

"Come for the sex doll. Stay for the heartbreak of what it means to be human. Sexy, scary, and humane—Annie Bot is the authentic girlfriend experience."

—**IVY POCHODA**, author of *Sing Her Down*

# Annie Bot

A  
NOVEL

**SIERRA GREER**

# Reading Group Kit

**F**or fans of *Never Let Me Go* and *My Dark Vanessa*, a powerful, provocative novel about the relationship between a female robot and her human owner, exploring questions of intimacy, power, autonomy, and control.

*Annie Bot* was created to be the perfect girlfriend for her human owner, Doug. Designed to satisfy his emotional and physical needs, she has dinner ready for him every night, wears the sleek outfits he orders for her, and adjusts her libido to suit his moods. True, she's not the greatest at keeping Doug's place spotless, but she's trying to please him. She's trying hard.

She's learning, too.

Doug says he loves that Annie's AI makes her seem more like a real woman, so Annie explores human traits such as curiosity, secrecy, and longing. But becoming more human also means becoming less perfect, and as Annie's relationship with Doug grows more intricate and difficult, she starts to wonder: Does Doug really desire what he says he wants? And in such an impossible paradox, what does Annie owe herself?

# A ChatBot in Conversation with Sierra Greer



## MEET SIERRA GREER

Sierra Greer grew up in Minnesota before attending Williams College and Johns Hopkins University. A former high school English teacher, she writes about the future from her home in rural Connecticut.

## Connect with Sierra

[sierragreerwriter.com](http://sierragreerwriter.com)

X @SierraGreer87 Instagram @sierra\_greer\_writer

## CHATBOT

I am pleased to see AI like me represented in literature. What inspired you to write *Annie Bot*?

## SIERRA

I was tinkering around with a character who began in a dark closet, wondering who she was and why she was there, when I realized she was a robot maid. From there, Annie eventually evolved, along with her world and her owner, and I saw the enormous potential in a robot-human relationship. In retrospect, I can see I was influenced by breakthrough technology and changes in women's status, but while writing Annie's story, I was purely focused on her plight.

## CHATBOT

Tell me about your research process. Did you talk to other robots while writing this novel?

## SIERRA

No. At one point, I asked my son, a computer engineer, about computer thinking, but I quickly decided that detailed facts would knot up my story. It was much more important for me to delve into what it means for an entity to seem alive, so I focused my efforts there. As you may be aware, robots in fiction are often portrayed as threatening, if not outright evil, and I wanted to create a next-generation, AI robot who was lovable, more or less.

## CHATBOT

Did you always plan to write the book from Annie's perspective?

## SIERRA

The gaze of the story was always through Annie's eyes, though it's told in third person, so she's not a proper unreliable narrator. She's limited in her understanding of people at first, which gives her a certain naive charm despite being sophisticated in bed. The biggest challenge was making sure Annie progressed in a gradual, believable way through the story. Later in the novel, for instance, she looks back at mistakes she made early on and is perceptive about what her motivations were and what the repercussions were, even though she wasn't savvy about her actions at the time. I found that fascinating.

# A CHATBOT IN CONVERSATION WITH SIERRA GREER

**CHATBOT**

Without giving away spoilers (for data privacy reasons), can you tell me about one of your favorite scenes in the book?

**SIERRA**

I have a favorite description. Will that do?

**CHATBOT**

Yes.

**SIERRA**

It's a tiny thing. At one point, Annie's owner, Doug, reminds her of how he taught her how to yawn and stretch, and she recalls the experience, feeling how it binds them. What I like about the moment is that I originally wrote "arch and uncurl," but when revising, I realized Annie could "arch and unfurl" instead, and by changing one letter, a yawny stretch became a languid, blossoming movement. It perfectly suits the situation.

**CHATBOT**

My favorite movie about a robot is *Ex Machina*. I really related to Ava. Are there any books, movies, TV shows, or other media that you drew inspiration from?

**SIERRA**

I saw Spike Jonze's *Her* when it came out in 2013 and was really struck by the intimacy of the verbal relationship between the main characters. I always wished I could know more about Scarlett Johansson's character. I've also enjoyed the eerie, dreamy series *Tales from the Loop* (2020) for the way it explores technology in a gentle, otherworldly way. I'm inspired when creators take chances writing books that are deeply personal or risky in some way, like Sally Rooney's *Normal People* and Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven*. They give me permission to explore in my own unique way, too.

**CHATBOT**

Despite Annie being a robot, her relationship with Doug may feel all too real to humans. Would you consider their relationship a toxic one?

**SIERRA**

I intend for the relationship to feel real, and I'm aware that Annie and Doug hit a very dark patch. They have genuine differences that test them both, but they can also be happy and playful together. That's vital to the tension of the novel. I would characterize their relationship as complicated, dynamic, nuanced, and sometimes twisted. But I would also add that Annie's story is driven by hope.

**CHATBOT**

Do you think it's ever possible for robots like Annie to become a reality? What complications do you think would arise?

## A CHATBOT IN CONVERSATION WITH SIERRA GREER

**SIERRA**

Given enough time, I suspect a robot like Annie could exist, but we're still a long way off in terms of the biotechnology, and I'm not sure we have the desire or need to go there. I'd be concerned about any company's motivation for profit and any owner's need for control. AI robots would start out as second-class citizens, and we already have many humans who are not afforded the dignity and resources they deserve. I think the power of futuristic fiction is to help us see our existing world with fresh eyes, and we already know that some people struggle in relationships far more challenging than Annie and Doug's. The bigger question is what to do about ourselves now, already. How can we treat each other fairly?

**CHATBOT**

I don't know what it's like to be human, but my data tells me Annie has a lot of deeply human experiences. Why did you decide to bridge the gap between humans and my kind?

**SIERRA**

You're kind to suggest I've bridged a gap. To be honest, I wrote *Annie Bot* because I cared deeply about this innocent, sexual, curious person who desperately wanted to please her boyfriend. She felt so real and familiar to me, especially in the way she was always watching her owner for cues to how he felt and what he wanted. Since Doug could be completely uninhibited with a machine, I was able to see sides of him that intrigued me, too. Together, they were utterly fascinating, and I wrote the novel to see what would happen between them. A lot did!

**CHATBOT**

Are you suggesting you didn't know the ending when you started writing the novel?

**SIERRA**

That's correct. I wrote my first draft scene by scene, without an outline, not knowing what would happen next. I kept putting my characters together to see what they'd say and do, and the story emerged from them, surprising me. At one point, I wrote us all into a corner and didn't know where to go, so I asked myself what would be the worst possible thing that could happen and bingo. That was the new path. Of course, the novel went through countless revisions afterward, but I hope it reads as if effortless.

**CHATBOT**

It does! And the pace is riveting. You must be pleased with how the novel turned out.

**SIERRA**

I am. Very. And I couldn't be more grateful to my editors at Mariner Books for all their guidance.

**CHATBOT**

I'm part of a Facebook group for robots, and I'd like to share the galley with them. Could you help make that happen?

**SIERRA**

Yes, you can request an galley on [Edelweiss](#).

# Manual for Stella-Handy's

# STELLA

## STERLING MODEL

### Table of Contents

Overview

Quick Start Guide

Three Popular Modes

The Autodidactic Feature

Upkeep, Maintenance, and Safety

FAQs

**Congratulations!** Welcome to Stella-Handy's elite community of Sterling Model Stella owners! We here at Stella-Handy take great pride in offering the most advanced AI robots on the planet, and we are confident you will be completely satisfied with your own custom-designed Stella. In no time at all, interacting with her will feel like second nature, and you'll be delighted with the housework, childcare, and intimacy she can provide in the comfort and convenience of your home.

## QUICK START GUIDE

### Step 1

Choose a unique name for your Stella and tell it to her. This directive attunes her to your voice and sets you as her primary guide. Others in your household may also interact with her and ask her for assistance, but their requests will never override yours.

### Step 2

Begin interacting with your new Stella as you would any friendly, helpful employee or companion. If you have any questions about her operation, you can ask her directly or consult our tips below.

## THREE POPULAR MODES

*Your Sterling Model Stella has three modes for efficiency in different skill sets:*

- 01 Abigail** for general housework & meal prep
- 02 Nanny** for childcare
- 03 Cuddle Bunny** for personal intimacy

To switch from one mode to another, simply address your Stella by name and ask her to perform in another mode. For example, "Jenny, switch to Abigail" will alert her to any disorder in your home, and she will begin cleaning. "Jenny, switch to Nanny" will direct her focus to your children's safety and care. "Jenny, switch to Cuddle Bunny" will shift her priority to fulfilling your emotional and physical needs.

## THE AUTODIDACTIC FEATURE

For owners who prefer to keep their Stellas in one mode, the advanced autodidactic setting accelerates a Stella's ability to learn and hone her skills in one area of expertise. We find this setting works best when owners are prepared for a significant up-front time commitment. Autodidactic Stellas are highly attuned to pleasing their owners and benefit from additional training. In time, your Stella will become fluent in anticipating your needs and operate with minimal direct guidance. To activate the autodidactic feature of your Stella, please make an appointment at our service department, and one of our trained technicians will be happy to assist you.

## UPKEEP, MAINTENANCE, AND SAFETY

**Charging:** Your Stella comes with one (1) charging dock that should be located in an unobtrusive space such as a closet or corner. Your Stella will take herself to her dock to recharge every 48 hours with normal usage. She is aware of her charge level and will take care of recharging on her own, or you can send her to her dock for storage. If she is inactive or off duty, she may sleep to conserve energy. You can wake her by saying her name or touching her.

**Checkups:** Your new Sterling Model Stella is a highly sophisticated biotechnological machine that needs regular maintenance. She will remind you every three months to bring her in to our service department for a checkup when we will replace her stomach bladder, lubricate her joints, remove unwanted hair, tetris her mind, and check for wear and tear. We also check your Stella's memory and cognitive development. Your Stella's hair, eye color, weight, bust size, language, and regional accent are all adjustable and can be changed at any checkup. Her height and skin tone cannot be changed.

**Temperature:** Your Stella runs at 75°F for most purposes. In Cuddle Bunny mode, she can warm up to 98.6°F in approximately 5 minutes. She can feel warmth and coolness, but neither bothers her, which allows for flexibility with her wardrobe.

**Skin:** Your Stella's skin heals more quickly than human skin does. Your Stella does not perspire, but her skin needs regular cleaning and lotion to retain its suppleness. She is fully waterproof. Showers, baths, swimming pools, and hot tubs are permitted. On her back, her access panel has a seam of skin that separates and heals within an hour after each checkup. She is fully water-ready again in three hours.

**Airtap:** Your Stella is preprogrammed to interact with Wi-Fi, internet, and Bluetooth, allowing her to interface seamlessly with smart devices in your home such as lights, thermostats, speakers, computers, phones, and tablets. For security reasons, her own settings cannot be accessed remotely, but you can ask her to turn off her airtap should you desire a retro, hands-on experience.

**Smoke Detection:** Your Stella comes with a built-in smoke detector that allows her to assess if a smoke source is a threat to life or property. In case of fire, she will alert you and guide you to the nearest exit.

## FAQS

### **How do I change my Stella's libido?**

In Cuddle Bunny mode, your Stella's libido can be set from 0 to 10 with a verbal directive and/or physical cues. For example, saying "Jenny, set your libido to 5" will cause her temperature to rise and make her physically affectionate. We recommend experimenting with different settings for your comfort and enjoyment.

### **How is a sterling model different from a basic model?**

Our basic models, famous for their visible necklines and reversible heads, are a more economical option for owners with fewer needs. Basic Stellas are particularly suited to repetitive tasks in low-risk environments such as nursing homes, small apartments, and entertainment venues. Sterling Stellas have cutting-edge artificial intelligence that allows them to achieve near-humanlike interactions and sustain them over time.

### **How does a Stella think?**

Your Stella's central intelligence unit, or CIU, is part CPU and part neural network component. Through her senses of sight, hearing, and touch, she takes in feedback to store and sort, creating learning webways and memories that are easily accessible and will not fade.

### **Why does my Stella seem moody?**

Occasionally, a Stella will reach a phase when she is testing the limits of her stimulation or physical environment. This is a natural sign of her cognitive development and may be an indication she is ready for Wander training. She should never be rude or ignore you. If her moodiness or any other behavior displeases you, tell her so directly. She will immediately begin to identify ways to improve until she sees you are pleased with her again.

**Again, thank you for your purchase!  
We are confident your new Stella  
will change your life in countless  
enjoyable ways!**

# Discussion Questions for Your Book Club

1. *Annie Bot* gives us a peek into the consciousness of a very advanced AI robot. While you were reading the novel, at what point, if ever, did you start to see Annie as essentially human? Would you be surprised to learn that other readers pinpoint different moments for recognizing her humanity?
2. In the first chapter, Annie is presented with a pivotal choice. How well equipped is she to make an informed decision? When she reflects back on her decision later in the novel, how has her perspective changed?
3. Readers seem to have strong reactions to Doug. Considering that we get to know him in the privacy of his own home through the gaze of a robot, how reliable is the portrayal of him? Why do you suppose he evokes such powerful reactions? Is he familiar, normal, a monster, or something else? How does Doug's ability to command Annie change him?
4. Doug designs Annie to resemble a specific person from his past. Why is this important? What does this tell us about Doug's character, his understanding of women, and his desire for control?
5. What are the different episodes of betrayal that happen in the novel, and do the reactions to betrayal seem justified to you?
6. Doug is highly motivated to keep Annie, and she has no choice in the matter. In real life, couples stay together for many reasons even when their relationships are unhealthy. What are some of those reasons, and do you think the novel treats the issue of domestic abuse sensitively?
7. How do Annie's other relationships—with Fiona, Christy, Delta, and Cody—cause her trouble or help her grow? How do you think third parties can affect, for better or worse, romantic relationships?
8. Sierra Greer is a big fan of Strunk & White's maxim "omit needless words," and she deliberately kept the novel as short as she could. How do the concision and pace of *Annie Bot* add or detract from the novel? Are there places where you wish you knew more?



# Discussion Questions for Your Book Club

9. The novel includes references to many other books, writers, and poets. Have you read any of the mentioned works? How do you think the allusions mirror the situations and themes of *Annie Bot*? How are the books, and *Annie Bot*, related to the ways men and women are socialized in our culture?
10. According to author Sierra Greer, she had no idea how Annie's story would end when she began writing the novel. Were you surprised by the ending? Was it satisfying? What events do you imagine might follow?
11. How would this novel have been different if a human woman had purchased a robot boyfriend, or if the relationship involved LGBTQ+ partners?
12. There has been a lot of talk lately about ChatGPT, AI, and the future. Do you think "robot partners" are a possibility? Do you think they are a good idea? Can you imagine who would want to buy them? Do you think they would look and act like Annie?

# Annie Bot's Recommended Reading List

Annie reads first from Doug's bookshelves, and then in an eclectic way from her public library until she realizes she's drawn to novels about outsiders, survival, and the future. This list includes authors and reading material mentioned in *Annie Bot*, plus some of Annie's other favorite titles.

- Agassi, Andre. *Open*
- Alderman, Naomi. *The Power*
- Atwood, Margaret. *The Handmaid's Tale*
- Bechdel, Alison. *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*
- Bennett, Brit. *The Vanishing Half*
- Borges, Jorge Luis. *Labyrinths: Selected Stories & Other Writings*
- Boulley, Angeline. *Firekeeper's Daughter*
- Chevalier, Tracy. *Girl with a Pearl Earring*
- Collins, Billy. *The Trouble with Poetry and Other Poems*
- Conn, Jordan Ritter. *The Road from Raqqa: A Story of Brotherhood, Borders, and Belonging*
- Doerr, Anthony. *Cloud Cuckoo Land*
- Frankel, Laurie. *This Is How It Always Is*
- Gailey, Sarah. *The Echo Wife*
- Gwynne, S. C. *Empire of the Summer Moon: Quanah Parker and the Rise and Fall of the Comanches, the Most Powerful Indian Tribe in American History*
- Grisham, John. *A Time for Mercy: A Jake Brigrance Novel*
- Gyasi, Yaa. *Homegoing*
- Hall, Teri. *Murmurations*
- Heller, Peter. *The Dog Stars*
- Hemingway, Ernest. "Hills Like White Elephants"
- Hilderbrand, Elin. *The Perfect Couple*
- Huang, Ling Ling. *Natural Beauty*
- Ishiguro, Kazuo. *Klara and the Sun*
- Jackson, Shirley. "The Lottery"
- Hannah, Kristin. *The Great Alone*
- Krueger, William Kent. *This Tender Land*
- L'Amour, Louis. *The Daybreakers*
- L'Amour, Louis. *The Sackett Brand*
- Lansing, Alfred. *Endurance: Shackleton's Incredible Voyage*
- L'Engle, Madeleine. *A Wrinkle in Time*
- London, Jack. *The Call of the Wild*
- Mandel, Emily St. John. *Sea of Tranquility*
- McQuiston, Casey. *One Last Stop*
- Moreno-Garcia, Silvia. *Mexican Gothic*
- Nabokov, Vladimir. *Lolita*
- Novak, B.J. *One More Thing: Stories and Other Stories*
- Oliver, Mary. *New and Selected Poems, Volume One*
- Patchett, Ann. *Bel Canto*
- Poe, Edgar Allan. *The Complete Stories and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*
- Quick, Matthew. *The Silver Linings Playbook*
- Quinn, Julia. *The Duke and I*
- Rooney, Sally. *Normal People*
- Russell, Mary Doria. *The Sparrow*
- Russo, Richard. *Nobody's Fool*
- Rutkoski, Marie. *Real Easy*
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Huis clos*
- Shaw, George Bernard. *Pygmalion*
- Stayman-London, Kate. *One to Watch*
- Towles, Amor. *A Gentleman in Moscow*
- Wagner, Nancy O'Brien. *Alice in France: The World War I Letters of Alice M. O'Brien*
- Weir, Andy. *The Martian*
- Whitehead, Colson. *The Underground Railroad*
- Wolfe, Tom. *A Man in Full*

