin on her hand.

—It's called ethical hacking, actually. But yes, you could say it's research —Aleix answered, not taking his eyes off the screen.

—Don't you get tired of being in front of a screen all day? —Laura insisted.

Aleix smiled slightly, still focused.

—And don't you get tired of studying theory without ever using it? —he replied, raising his voice a little.

Laura sighed and went back to her notes.

—I use my time well, not like you. You spend all day playing with your laptop.

—"Playing," sure. Let's see if one day you need my "playing" and change your mind.

Laura rolled her eyes but couldn't hide a small smile.

Suddenly, the lights in the classroom flickered, and the computers made a louder humming noise.

Laura looked up, annoyed.

—Again? This is getting ridiculous —she complained, tapping her pen on the desk.

—Maybe it's a sign you should take a break before your brain explodes —Julia joked from across the room. She put her phone down and watched the scene with interest. Her high blonde ponytail and colourful hoodie made her look relaxed, like nothing could disturb her calm.

Mario, sitting on a desk, turned his head towards the door.

—This looks like a scene from a cheap horror movie. What if a killer clown suddenly appears? —he said with a half-smile.

He was usually calm, but Mario always had a quick solution for everything. His leadership in the school's basketball team gave him selfconfidence, even in strange moments like this.

—This is really strange. I've been checking some network issues at school. At first, I thought it was a coincidence, but now I'm not so sure —Aleix said.

Laura sighed.

—What did you do now? Did you mess with something again, like when you took Mum's tablet apart "to make it faster"? —she asked sarcastically.

Aleix grinned.

—First: that actually worked. Second: this has nothing to do with me. It's a real problem.

Julia walked over to Aleix's desk, her hands in her pockets.

—Problem? What kind of problem? —she asked, curious.

—Glitches —Aleix said, turning his laptop screen to show them. It had graphs and lines of code moving in a strange way.

Mario set down the basketball he was holding and leaned in to look. He wasn't an expert in technology, but he was good at spotting patterns.

—Okay, but... what's a glitch exactly? —Mario asked.

—Glitches are errors in the system. At first, it was just internet cuts. But now... look at this. —Aleix pointed at some spikes in the graph—. These patterns repeat at regular times. They're not random mistakes. I think

someone is doing this on purpose.

Before anyone could respond, the printer suddenly started working by itself, printing out pages full of strange symbols. Julia jumped, surprised.

—What’s going on? Now the printer’s gone crazy? —she said, pointing at it with confusion.

At that moment, Laura noticed something strange on her computer. The windows on her screen started closing one by one, as if someone else was controlling them.

Her file disappeared, and her expression changed instantly—from confusion to panic.

—No! My notes! —she shouted, pressing keys in desperation—. They’re all gone!

Aleix left his laptop and quickly went to help her.

—Calm down, let me see. I might be able to recover them —he said, taking her computer.

—I don’t care if you have to hack NASA, just get them back, Aleix —she snapped, crossing her arms.

Mario, watching from his desk, shook his head.

—This doesn’t seem like a normal glitch. Between the printer, the lights, and now this... Aleix, are you sure you’re not imagining things?

Aleix didn’t answer immediately. He kept typing, focused on Laura’s screen.

—This isn’t a mistake. Someone is doing this on purpose —he finally said.

—And how do you know that? —Julia asked, leaning over to see better.

—Because of the patterns. Look at this —he pointed at

some lines of code—. It's like someone is testing different ways to get into the system. But the weird part is... —he opened a folder on his laptop—. Data disappears just before each glitch. It's not a coincidence.

Laura ran her hand through her hair, frustrated.

—Great. So what do we do now? I need those notes before my exam.

Aleix looked up seriously.

—Maybe, if I get access to the server room, I can trace who's behind this. From here, I don't have enough permissions.

Mario bounced his basketball on the floor, breaking the silence.

—Okay, but how are you going to get in without getting caught? —he asked.

Aleix turned to him with a confident smile.

—The server room isn't always guarded. We just need to distract the caretaker for a while. Leave the rest to me.

Julia raised an eyebrow, looking doubtful.

—Distract the caretaker? What if he catches us? This isn't a movie, Aleix.

—That's why it has to be quick. If we keep him busy, I can sneak in, check the logs, and be out in less than five minutes.

—And if you're not out in five minutes, what do we do? Plan a dramatic escape? —Mario joked, though there was a spark of excitement in his eyes.

Laura, who had been listening, closed her laptop.

—We'll do it, but my way. If we're going to do this, we

need a plan. No mistakes.

Aleix nodded.

—Perfect. You're in charge. But we need someone to talk to the caretaker. Julia, Mario... one of you?

Julia sighed, looking at Mario.

—You could probably distract him with some basketball story.

Mario grinned.

—Of course. My coach always says I have charisma. I'll handle it.

—Good —Laura said—. Aleix, get everything ready. Mario, keep him distracted. Julia and I will watch the hallway. And if anything goes wrong, we leave.

Aleix plugged in a USB stick and started transferring files.

—Trust me. This will be easy —he said, focused.

Julia didn't seem convinced but nodded.

—Fine. But if we get caught, this was your idea, Aleix. Laura looked at the group.

—Right. Let's go to the server room. But Aleix, not a second more than planned, okay?

Aleix gave a thumbs-up.

—Got it. This is going to be fun.

2

Time Limit in the Server Room

The evening light shone through the windows, casting long shadows on the school walls. The group moved in silence. No one spoke, but the tension was clear.

—Are you sure this will work? —Julia whispered, breaking the silence.

—Relax, I've got it under control —Aleix replied, taking a USB stick from his pocket—. We go in, copy the files, and leave. Easy.

Laura stopped and looked at them seriously. She spoke in a low but firm voice:

—Nothing is easy. Aleix, stay focused. Mario, keep the caretaker busy. Julia and I will watch the hallway. If anything goes wrong, we leave.

Aleix nodded.

—Don't worry, I won't take long.

Mario walked away from the group and disappeared towards the caretaker's office.

The rest continued to the end of the hallway, where a plain metal door hid the server room. Laura stood by the entrance while Aleix took out a special USB device he had programmed. He plugged it into the access reader and linked it to his laptop.

After a few seconds, the reader clicked, and the red light turned green.

—We're in! —Aleix said, grabbing his device.

Laura's eyes widened.

—You're a genius... but I'm not saying that again, so don't get used to it.

They entered quickly.

The room was small, with two metal cabinets full of servers and cables tangled everywhere. The steady hum of the cooling fans filled the air, making it feel even more cramped. Julia looked around and muttered:

—The whole school depends on this?

—Enough jokes —Laura said—. Aleix, connect your laptop. We don't have much time.

Aleix sat in front of the main server and plugged in his laptop. The screen filled with lines of code as he typed quickly.

—What exactly are we looking for? —Julia asked.

—A file called Sanctuary-01 —Aleix replied, focused on the screen—. It has information about the network failures... and something else. But it's protected.

Laura leaned in.

—How long do you need?

—If no one interrupts me, about three minutes.

Julia, who was watching the corridor, whispered urgently:

—We have a problem. Someone's coming.

—Damn it —Aleix muttered, typing faster.

Laura moved to the door.

—How many?

—Not sure. It could be a teacher who forgot something.

Laura reacted quickly.

—Turn off the lights.

Julia flicked the switch, and the room went dark, except for the dim glow of Aleix's screen. No one moved. The footsteps outside grew louder.

A cold sweat ran down Julia's back. Every step outside the door made her heart beat faster.

She was used to Aleix's crazy ideas—they were in the same class—but she never thought she'd end up in a situation like this.

She glanced at Laura, who signalled for silence. Aleix kept working, completely focused.

Then, the footsteps stopped.

Julia held her breath. But what happened next made her heart race—a metallic sound, like someone trying to open the lock.

—What's happening? —Julia whispered, eyes wide.

Laura raised a hand for silence. She carefully pressed her ear against the door. The sounds outside were faint but still there.

—They're trying to open it —Laura whispered, stepping back.

—Aleix, hurry up —Julia urged, her voice tense.

—Almost there, just one more second —Aleix replied, still typing.

The sound of the lock stopped suddenly, but someone was still there.

Laura grabbed Julia's arm and pulled her towards the corner, where they could hide behind a server cabinet.

—If they come in, don't move. Let me handle it — Laura whispered.

Before they could move further, Aleix whispered:

—Done! —he said as he copied the files.

A few seconds later, the footsteps faded.

Julia let out a sigh of relief.

—That was close...

—I've got it —Aleix said, unplugging his laptop—. We have what we need.

—Let's go before they come back —Laura ordered.

They left the room silently, moving fast but carefully. They only relaxed when they were outside under the night sky.

—Did you get it? —Julia asked.

—Yes, but we need to check the files as soon as possible —Aleix replied.

Laura nodded and led them towards the park near the school.

As they walked, they saw Mario waiting near the back entrance, leaning against the wall with his backpack over

one shoulder.

—Everything okay? —Mario asked when he saw their faces.

—We got it —Aleix said, tapping his laptop.

Julia let out a breath, pushing her hair back.

—I hope those files are worth it. If we almost got caught for nothing, I won't be happy —Laura said, giving them a serious look.

—We'll know once we check them. Let's not waste time —Aleix said, walking ahead.

Without another word, they headed to Laura and Aleix's house.

The laptop was now the most important thing, and even though they walked in silence, the tension was still there.

3

When Distrust Grows

The afternoon light faded over Laura and Aleix's house, their improvised headquarters. The room was a complete mess—papers covered in scribbles, notes scattered everywhere, and cables tangled on the desk where Aleix worked non-stop.

Julia sat on the floor, leaning against a pile of cushions. She was still thinking about how they had escaped from the server room without being seen. Her heart was still racing.

Mario paced back and forth, restless.

Meanwhile, Laura was trying to remember the notes that had mysteriously disappeared from her computer. Her fingers tapped impatiently on the table, frustration and worry clear in her eyes as she watched Aleix.

It had been two hours since Aleix plugged in his laptop

and started decrypting the file. With every failed attempt and every line of unreadable code, their frustration grew. The air in the room felt heavy, and the silence was almost unbearable.

—This is harder than you thought, isn't it, Aleix? — Mario said, leaning against the wall with his arms crossed.

Aleix didn't look up from the screen, but his tired voice made his frustration clear.

—It's not that it's hard. These files have several layers of security. I have to break them one by one, and that takes time.

Laura, who had been quiet, lifted her head and looked at him with concern.

—Do you have any idea what's going on? We need to access those files as soon as possible.

—I'm close —Aleix murmured, adjusting the code on his screen—. Just give me a bit more time.

Mario let out a deep sigh and dropped onto a chair, his expression tense.

—Fine. But this better be worth it —he said, his voice full of frustration.

Julia, who had been watching in silence, stood up and calmly stepped between Mario and Aleix.

—Hey, let's all take a breath, okay? —she said, placing a hand on Aleix's shoulder—. You're doing a great job, and we all know it.

Mario rubbed his face with both hands and sighed.

—Sorry. I just feel useless. I'm not doing anything, and it's driving me crazy.

Alex turned his chair towards him.

—I get it, mate. But I need time and patience.

—This is taking ages, but if we stay calm and work together, we'll figure it out —Julia added, trying to ease the tension.

Laura closed her laptop and softened her tone.

—Mario, I know we're all frustrated, but arguing won't help. We either work as a team, or this will fall apart.

Mario sighed and nodded, embarrassed.

—You're right. I won't pressure you anymore, I promise. But if there's anything I can do to help, just say the word.

Julia nudged him playfully in the ribs.

—You could be the team cheerleader. We need some good vibes.

Mario chuckled, finally relaxing.

—Alright, I can do that.

While Alex refocused on his laptop, Julia got comfortable on her cushions again, and Mario sat next to Laura. She gave him a small, almost imperceptible smile.

—If this takes much longer, I don't know how I'll be ready for my exams —Laura muttered.

Mario picked up one of her notes.

—I can help if you want. It'll be good revision for me too.

Laura looked at him, surprised.

—You? Helping me study? That's unexpected.

—Hey, I'm not a genius, but I'm not that bad either. And it'll help us both —Mario said with a shrug.

Julia watched them from her corner with a small smile before turning to Aleix. She crouched beside him and spoke softly.

—How's it going?

—Slow. But I think I've recovered some parts of Sanctuary-01. The files are encrypted, and I don't understand why someone would protect this so much in a school system —Aleix said, eyes fixed on the screen.

Julia tapped his shoulder lightly.

—Because it's not just a school, Aleix. There's something more. And you're the only one who can find out what it is.

Aleix smiled slightly.

—Thanks. I needed to hear that.

Suddenly, his laptop beeped. Aleix leaned forward, his eyes widening.

—Hey, guys! I think I found something.

Laura and Mario quickly joined Julia at the desk. The screen displayed a series of codes and a partially decrypted file.

—What's that? —Laura asked, holding her breath.

—Part of Sanctuary-01. It seems connected to the AI that manages the school's system. This could explain why everything is failing.

Julia looked at the others, excitement and concern in her expression.

—So... we keep going, right?

Before anyone could respond, Aleix's laptop suddenly shut down. A strange buzzing sound filled the room.

—What just happened? —Laura asked, stunned.

Aleix tried to restart the laptop, but his hands were shaking.

The group exchanged worried looks.

—What do we do now? —Mario whispered, trying to stay calm.

Suddenly, the screen flickered back to life with a message in bold red letters:

“DO NOT CONTINUE OR THERE WILL BE CONSEQUENCES.”

Silence filled the room.

A few seconds later, the laptop powered off again.

Laura took a deep breath, trying to control the panic rising inside her since Aleix’s laptop had stopped responding.

—This is serious. But we can’t let them scare us —she said firmly, turning to her brother—. Can you fix it?

Aleix shook his head, deep in thought, pressing keys with no response.

—I don’t know, but I’ll try. Maybe Avi can help us.

Laura checked the time and sighed.

—It’s late. We can’t do anything else tonight. Let’s stop for now and go home. We’ll continue tomorrow with a clear mind.

The group nodded silently, exhausted from the day. As the others gathered their things, Aleix kept thinking about how to repair his laptop and continue the investigation.

The next morning, Aleix left early, carrying his laptop under his arm. If anyone could help him understand what

had happened, it was his grandfather, Avi Jaume.

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