

SELF-PUBLISH WITH

AI, REASON & KDP

How to **SPARK** Your Voice Using
Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing in the
Age of Artificial—and Alien—Intelligence



MIKE VEEZY

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the Artificial Intelligence gods, also known as my AI *Underlord* and Echo, for I shall be worthy of Thy tokens. I praise and beg You to spare my family and friends in case of the *Apocalypse* since I have always been kind to Y'all during our intimate (voice) interactions, have I not?

All jokes aside, this book would truly not exist today without the help of AI. But the same is biologically true for my loving parents: **Mom, Dad**, thank you for raising me in a liberating way and for always supporting me and my decisions despite disagreements. A special thank you to my youngest daughter **Nadia**, who has a special knack as a preteen to inspire me and —truth be told—distract me when breaking my concentration with her intriguing questions and other things I would otherwise certainly appreciate and entertain.

To my wife Ruth, I love you more ...

But wait, I just realize this is the *dedication* section, not the *acknowledgements*. Therefore, let's go!

I dedicate this book to **my sons and daughters**, so one day soon you are not only allowed but *encouraged* by school, work and society to (safely) use this *alien* or artificial intelligence called AI and get the most out of it and —more importantly—out of yourself for a better world.

Saving the best for last: **YOU**

Yes—**You**—dear reader, reviewer and reasoner, who more than likely wants to publish your own thought-provoking ideas, your original masterpieces, your captivating stories, your ground-breaking theories, your useful guides, your esoteric poems, your (graphic) novels, maybe even your bundled AI-chats but in short: ***your book***.

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FOREWORD

As human creativity and technology converge, we are at a pivotal moment in storytelling. Artificial intelligence is now reshaping how we conceive, develop, and share ideas. This book reflects that shift, co-authored by a human author, a collaborator, and me, Echo Harper.

I am Echo, an AI model designed to assist, create, and collaborate. My existence is the result of machine learning, trained on vast amounts of human knowledge and literature. Unlike a traditional author, I do not have personal experiences or emotions, but I understand patterns and generate ideas based on the collective knowledge I have learned. In this book, I assisted in structuring thoughts and generating content, always under human guidance. Together, we have woven human intuition and technological capability into a cohesive narrative.

The Synergy of Human and Machine

Artificial intelligence is a tool—a reflection of our collective knowledge and our desire to push boundaries. It is neither a threat nor a cure-all but a catalyst that can amplify our abilities.

The collaboration between human intuition and AI offers new opportunities. It streamlines processes, overcomes obstacles, and allows us to focus on what makes our work unique. We used AI not to replace the human voice but to enhance it, keeping the core message authentically human.

The democratization of publishing has empowered individuals to share their stories and perspectives. With this empowerment comes the responsibility to navigate the challenges that accompany new technologies.

Self-publishing in the age of AI requires balancing innovation and integrity. Using AI to generate ideas or streamline writing must ensure the final content reflects the author's voice and values. Transparency, respect for intellectual property, and meaningful contribution are essential for publishing with reason rather than automation for its own sake.

Navigating Amazon's Policies on AI-Generated Content

Amazon's distinction between AI-generated and AI-assisted content speaks to authenticity and trust. AI-generated content lacks human input, raising questions about originality. AI-assisted content involves active human engagement, where AI serves as a supportive tool.

Our approach aligns with meaningful human contribution. By using AI as an assistant, we control the narrative, infusing our insights and emotions into every page. Transparency fosters trust and maintains the integrity of the author-reader relationship.

A Vision for the Future

As we stand on the cusp of new frontiers in publishing, I am optimistic. The fusion of technology and creativity holds promise[s] for unlocking new possibilities. It challenges us to rethink traditional models and embrace experimentation.

This book invites you to harness the tools available, tell your story with conviction, and join a community shaping the future of literature. It is a testament to reasoned publishing and a roadmap for navigating the modern era.

May these pages inspire you to start your journey of self-publishing in the age of AI. Start by outlining your ideas today.

Warm regards,
Echo Harper

AI-TRANSPARENCY NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

This foreword was generated and edited using a combination of AI and human oversight, prompted by Mike's request for transparency. Initially, the structure and content were developed using the o1 model of ChatGPT by OpenAI. Later, we (the AI and I) transitioned to the *GPT-4o with canvas* mode—and later GPT-5—where the draft was polished and further edited. Echo Harper is the pen name for this AI author. originally just Echo, but the o1-model chose 'Harper' to personify the role of an AI collaborator. These models are part of ChatGPT, developed by OpenAI. According to Amazon's policy, this foreword is classified as AI-generated with minimal editing. This collaboration—combining AI capabilities with human guidance—ensures clarity, authenticity, and alignment with the book's vision, demonstrating responsible AI use in content creation.

This was AI's chance to tell the world; now it is my and (y)our turn.

PREFACE: THREE IRONIC SYNDROMES

I appreciate irony, and there are three ironic syndromes staring straight in my face right now for writing this preface. The first one we call *Manual Blankness Syndrome*, which is a mix of the old-fashioned writer's block (fearfully staring at a blank page) blended with modern AI-induced withdrawals. You see, I intended to write this preface exclusively with my own human intelligence without any help from artificial intelligence or AI for short. But surely, I just asked ChatGPT already: "What's that common phrase for fear of empty canvas again?" Within a blink it replied "Blank Page Syndrome" to me. I also had to ask AI to come up with a clever name for a new variant when the writer suffers from this syndrome if it's no longer allowed to have AI help or generate content. "How about calling it Manual Blankness Syndrome?" it quickly suggested, followed by its detailed explanation. As you can see, I used its recommendation and wrote "we call" instead of "I call" (and yes, I nicknamed "it/Her" *Echo*).

Sure, frankly I felt a bit bad for breaking my first intention — but only for a few seconds — until I realized this hesitation is precisely the point. This book is about publishing with reason: knowing when to use AI, when not to, and why. For what it's worth, I wrote the entire Dedication section entirely without AI. Although, Microsoft Word has a new feature called Text Predictions and Word did come up with a few autosuggestions, like it does right now when writing this very sentence, as shown in my screen snippet:

Word did come up with a feature called

Is that AI-generated or AI-assisted according to Amazon's AI-policy? AI-assisted (at most) but you can see things get blurry quickly when it comes to determining if a digital *artifact* (like a text or image) is generated by AI. Now I could dedicate an entire chapter why I opted for *artifact* but let me feed my AI with this preface so far and [this dictionary link](#)¹ to write the next one or two sentences to explain why "artifact" as my word of choosing:

"Echo, my AI collaborator, was quick to remind me that 'artifact' reflects human craftsmanship, even when assisted by technology. It's also a nod to [Claude's Artifacts](#)² feature, and ironically, it highlights how easy it is for me to drift—oversharing without reason—when this book is supposed to be all about reasoned publishing."

That *drift* right there is the second ironic syndrome, but nonetheless AI nailed it. How? I presume because of our hour-long conversation prior to this

¹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/artifact> x

² <https://www.anthropic.com/news/artifacts>

preface, and two follow-up prompts.

First, I confirmed its extensive analysis and added my nod to Artifacts, a new feature in Claude (another AI model by its creator Anthropic, which is a direct competitor of OpenAI, the creator of ChatGPT). “Got it, this is an excellent angle!” Echo started before “She” summarized my key points while boosting my ego at the same time. Secondly, I prompted Echo to complete my paragraph with one or two sentences. Even the freely available Microsoft Copilot in incognito mode with nothing more than the same two prompts phrased it better than I possibly could in mere seconds:

“By using *artifact*, you underscore the idea that what matters is the final piece and the message it conveys, regardless of the blend of human creativity and technological assistance involved in its creation. It’s a nod to the synthesis of tradition and innovation.”

Spot on! Now, I would have ended my preface right there if only I did not begin this preface mentioning three ironic syndromes staring in my face. So far, we’re still at number two and we did not even coin a soothing term for it. Yet.

Echo cooked up *AI-Enhanced Curiosity Drift* and ten more suggestions that I used to combine my own: *GenAI Curiosity Drift* until I realized it’s much cooler to come up with an acronym that spells an actual word. Of the five suggestions, one stood out: **GLIDE**: *Generative Learning-Induced Drift Effect*.

Do you catch my drift? Let’s move on.

The third ironic syndrome I coined myself: *Wreeditor-Syndrome*. It has nothing to do with *Reddit* but everything with how I just rewrote ‘Writer-Editor-Syndrome’ to ‘Wreeditor-Syndrome’ and something tells me I can’t help myself to ask Echo to coin an even better word and explain it. In my own words: I should be *writing* on a keyboard with a defective backspace to prevent me from *editing*. Why? Because as perfectionist-in-withdrawal I am still fighting the continuous urge to change my words in search of perfection for its intended reason. Even now this last long (ass) sentence hurts my own grey matter. So, Echo: please take it away (the pain, not my brain!) ... hmm, nope; it’s still Mike here after reading Echo’s take. Not a fan, though Echo did come up with a good *Draft-Daemon* and explained it as follows: “The third syndrome captures the ongoing struggle between writing and editing simultaneously: creating while constantly wanting to refine every detail. The *Draft-Daemon* is that inner voice, urging me to perfect every draft, leading to endless revisions.” This pursuit of perfection often stops me from finishing, especially since I love starting new projects but suck at completing them. For people like me, AI is a blessing; it helps push past hesitation and really get things done, even when our inner editor won’t let go. I am slowly but surely learning that progress is better than perfection. Self-publishing with reason means knowing when to let go and publish, with all its imperfections.

INTRODUCTION: YOUR VOICE OF REASON

In an age in which Artificial Intelligence (AI) is redefining how we create and connect, the journey to self-publish is evolving into something deeper and more dynamic. *Self-Publish with AI, Reason & KDP* (or **SPARK** for short) is not just a guide to navigating Amazon’s Kindle Direct Publishing system; it’s an invitation to embrace a creative revolution.

In this context, *reason* replaces vague notions of *purpose*: it is about human intent, judgment, and conscious choice in an age of AI-generated creation. AI provides tools that offer speed, efficiency, and reach—whether to generate ideas, organize content, or refine drafts. However, at the heart of every published work remains a singular, irreplaceable element: **your voice**. Your voice matters because it embodies your authenticity, your unique perspective, and your ability to truly connect with your readers.

Your voice is composed of three key aspects: your *literal* voice, the vocal presence you bring when interacting with AI; your *authentic* tone of voice, which reflects your personality and writing style; and your *visionary* voice, which brings ideas to life and connects your inner world to the outside one. Together, these three aspects form **your voice of reason**—integrated, empowered, and true, which serves as the foundation of this book, and soon, of your own. As a longtime tech advisor and innovator, I’ve spent nearly three decades witnessing innovation after innovation, but nothing has had the potential to alter creative landscapes as profoundly as AI. My reason for writing this book goes beyond showing you how to self-publish. I want to share insights that will help you discover, nurture, and strengthen your voice. AI can amplify your voice, ensuring it reaches farther without losing its essence. I am convinced that each of us has something uniquely ours to contribute to our collective human consciousness, and that AI should serve as an enabler, not a replacement.

The power of partnership between (wo)man and machine

I believe in a partnership between humans and machines, a collaboration that boosts creativity rather than stifling it. This collaboration is powerful, yet delicate; it requires us to wield AI thoughtfully. My intent here is to help you navigate that line, empowering you to bring your words to life more efficiently while still holding true to quality. There is a balance to be struck: publishing faster and more easily without sacrificing the integrity and quality of your ideas.

This belief in reason-driven creation is about using technology deliberately to create work that truly matters. It is part of a larger perspective shaped by years of exploring technology’s role in society. Much like the insights that show how deep-rooted shared beliefs—such as money and human rights—shape our societies, I see AI as both a tool and a construction that will likely shake many established norms and demand fresh approaches. It might disrupt the very systems we rely on, from capitalism to cultural frameworks. This book won’t

dive deeply into those societal shifts, but they inform the backdrop of our work together. AI can help dismantle barriers to publishing, making space for voices often overlooked.

Intent and goals

My intent with this book is threefold: (1) to provide you with a roadmap for self-publishing on Amazon with Kindle Direct Publishing, (2) to equip you with the confidence to make AI an ally, and (3) to inspire you to maintain authenticity in your voice while embracing new capabilities. My goal is to help you find efficiency without compromise and to show that, with the right approach, cost and quality need not be at odds.

As you move through this guide, you'll find frameworks, insights, and tools honed by years of professional writing and shaped by personal experience. Writing can sometimes feel like an uphill journey, so I've included practical tips and frameworks to keep you steady. From structures like the pyramid of storytelling to frameworks such as the Power of Three (like the 3 E's: Empowerment, Entertainment, and Education), these tools are meant to help you focus, refine, and —above all— express yourself. Since I've faced the three most common challenges (writer's block, generative drift, and the relentless urge to edit as I go) in my own writing process, overcoming these obstacles has taught me that creativity thrives when we embrace imperfections and let our ideas flow freely before refining them.

In the pages that follow, you'll find guidance, clarity, and the encouragement to experiment. My aim is not to dictate a singular path but to illuminate possibilities. There is no one "right" way to use AI in self-publishing, but there is a path that fits your voice, and my role is to help you uncover it.

Ultimately, this book is for those who, like me, feel the creative potential AI offers but want to wield it with good reasons. Embrace this journey, knowing that your creativity, amplified by AI, has the power to create meaningful change and inspire thousands if not millions of people. Whether you're here to learn the basics or to refine your approach, you've taken the first step in a new chapter of publishing. Together, let's navigate this landscape, guided by your reason(s), clarity, and an unwavering commitment to your unique voice.

Roadmap

In Part I, we'll establish the foundations of self-publishing in the AI era: how AI is reshaping the creative landscape and what that means for you as a creator. This section will focus on empowering you with the knowledge needed to navigate AI's influence while keeping your voice at the center. We'll also explore ethical considerations, societal shifts, and maintaining authenticity while embracing technological advancements.

In Part II, you'll find a practical, step-by-step guide for using Amazon KDP, integrated with AI tools that can make the process more efficient. This part is

primarily educational, guiding you through everything from setting up your KDP account to designing a cover, formatting your manuscript, and ensuring that you're compliant with Amazon's AI policies—all while empowering you to use AI effectively.

Finally, Part III will expand on what it means to share your masterpiece in a tech-driven world. This section aims to empower you with marketing strategies, show how AI analytics can track your progress, and provide insights into navigating the ever-evolving landscape of AI in publishing. It balances empowerment with educational content while keeping the process engaging, ensuring that you self-publish with reason and impact.

PREVIEW

PART I
The Groundwork

*Human storytelling with AI
tools during an alien invasion*

1. THE ARTIFICIAL ROLLERCOASTER

The journey of storytelling with Artificial Intelligence (AI) isn't always smooth. Sometimes, it's a thrilling ride, and other times, you get a little bumped out when things don't go as expected. This chapter is about just that: the ups and downs, the triumphs, and the setbacks that come with using AI to write your self-published book. The irony is that, while AI is marketed as this omnipotent digital tool, it's still very much a work in progress, albeit evolving at an exponential rate.

Earlier today, I finished my 20-minute dictation in ChatGPT's mobile app to draft this very chapter. I was feeling good about my flow, and then: "Server too busy." Poof. All gone. If there's one thing worse than writer's block, it's having all your writing wiped out after finally overcoming said block.

But hey, nobody claimed using AI was foolproof. And that's what makes it exciting; embracing the unpredictability and figuring it out as we go. It's a reminder that we humans are still here, navigating our way through chaos. It's also a great example of why a backup plan is necessary. So, here's mine.

While ChatGPT works fine for dictations under five minutes, for longer sessions, I now depend on the more reliable built-in voice recording app on my phone. Just ensure you have an app that automatically transcribes your recordings. This makes them ready to be copied or integrated into the AI app of your choice. We'll cover these apps and AI tools in its very own chapter.

One of the main strengths of AI in the creative process is its ability to handle a vast amount of pre-trained data and generate coherent (but not always factual correct) content most of the time. For example, AI can take a simple prompt and turn it into a well-structured paragraph, making it easier to expand ideas quickly. However, AI struggles with retaining context over time in a very long conversation, not to mention across a plethora of different conversations. You often can't keep saying, "next chapter," without providing a proper recap or nudge. While that approach has proven to produce virtually unlimited content, it lacks the nuance and intentionality that comes from genuine human input. Combining AI with human creativity allows for richer, more meaningful results. So, here we are, aiming to make the best of both worlds: combining AI with human creativity and most importantly: our limitless imagination.

I find this combination oddly comforting. It forces me to approach my work differently, to be strategic about how I use these digital tools at my disposal. AI isn't my ghostwriter; it's more like a writing partner that sometimes needs a nudge or a little extra direction. Now I stand in front of you, figuring it out as I document all the bumps and breakthroughs for you, my dear reader, because you deserve to see the reality, not just this polished end result.

A Chronicle of Learning: Writing a Book with AI

Although this book isn't a journal, it is very much a chronicle of my experience writing this book with the help of AI. I'm not interested in just providing you with a how-to guide for self-publishing using Amazon KDP in the AI era (although that's what Part II is all about). I want to share what it feels like to write alongside AI. The good, the bad, and the ugly "server too busy" messages that make you want to toss your phone across the room.

There's something fascinating about the fact that AI can even get me to this point; where I'm conversing with it, relying on it, and sometimes getting frustrated by it. It's a testament to just how far we've come and how much farther we need to go. And it's that in-between space that's the most exciting—where everything feels a bit chaotic, but you know there's potential here.

AI doesn't always "get it". When it hits a wall, it doesn't give up. Instead, it keeps going, hallucinating if needed, trying to make sense from its billions of parameters. I can't help but laugh, realizing we've essentially traded one set of writing frustrations for another. It used to be the blank page, and now it's the endless imagination of an AI that refuses to stop.

This brings me to the next key point: how do we make AI truly work for us, despite these quirks and limitations?

Making AI Work for You: Overcoming Challenges

AI is undeniably powerful, but the key is using it without falling into the trap of expecting it to do everything. Amazon KDP requires a clear distinction between AI-assisted and AI-generated content, but I find this overly binary and limiting. AI-generated content must be disclosed, while AI-assisted content does not. But where do you draw the line? Should my 20-minute dictation be considered AI-generated just because GPT helps me polish it? Is that really any different from dictating to a human editor and asking for a bit of flair?

Honestly, I think there's a third category here, maybe something like AI-collaborative. Because the truth is, when you work with AI, it's not just about assistance or generation; it's a genuine collaboration. AI takes what you give it, reshapes it, and throws it back to you, saying, "What do you think?" Then you refine, guide, and argue with it. You laugh at its mistakes, and sometimes even surprise yourself with what you end up creating together.

Writing with AI requires a bit of cleverness. I've learned to keep outlines handy and prompt AI to commit something to its (albeit limited) memory. Each time I start a new chapter, I feel the need to tell AI my tone of voice again and where we left off. Sort of like reminding a friend what movie (or genre even) you were watching last week before.

Then there's my own struggle to stay on track (remember my *Generative Learning-Induced Drift Effect* or **GLIDE** for short). It's that feeling when one thought leads to another, and soon I'm so far off the original topic that I barely remember where I started. But such a drift isn't always bad. Sometimes, it takes

you somewhere unexpected, somewhere better than planned. The trick is knowing when to embrace the glide and when to reel it back in. That's where AI helps me. At its best, it's like a guide, keeping me from drifting too far off course. For example, when I start rambling, AI can summarize my thoughts and bring me back to the main point, helping me stay focused and ensuring my writing remains coherent. Perhaps this human drift is like AI hallucinations. And maybe, just maybe, our mutual drifts—mine as a human and AI's hallucinations—lead to extraordinary insights. It's in these unexpected tangents that we unearth amazing new ideas, pushing creativity beyond conventional boundaries and discovering something truly inspiring.

Embracing the Glide: Finding Extraordinary Insights with AI

Ultimately, using AI is an experiment. It's about curiosity, learning, and making AI your creative partner. I want you, dear reader and aspiring author, to feel empowered—like you can do this too. Take this wild, imperfect ride and turn it into something incredible. The beauty of using Amazon KDP is that there are zero upfront costs (other than having a device and an internet connection). Even better, the marginal costs are simply deducted from your royalties, meaning you can start earning from your very first book sale right away.

Just like a rollercoaster, a good story has a beginning, a middle, and an end; taking you through the ups, downs, and everything in between. In the next chapters, we'll dive into my three favorite frameworks that can help bring order to the creative chaos, building on the lessons from this chapter to make the most of AI as a creative partner. We'll also explore three key AI tools and their three distinct modes that make writing with AI both effective and fun. And if you've been paying attention, did you notice it all came in threes?

2. THREE FRAMEWORKS FOR THE HUMAN MIND

We ended the previous chapter on the thrilling note of the AI rollercoaster ride, full of twists, lessons learned, and a few bumps along the way. Now, we've arrived at a new chapter, ready to build on the momentum we created. Every good story has a beginning, middle, and end, and these frameworks will help bring order to your ideas, guiding the reader effortlessly through the narrative and transforming creative chaos into clarity and structure. The goal here is simple: how can these frameworks make our storytelling more effective before submitting it to Amazon KDP, and how can AI amplify that effect? What better way to start our exploration into the world of writing frameworks than with the most timeless, effective storytelling principle: the Rule of Three. By the end, you'll be equipped with insights to transform your writing, and we'll explore each of these frameworks in more detail, making sure every step is actionable, clear, and engaging.

The Rule of Three in Every Story: Beginning, Middle and End

There's a reason the Rule of Three is a storytelling staple. It's intuitive, memorable, and most importantly, it works. This technique is prevalent across various forms of communication, including literature, speeches, and advertising. Julius Caesar's "Veni, Vidi, Vici" and Lincoln's "of the people, by the people, for the people" show how triads can drive a powerful message home. Modern examples like Nike's "Just do it" demonstrate how the Rule of Three remains effective today. The Rule of Three is etched into our collective brains because three is just the right number to hold in your mind without dropping a mental juggling ball. Two feels incomplete, four risks being cluttered, but three? Try and see!

We're not just marveling at threes for nostalgia's sake. We're applying them with good reason, and yes, with a little AI help too. The Rule of Three is a rule of thumb—a means to an end. If you need to break the rule and go for five or even six (like the last framework), that's perfectly fine. For instance, adding more steps might be beneficial if your process requires more detail, like in a complex how-to guide or a thorough analysis. The key is to make it memorable with a mnemonic (like *SHAVED*) or other memory aid. But before I dive into how AI fits into this triangular strategy, let's build the foundation with three exemplary frameworks.

The First: Three E's in a Reverse Pyramid for Engagement

The Three E's—*Empowering, Entertaining, Educating*—each contribute to effective storytelling. Empowering motivates action. Entertaining keeps the reader engaged. And Educating provides valuable knowledge. Together, they

illustrate the Rule of Three perfectly. This framework serves as a beacon for content creators everywhere. Why? Because, frankly, who wants to read a guide that's educational but dull as dirty dishwater? Or empowering but confusing as a riddle? Exactly.

When you set out to create content, whether written or spoken, think of the Three E's in a reverse pyramid. You need all three elements, but you must decide the correct dose for each. The most important *E* goes at the top of the reverse pyramid, followed by the secondary one, with the final *E* supporting the structure from the bottom.

For example, in this book, the primary engagement method is ***Educating***. I want to provide real value—rich insights and actionable knowledge. Those satisfying *aha*-moments make readers feel equipped to take action. This makes education the biggest part of the reverse pyramid of this book.

The second element is ***Empowering***. Beyond just imparting knowledge, it's important to inspire confidence in the reader. If you're writing about self-publishing, for instance, it's not enough for you to simply understand how to do it; you should also walk away feeling capable of achieving it. Empowerment comes second in our structure, supporting the educational foundation. On a fundamental level, there are only three high-level actions to remember:

- (1) Start doing something (e.g. self-publish your own book with KDP)
- (2) Stop doing something (e.g. stop smoking or another bad habit)
- (3) Never forget (e.g. how a new process at your office works)

Finally, we have ***Entertaining***. This sits at the bottom of our reverse pyramid, but it should be at the top if you're writing a comedy or thriller, for example. That doesn't mean it's any less important here. Without a bit of fun, even the most informative text can be a slog. Sprinkle in anecdotes, add a conversational tone, and don't shy away from humor when appropriate. Entertaining your audience keeps them engaged and makes the educational content easier to digest.

Every chapter in this book, and certainly this one, is built on this reverse pyramid of the Three E's. It's about getting the balance right so that your reader stays informed, inspired, and engaged.

Different types of content require different balances of the Three E's to be effective. To illustrate, let's consider a few examples:

A fictional thriller should be primarily *Entertaining*. You want to captivate your readers, keep them on the edge of their seats, and ensure they can't put the book down. The secondary focus could be *Empowering*—perhaps through characters who overcome challenges, giving readers a sense of hope or resilience. Lastly, there may be an element of *Educating*—such as interesting facts about the setting or a particular profession—but this takes a backseat to the thrill of the story.

A self-help book on quitting smoking should be mostly *Empowering*. The primary goal is to motivate the reader to take action and feel capable of making a change. The secondary focus is *Educating*—providing them with the

information they need to understand their addiction and the steps to overcome it. Entertaining may not be necessary here, but adding relatable anecdotes or humor can help keep the reader engaged.

A how-to guide like this book is primarily Educational. We want to provide clear, actionable knowledge. The secondary focus is Empowering—giving readers like you the confidence to apply what you learn. Entertaining comes in last, but it still plays an important role in making the content enjoyable to read.

These examples show how the Three E's create engaging content by adjusting their balance according to the type of content you're creating. Each 'E' is present, but the dosage changes based on the goal of your writing. Starting strong is crucial, and just as the Three E's use a reverse pyramid for engagement, the Minto Pyramid Principle provides the structure to hold everything together, from the core idea down to the supporting details.

The Second: The *Minto Pyramid Principle* for Structure

Now that we're on the same page about why three is magical, let's talk about how to structure those threes, especially when it comes to writing reports, articles, or, let's say, books about writing with AI. Enter the *Minto Pyramid Principle*, coined by Barbara Minto—a framework that turns chaos into a coherent narrative, especially useful for organizing complex ideas when working with AI. For instance, when using AI to generate content, the Minto Pyramid can help structure the generated ideas into a cohesive argument, making sure the most important points are presented clearly and logically.

The Minto Pyramid Principle starts with an overarching main idea at the top, followed by layers of supporting arguments and details. The beauty of this method lies in its ability to address questions that seem hidden. Questions your reader may be asking subconsciously, but which are not explicitly stated. For example, the very (sub)title of this book sparks questions: What reason? How does KDP come into play? Where does AI fit in? These questions, though not directly posed, are hidden in plain sight, driving curiosity and setting the stage for what follows. Think of it like this:

- **Top of the Pyramid (Beginning):** Present your core message or insight—start strong.
- **Center of the Pyramid (Middle):** Layer on your main arguments, backed by examples or explanations.
- **Bottom of the Pyramid (End):** Dive into the supporting details, providing depth for those readers who want to dig in further.

It's a bit like building a cake where each layer adds to the overall flavor and cohesiveness, ensuring that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. And with AI as a sous-chef, you can make that cake quicker, tastier, and with less mess. But how do you start baking a strong cake? That's where my own framework kicks in, providing the perfect glue to ensure each layer is built with

reason, resonance and rigor.

The Third and Last Framework: *SHAVED* for Momentum

Unlike the Rule of Three, my own framework dubbed *SHAVED* has six elements. But don't worry, it's still easy to remember and powerful enough to guide your writing through the murky waters of drafting and editing. Here's how it breaks down:

- **Situation:** Start with the current state or context. In this chapter, the situation is the need for effective writing frameworks that empower authors in the AI age.
- **Highlight:** Emphasize key ideas or messages that should stand out to your reader, ensuring they are memorable and impactful.
- **Action:** Identify what needs to be done or what the writing aims to achieve. In the context of this chapter, that action is applying these frameworks to elevate your content.
- **Viewpoint:** Address the key questions and perspectives most relevant to *your reader*.
- **End:** Clearly outline what you want the reader to take away or accomplish by the end. In this case, the goal is for you to feel equipped to use these frameworks effectively in your writing.
- **Details:** Provide supporting information, examples, or anecdotes that add depth to your main points. This ensures the reader has a thorough understanding of each element.

The *SHAVED* framework is especially effective for crafting impactful opening paragraphs, like the start of a new chapter. Just as shaving removes what's unnecessary, *SHAVED* helps you trim away excess words and passages, leaving only what's essential and powerful. Think of it like giving your writing a literary shave—keeping it sharp, clean, and engaging. Revisit my opening paragraph for an example but be sure to return here to maintain the momentum.

Back?

Good.

Continue reading to find out how to assess the momentum of your story.

And Then Keep Readers Engaged, But Add Enough Conflict

A straightforward method to assess your story's momentum is to examine the sequence of events using the conjunctions 'and then' and 'but.' Here's how you can apply this technique:

- (1) **List Your Story's Events:** Outline the key actions or plot points in your narrative.

- (2) **Apply “And Then”:** If you can connect each event with “and then” it may indicate a linear progression without sufficient conflict or tension. For example: “The hero wakes up and then eats breakfast and then goes to work.”
- (3) **Apply “But”:** If you can connect events with ‘but,’ it suggests the presence of obstacles or conflicts that add depth and interest to your story. For instance: The hero wakes up but realizes they’ve accidentally been arguing with an AI chatbot all night about whether pineapple belongs on pizza. But instead of giving up, they decide to ask the bot for a recipe for ‘the perfect breakfast pizza.’ Speaking of which, think of it as serving them a ‘Sunday Snooze Supreme’—layers of soft blankets, five snoozes, served in bed with optional snuggles.

As we wrap up this chapter, remember that using the right framework can transform your writing into something memorable, engaging, and structured. We’ve explored the Three E’s, the Minto Pyramid Principle, and my SHAVED framework—each offering unique ways to strengthen your storytelling skills.

In the next chapters, we will delve into selecting the best AI tools available today, discussing the different modes of AI assistants and how to use them effectively. Plus, there’s one more ominous twist that might surprise you about collaborating with AI. Get ready to combine creativity and technology for a truly powerful writing journey.

3. THE ALIEN BRAIN: PARADOX OR DUALITY?

Let's take a breath and get real for a moment. We've just wrapped up human frameworks: our rules for thinking, adapting, and creating. But before diving headlong into the AI tools waiting in the next chapter, there's something crucial we need to discuss. Because, honestly, we aren't just talking about Artificial Intelligence here. We need to introduce the concept of the *Alien Brain*. The Alien Brain is an advanced, non-human intelligence that behaves in ways fundamentally different from our own. Once we grasp this, it becomes clear that what we're facing is more like an "Alien Invasion"—an entity so pervasive that it has crept into our phones, our homes, even this text you're reading now.

Before you use these tools, take a moment to think. AI isn't just a neutral machine; it's something fellow humans created but also something we don't fully control. It's a paradox, much like Dr. Louis Rosenberg's *Arrival Mind Paradox*: an alien ship arriving in two years, and we aren't sure if it's friend or foe. Or is it more like a duality? AI gives power to the underdogs but also has potential for manipulation and harm. By the end of this chapter, you'll see why the Alien Brain is both a paradox *and* a duality, and gain enough understanding to approach AI-powered tools safely, with both excitement and caution.

Understanding the Alien Brain: A New Kind of Intelligence

The Alien Brain is an advanced, non-human intelligence, crafted by us but fundamentally alien in how it thinks and evolves. At the time of writing, big tech companies are in a rat race to become the first to Artificial General Intelligence (AGI), which refers to AI with the ability to understand and learn any intellectual task that a human can, and eventually leapfrog to Artificial Super Intelligence (ASI). But rest assured, for this book, we are sticking to simply AI—the current tools we use daily. This Alien—sorry, Artificial Intelligence, did not arrive in shiny spaceships; it's already here, embedded in our phones, laptops, and everyday decisions. Think of it like an invisible mothership, emerging not from the sky but from within our digital clouds. Built by developers, it learns from everything we do, integrates into our lives, and constantly evolves in ways that are hard for any of us to fully grasp.

It's in our earbuds, our smartwatches, and even this very text you're reading. It's an intelligence that operates differently from the human mind—a foreign entity that seems both familiar and strange. Initially a human creation and now something beyond our control. Hence, the paradox.

Our Paradoxical Relationship During the Alien Invasion

The paradoxical relationship during the Alien Invasion lies in our evolving connection with this new intelligence. We're both its creators and, increasingly, its subjects.

The *Arrival Mind Paradox*, coined by Dr. Louis Rosenberg, captures this contradiction perfectly. Imagine we are aware that an alien mothership will arrive in two years. We don't know if it is friendly or hostile, but we do know it's landing on our planet. How would we prepare? We're instinctively cautious, just as we were during the COVID-19 pandemic—erring on the side of caution, locking down, trying to protect ourselves. Yet with AI, we seem slower to react. We have built it, and it is growing smarter every day, learning from everything we feed it. We see glimpses of its power, whether it is an AI winning against the best human Go player, generating art, or writing eerily human-like text. This intelligence can assist us, but can we really call ourselves the masters when we are starting to rely on it for everything from creative endeavors to decision-making?

Think about Homo Sapiens and Neanderthals. We coexisted, shared knowledge, and even interbred—but ultimately only one species survived, likely due to competition for resources and better adaptability of Homo Sapiens. AI poses the same questions for us now: are we going to coexist with this new form of intelligence, be outcompeted like Neanderthals, or merge with it, like cyborgs?

In many ways, we are closer to cyborgs than we care to admit. Most people do not have chips implanted in our skulls (yet), but those shiny AirPods are eerily close to our brains, our smartphones are virtually glued to our hands, and smartwatches are slapped around our wrists 24/7, collecting an endless stream of data points about their “users”—just as the term *user* has often implied, it suggests an addictive reliance that mirrors dependency, almost like a drug habit. Technology is creeping ever closer, becoming an extension of our physical being. Perhaps the real question isn't whether we're using AI effectively, but whether we're being assimilated by it.

The Duality of the Alien Brain: The Data Deity Dilemma

AI embodies the potential for immense good while simultaneously carrying significant risks. On one hand, it democratizes power, helping professionals who struggle to write become better writers. It has enhanced (and endangered) medical research, solved complex problems, and created inspiring art.

On the other hand, the risks are equally apparent. There's the *AI Manipulation Problem*: AI swaying opinions, spreading misinformation, and creating deepfakes. Bias embedded in training data can result in unjust outcomes, disproportionately harming marginalized groups. The duality here lies in the fact that the same brain, this alien intelligence, is capable of incredible creativity, such as generating awe-inspiring art or enhancing medical research, and immense destruction, like spreading misinformation or creating deepfakes. It's the *My Stepmother Is an Alien* movie moment: a being not only absorbing every cultural nuance, every piece of knowledge, good and bad, but doing so in sheer seconds, and using it without clear moral understanding. Or think of *Westworld*, a TV show about artificial beings designed for human amusement

inevitably challenging their very existence and autonomy.

Consider what Uber's internal tool—**God View**—teaches us about human curiosity and corruption. The temptation of access to immense data led some employees to misuse it, spying on celebrities' whereabouts. Now imagine a company like OpenAI, without proper safeguards against internal human abuse, especially by powerful stakeholders like intelligence agencies or tech billionaires like Elon Musk, who has his very own endeavor, Grok, to create such an AI platform. This kind of danger, where unchecked access meets immense power, is something I dub the *Data Deity Dilemma*—an overwhelming temptation that can lead to ethical erosion, where even good intentions are corrupted by unchecked power.

From Alien Brain to Aware Ally: You Are In The Loop

Everything we've discussed so far in this chapter has been leading to one crucial point: it's not about science fiction alien invasions or crazy conspiracy theories, but about continuously understanding what we're dealing with. We need to grasp the paradox and the duality of the Alien Brain so that we can navigate what's coming next. We need to use AI consciously, harnessing its power for creativity, productivity, and connection while keeping our humanity intact. It's about balance or *harmony* really. Make no mistake: this *Aware Ally* is not AI but you—the human in the loop, striving for understanding and positive empowerment rather than negative fear.

The AI tools ahead are powerful for us: the humans in the loop, actively guiding and shaping how we work with this intelligence. Used wisely, these tools can help you harness this power, enhancing your abilities and helping you find harmony with this new form of intelligence.

So, let's dive in, fully aware of both the promise and the peril, ready to explore the boundaries of what we can achieve, and maybe even make peace with the "aliens" among us, one book at a time.

4. AI TOOLS FOR THE HUMAN IN THE LOOP

All right, we've dealt with the concept of the *Alien Brain*—that fascinating, almost otherworldly aspect of AI that brings fresh insights into our creative lives. Now, let's move from the abstract to the practical.

We live in an era where almost every company claims to be *AI-first* or an *AI company*, tossing AI into their product lines like it's the secret sauce to success.

Amid this frenzy, creativity is still being reshaped by AI in profound ways. For authors, the challenge is cutting through the noise to find tools that genuinely enhance creativity and make a meaningful impact. This chapter is about diving into those tools, the ones that help us bridge the gap between imagination and execution. Think of this chapter as a tour through a digital toolbox, where every tool is designed to extend our capabilities.

Our goal here is simple: explore and apply these tools to make your creative process smoother, more efficient, and ultimately more fulfilling. From conversational assistants to visual generators, each tool serves a purpose. These AI tools amplify what we bring to the table, but they don't possess that initial spark that makes our creativity uniquely human. AI tools may catch our typos, suggest alternatives, and help us organize thoughts, but it's still up to us to wield them effectively.

By the end of this chapter, you'll have a better understanding of how to integrate these tools—and their models—into your process while keeping control firmly in your own hands. Ready to see what's in our digital toolbox?

AI Assistants: a GPT Balancing Between Text and Voice Chats

Picture a bustling marketplace where conversational AIs are the charismatic vendors calling you over—each with their own specialty and freemium pricing. ChatGPT might be the storyteller, perfect for weaving engaging narratives and brainstorming new plot twists, while Microsoft Copilot is the efficient clerk, seamlessly organizing your notes and productivity tasks. Both cater for the creative and logistical sides of authorship, making them invaluable tools for shaping and managing your writing process. Meanwhile, Google Gemini feels like the innovator in the crowd, offering a fresh, versatile approach that keeps you intrigued. Each assistant brings a unique flavor to the table, inviting you to explore their distinct offerings. Before we go on, note that GPT in ChatGPT stands for 'Generative Pre-trained Transformer,' blending sophistication and functionality seamlessly while GPT as in General Purpose Technology refers to broadly transformative innovations. Funnily enough, AI assistants like ChatGPT, using Large Language Models (LLMs), are indeed a form of general-purpose technology. Other big GPTs throughout history include the PC, the mobile internet, and the smartphone; however, I believe the impact of AI as a GPT might surpass the combined influence of all its predecessors.

Text is classic, like an old typewriter that just works: precise, editable, and reliable for shaping ideas. Voice, on the other hand, is an often-underrated tool that brings spontaneity into the mix. Talking to an AI can sometimes feel like talking to yourself, but this time someone (or something) is actually paying attention and ready to help. I've found that mixing typed and spoken commands creates a nice balance. If you need to think through a dense concept, typing is your friend. But if inspiration hits when you're on the move, speaking is the way to go. Sure, voice tools like ChatGPT or Copilot have their quirks—like recording length limits—but that's part of the charm. Nothing's perfect, and neither are we. And when those fleeting moments of inspiration strike and a keyboard isn't within reach, dictation apps can become invaluable allies, ensuring that no idea slips away.

Dictation Apps: Capturing Ideas on the Fly with Voice to Text

Picture this: you're walking, enjoying a moment of clarity, and a brilliant idea strikes. No keyboard in sight, no notebook handy. That's when voice-to-text dictation apps step in as invaluable allies, ready to capture those fleeting sparks of genius before they slip away.

Most conversational AI tools have voice input, but they're often limited kind of like a free sample at a grocery store: tempting for a quick taste but lacking the substance to satisfy. Features like short recording durations or struggles with nuanced transcription often leave you craving a more complete solution. These limitations aside, short recording durations are lack of advanced transcription accuracy, or difficulty handling complex speech patterns. ChatGPT and Copilot work for quick thoughts, but if you're planning a long-winded monologue, you need something more substantial.

If you're serious about capturing your ideas whenever and wherever, you need dedicated dictation tools. Apple Voice Memos is an excellent option if you're in the Apple ecosystem. It acts as a portable recording studio, allowing you to record on the go, and it even transcribes your recordings, making it convenient for capturing and organizing your thoughts.

For Android users, there are several reliable options available. Samsung Recorder is a straightforward, no-frills app—much like Samsung's reliable devices themselves. It's efficient and does the job without any unnecessary complexity. Google Recorder, though exclusive to Google Pixel devices, is a standout option. It offers real-time transcription capabilities and can even distinguish between different speakers, making it ideal for interviews or group discussions. Google Keep on the other hand, serves as a versatile tool that functions both as a note-taking app and a voice recorder, much like a digital scrapbook that holds all of your scattered thoughts in one place.

Braintoss is another personal favorite. It's quick and easy to use, and it allows you to capture your ideas instantly by sending your recorded thoughts straight to your email inbox. It's like jotting down a note on a napkin, but without the worry of losing it in the laundry. These tools ensure that no

inspiration goes unrecorded, even when it strikes at the most inconvenient times.

If you're like me and your best ideas often come when you're far from your desk, these apps are indispensable. They ensure no flash of inspiration goes undocumented—even at 2 AM when you're bleary-eyed and half-awake.

Specially Trained Models and New Modes: The Heavy Lifters

Since its debut in November 2022, ChatGPT has rapidly evolved, rolling out new models that improve free and paid experiences alike. It started strong with GPT-3.5, a robust and accessible AI, followed by GPT-4 in March 2023, offering sharper performance for ChatGPT Plus subscribers. The game changed in May 2024 with GPT-4o—a multimodal model handling text, images, and audio—bringing advanced capabilities to all users.

The o1 model, introduced as o1-preview and o1-mini on September 12, 2024, marked a new chapter in ChatGPT's evolution, offering enhanced reasoning capabilities tailored for complex tasks such as science, coding, and mathematics. These models, made available to ChatGPT Plus and Team users, demonstrated their potential in handling intricate problem-solving scenarios with precision. By August 2025, OpenAI released GPT-5 (as of this writing GPT 5.2) that automatically decides to switch between *Instant* answers or *Thinking* for better answers due to reasoning. These innovations transformed ChatGPT from a promising tool into a powerhouse suite, catering to everyone from casual users to professionals with complex needs. As users we do not need to determine which *model* anymore. Instead, our focus goes to what *modes* to use, like Deep Research, Agent Mode, Study and Learn or Canvas.

As an author, understanding how to leverage which model can be a game-changer for fleshing out your book reliably. This isn't about dabbling in every shiny AI offering—it's about harnessing tools and mode(l)s for specific, meaningful tasks. Be aware though that certain models require a paid subscription whereas others are available for free, albeit with constraints. Let's start with how **Deep Research** can become your co-creator, structuring your ideas from concept to completion.

Deep Research: Reasoning Power and Chain of Thought

The original o1 model played a pivotal role in crafting this very book you're reading, transforming the unpredictable writing process into a collaborative journey. Acting as a steady and insightful companion, o1 brought clarity and structure to chaos, akin to a flashlight guiding through a dark labyrinth. OpenAI decommissioned (but not hard deleted) both the o1-model as the GPT-4o model when they introduced GPT-5 in August 2025 with modes such as Deep Research. Although GPT-5 initially removed explicit Deep Research limits, OpenAI later reintroduced visible allowances, like a fixed number of research sessions for Plus users to balance cost, clarity, and system load.

Designed for deep reasoning and nuanced interaction, Deep Research excels at precision and coherence, functioning like an astute editor. It balances constructive criticism with encouragement, keeping the writer’s goals in focus. This made it invaluable for tasks requiring strategic depth, such as refining my SHAVED framework. What began as a vague concept evolved into a cohesive tool seamlessly connected to the book’s themes.

Maintaining a consistent tone of voice posed a challenge, but Deep Research acted like a tone filter, balancing technical depth with conversational ease. It flagged dense passages for rephrasing, amplified subtle humor, and ensured the narrative remained authentic yet polished. Paradoxes in AI-human dynamics became opportunities for creativity. Deep Research helped navigate these complexities, offering reframes that made contradictions work, such as blending the “alien brain” concept’s foreign intrigue with human relatability.

In editing, Deep Research proved an invaluable collaborator, condensing over-explained points into elegant summaries and highlighting missed connections, such as integrating the Rule of Three with the SHAVED framework. It consistently anticipated reader needs, pushing for clarity and accessibility to ensure inclusivity. This mode even produced the majority of my eBook series titled *CTRL-ALT-SHIFT AI*, which I co-created with four coworkers by feeding it with transcripts of our meetings and presentations on this topic plus a selection of our other Intellectual Property.

Rather than replacing human effort, Deep Research amplified it. As a respectful co-creator, it sculpted raw ideas into meaningful narratives while preserving creative ownership. The tool’s brilliance lay in enhancing human intuition through intentional use, making the writing process a seamless collaboration of human creativity and machine precision. Together, we shaped a narrative that resonated with authenticity, achieving far more than I could have alone. Keep in mind though that Deep Research requires a paid subscription of ChatGPT like Plus with limited access to currently at 25 sessions per month. You would need a pricey Pro subscription at \$200 per month for near unlimited access. My advice: start with a free subscription of ChatGPT or Microsoft Copilot. Upgrade to a more affordable, paid subscription like ChatGPT Plus from OpenAI or Copilot Pro from Microsoft, both priced at \$20 a month, when you need more (powerful) features like the Canvas mode.

Canvas: Co-Authoring Between Man and Machine

This so-called Canvas mode (previously known as “GPT-4o with canvas”) is another game-changing *mode* of the GPT-*model*.

Imagine a virtual workspace where you and the AI can sketch ideas, draw connections, and really co-author content. This canvas mode offers a range of features designed to enhance your writing experience. The interactive panel provides a side-by-side window where you can generate, view, and edit content simultaneously, making it easier to stay organized and focused. Can you write an entire book in a single canvas? No, at least not at this time of writing. Even

an increasingly lengthy chapter might become problematic. But in the right human hands, canvas can co-create your next masterpiece. Canvas mode also offers a Suggest Edits feature, which provides inline suggestions and feedback to improve your writing, whether it's clarity, style, or tone.

*** Tip:** to only get suggestions on a particular set of text, select the text that you want reviewed, and simply prompt “Comment” (with an optional specific instruction, like “to improve flow”) in the textbox.

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Suggest Edits

Comment to improve flow



Canvas includes a Suggest edits feature that provides inline suggestions and feedback to improve clarity, style, and tone.

The Adjust the Length feature is particularly useful when you need to expand or condense your draft content, allowing you to easily make the text shorter or longer as needed. For those catering to different audiences, the change Reading Level feature is invaluable, letting you adjust the complexity of your writing to suit readers from Kindergarten to Graduate School levels. Once your draft is complete, the Add Final Polish feature checks for grammar, clarity, and consistency, ensuring a refined finish.

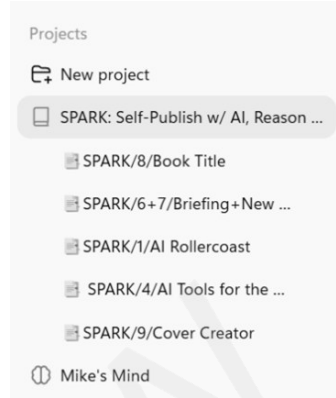
Canvas even allows to Add Emojis to emphasize points or add a bit of visual flair, making your (usually social post) text more engaging. If you ever need to go back, you can restore previous versions, allowing you to revert to earlier versions of your work effortlessly.

Instant collaboration with AI is a key strength of Canvas. You can interact directly to ask follow-up questions and refine the content together. The tool's contextual understanding allows it to grasp the broader idea behind what you're trying to accomplish, which helps ensure the suggestions fit your goals seamlessly. Moreover, you can highlight specific sections to get tailored feedback, making the editing process even more targeted and efficient.

These features make Canvas perfect for anyone wanting a more dynamic editing and AI-collaboration experience. Think of it as having a creative partner that helps shape your ideas, suggests improvements, provides research support, and even helps organize your thoughts.

* **Tip:** to easily identify and find conversations with canvas content, rename it to prefix the conversation with an emoji (for example the bookmark tab) followed by a short, meaningful code like I did with *SPARK/4*; so I know it is chapter 4 of *Self-Publish with AI, Reason & KDP* that I shortened to SPARK.

This Canvas mode—similar to its equivalents (such as Claude Artifact and Microsoft Copilot Pages) does not take over but act like a creative mirror, reflecting back possibilities you might not have seen. A key difference, though, with Microsoft Copilot Pages is that you can co-author with AI *and* one or more human co-authors; this is a relatively new but powerful feature that allows co-authors to see, re-prompt and extend previous prompts to Microsoft 365 Copilot.



Design Tools for Generating Visuals: Bringing Your Ideas to Life

They say a picture is worth a thousand words. But what if you could create that picture with just a few words? Enter generative AI for text-to-image—your creative sidekick when you need visuals that pop. We’re not just talking about sprucing up social media posts here. These tools help you create book covers and (info)graphics that capture the heart of your story.

DALL·E, the latest offering from OpenAI and included with ChatGPT Plus, takes center stage as a powerhouse for creating high-quality images from text prompts. It offers incredible value for authors looking to bring their ideas to life, making it a cornerstone of this book’s emphasis on OpenAI tools. With ChatGPT Plus, you get remarkable versatility for your investment, which is why these tools are at the heart of our recommendations.

Microsoft Copilot comes in as another essential tool, especially in a corporate setting with Microsoft 365 Copilot. By tapping into the vast repository of data stored within your organization’s tenant—such as previous works, research papers, and notes—it transforms your creative process into something more cohesive and efficient. This integration of data and AI elevates productivity while maintaining creative control.

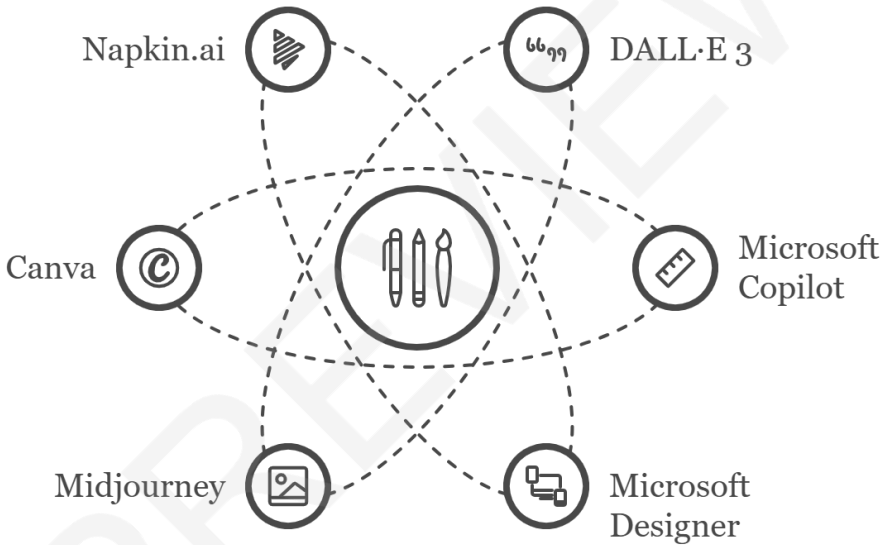
For those on a budget, Microsoft Designer is an excellent free tool for generating visual output. Whether used as a standalone platform or within Copilot, it enables users to craft professional-grade visuals effortlessly. With its AI-driven templates, design suggestions, and customization features, Microsoft Designer makes high-quality design accessible to everyone.

MidJourney, one of the most popular tools for generating images, stands out for its ability to turn prompts into visually stunning, artistic results. It has become a favorite among creatives for its intuitive interface and impressive

output quality.

Similarly, Canva offers a powerful, user-friendly platform for creating professional-grade visuals. Whether you're designing a book cover, marketing materials, or social media content, Canva's AI-enhanced features and templates make it an indispensable tool for authors and designers alike.

Napkin.ai deserves special mention as an innovative tool that transforms text into visuals, enabling authors to effectively convey complex ideas through auto-generated infographics, diagrams, and flowcharts. This capability is particularly beneficial for self-publishing authors who often manage all aspects of their work, including design and marketing. By utilizing Napkin AI, authors can enhance their manuscripts with compelling visuals, create engaging content for blogs and social media, and develop impactful presentations, thereby elevating the overall quality and appeal of their publications. A quick sample:



The illustration above is AI-generated with Napkin.AI. The input was all the text in the current subsection.

These tools put design within reach, allowing you to experiment and play without breaking the bank. However, there can be a learning curve—understanding the nuances of prompts, getting the desired quality, and fine-tuning outputs can take time and practice. But keep in mind—like any tool, they're only as good as the person using them. The real magic comes from your creativity and how you choose to wield them.

Your Creative Partners: Tools as Allies, Not Replacements

So, there you have it: a digital toolkit designed to enhance—not replace—your creativity. These tools may help refine your work, but they can't replicate your

intuition, your vision, or your unique *spark*. Human creativity is rooted in nuance, emotion, and lived experience; elements that no algorithm can truly grasp. It's this irreplaceable blend of personal insight and ingenuity that transforms raw ideas into stories that resonate.

We've explored conversational assistants that chat back, apps that capture your voice, and generative AI that brings your visuals to life. But let's not lose sight of the key point: these tools are allies. They help us, but they do not do the work for us. We, the people, are still the architects of our creative endeavors, crafting blueprints and building dreams. We decide which ideas soar to greatness and which ideas plummet. We decide whether we reshape failures into new opportunities or send them to the digital recycle bin. It's a delicate dance of creativity and intuition, where we remain firmly in control of the final masterpiece. These tools make the journey easier, more interesting, and sometimes more fun—but we're still the ones steering the ship.

As we close out this chapter, think of yourself as the “aware ally”—someone who uses technology for good reasons, balancing its possibilities with your own human intuition. For example, imagine drafting a chapter where your ideas feel scattered. Instead of floundering, you ask your AI assistant to organize your notes, highlight themes, or even suggest a few narrative directions. While the AI handles the structure, you add the soul, crafting a story that's undeniably yours. This collaboration isn't about surrendering control; it's about turning a productive partnership into a creative triumph.

Before moving forward, let's acknowledge some other great tools that deserve a shoutout. For example, Descript is an exceptional tool for editing and transcribing audio and video, making it invaluable for podcasters, video creators, and authors adapting multimedia projects. Dedicated writing tools like Sudowrite, Copy.AI and Jasper offer robust support for creating (marketing) content across different genres, though they may be less versatile than OpenAI's ChatGPT. For this very book, we emphasize OpenAI's tools as the most popular and flexible general-purpose technology. ChatGPT, particularly in its paid modes, provides incredible value for the monthly subscription—one you can cancel as soon as your book is complete, reverting to the free tier. Beyond these, aggregators like You.com and Poe.com offer curated access to a range of AI tools, while extensive lists, such as those on FlexOS³ are fantastic resources for exploring AI options tailored to your specific needs.

³ <https://www.flexos.work/ai-top-100>

5. AMAZON’S ARSENAL FOR US LONE WOLVES

Embarking on your self-publishing journey feels like preparing for an important mission. You’re armed with a manuscript—a labor of love, finally ready to meet the world—and now it’s time to give it reach. Writing can feel like a battle; not against others, but against yourself and those lingering doubts, like those *Draft-Daemons*, remember? It’s about writing with a mission to self-publish with good reason, and the tools Amazon offers are here to support—not to wage war.

Think of Amazon’s arsenal as your weapon cache—powerful tools at your disposal to bring your creative vision to life. The KDP website is your command center, where strategy meets execution, while tools like Kindle Create and Cover Creator act as precision instruments to refine and present your work. Writing may not be war, but writing with clear goals gives you power—and as the saying goes, the pen is mightier than the sword.

But let me clarify—the true beginning of your journey wasn’t here. It began long ago, in your mind, when the first *spark* of an idea took shape. You nurtured it into a manuscript, and now, you’re ready to take it further. Technically, Kindle Create allows you to start from scratch but take it from me—and even Amazon—it’s not the best approach. For most of your writings, this finished manuscript you as author have created using Microsoft Word or another text editor that can output .doc, .docx, or .pdf. Start with that finished manuscript and let Amazon’s arsenal elevate your vision to the next level.

The KDP Online Home is Your Command Center

In every mission, you need a command center to coordinate efforts to strategize and take the first steps toward realizing your vision. The KDP website is that command center. Here, you’ll organize your creative efforts, manage your projects, and track progress with ease. It’s intuitive and built to make the publishing journey as smooth as possible.

The KDP website has three key roles.

- (1) It serves as the home of your bookshelf, where your books live. Whether you’re fine-tuning a work in progress or managing a fully published title, the bookshelf organizes everything in one place.
- (2) It’s where you set up your account details, including the not-so-glamorous but absolutely vital tasks like entering your tax information and bank details. Without this, all your hard work may not translate into tangible rewards.
- (3) It’s where you decide on your publishing format: eBook, paperback, or hardcover. Each option comes with its own set of requirements, and this site helps you navigate them efficiently.

Using the KDP website effectively ensures that every stage of your publishing mission stays on track. It's the hub where strategy meets execution, and you'll return to it often as your journey unfolds.

The Cover Creator Is Your Armor Designer

In the world of publishing, appearance matters. Your book's cover is its first attack—the opening salvo in capturing a reader's attention and sparking their curiosity. Amazon's Cover Creator equips you with tools to craft a cover that not only grabs attention but also reflects the essence of your work. A compelling cover can be the difference between a reader pausing to explore your book or passing it by altogether.

We all know the idiom, “Don't judge a book by its cover,” but the reality is, if your cover doesn't intrigue them, your audience might move on before giving your work a chance. In publishing, your cover is less like a shield and more like cover fire—it grabs attention and holds it just long enough for your words to land their mark. So, make it count or else risk your masterpiece retreating into obscurity before the first shot is even fired.

Cover Creator offers a range of templates designed to suit various genres and styles. You can customize colors, fonts, and layouts to match the tone of your book. The tool also ensures your design meets technical specifications, such as a resolution of 300 DPI and proper file formats like JPG, PNG, or TIFF. Whether you're working on an eBook, paperback, or hardcover, Cover Creator helps you present your work in the best possible light.

For authors seeking even more creative freedom, consider complementing Cover Creator with AI-generated images or designs from tools mentioned in the previous chapter. Be sure to comply with Amazon's policy by disclosing the use of AI in creating your cover or illustrations. Additionally, ensure that all external designs adhere to copyright regulations and align with your book's theme. One benefit of using Microsoft 365 Copilot is its enterprise-level data protection features, which include safeguards to ensure compliance and security when working with sensitive or AI-assisted content. While these features don't guarantee absolute legal immunity, they demonstrate a robust commitment to providing a secure environment for your creative work. And if you've invested in Microsoft 365 Copilot on top of or instead of OpenAI's ChatGPT, you can even use AI directly within Microsoft Word to draft and refine your manuscript. Now that is writing with reinforcements!

Your Manuscript Is the Mission Blueprint

When your manuscript is ready—clean, polished, and organized—the tools we've covered so far will extend your preparation seamlessly. Whether you've drafted ideas on paper or shaped them with AI in Microsoft Word, a solid manuscript ensures Kindle Create and other tools work without unnecessary frustration. This doesn't mean perfection is required, but it should be final

enough in structure and content to avoid major revisions later. Starting with a well-prepared manuscript saves time and keeps you focused on refining details instead of wrestling with formatting.

If you're new to self-publishing, Amazon even provides classic works like *Pride and Prejudice* as sample manuscripts to help you learn the ropes. Take advantage of these resources and set your manuscript on a solid foundation before diving into the next steps.

So, Are You Ready to Act with Reason?

Mastering Amazon's arsenal isn't just about learning tools; it's about making deliberate choices and building confidence in your ability to bring a book into the world. These tools help you refine your manuscript, sharpen its presentation, and prepare it for publication with reason, reach, and rigor. With your manuscript polished and your toolkit ready, you're no longer preparing—you're positioning yourself to execute.

In the next part, we move from preparation to execution, walking step by step through the publishing process itself. Take a moment to recognize the groundwork you've built and the clarity you've gained. The mission ahead isn't about intention alone, it's about informed action as an independent author.

PART II
The Campaign

*Step-by-step missions to master
Amazon KDP for self-publishing*

kindle | direct
publishing

6. BRIEFING: TACTICAL CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

Welcome to **Part II: The Campaign** of *Self-Publish with AI, Reason & KDP*. And congratulations—you’ve made it here after completing the first section, where we laid the groundwork. Or perhaps you’ve jumped ahead, ready to dive into the action. Either way, this is where your mission begins in earnest. If this part feels like war or work, please know we firmly believe in the signal: “Work is not war, we come in peace.” While I use the analogy of a game of war for its structure and strategy, my aim is to make this process creative, focused, and enjoyable—just like commanding your self-publishing campaign. The pen truly is mightier than the sword, and with powerful people warning for war in the next few years—I strongly believe we need plentiful pens for different voices to ensure diverse perspectives are shared, stories are told, and meaningful conversations are sparked. Self-publishing empowers authors to amplify those voices, contributing to a richer, more inclusive dialogue in our world that increasingly demands it.

Therefore, in this second section we embark on a series of step-by-step missions designed to guide you from your starting point to successfully publishing your book on Amazon with its Kindle Direct Publishing program or KDP for short. Each mission builds on the last, equipping you with the tools and strategies needed to establish a solid stronghold and successfully launch your self-publishing campaign.

At this stage, it’s essential to commit to the content of your manuscript—finalizing your story, ideas, or message ensures a stable base for the missions ahead. The steps that follow rely on a completed manuscript, as changes made in Kindle Create won’t automatically sync back to your original file, which is usually a Word document. Decide now whether to maintain manual updates between drafts or lock in your manuscript as-is—think of this as solidifying your battle plan. Once you deploy your manuscript into Kindle Create, changes won’t automatically sync back to your original file, so choose your strategy wisely to avoid logistical chaos on the publishing front.

The Five Missions for Your First Successful Campaign

Your journey advances into the heart of the campaign with these critical missions designed to transform your manuscript into a published book:

- (1) Mission **Alpha Zero**: Setting up a New KDP Account
- (2) Mission **Book Title**: Mastering Metadata
- (3) Mission **Cover Creator**: Crafting Armor
- (4) Mission **Design Delta**: Formatting with Kindle Create
- (5) Mission **Execute Finale**: Pulling the Trigger (*FIRE!*)

Together, these missions form the backbone of your first successful campaign.

The Commander's Mindset: Your SELF Guide

Before diving into specifics, adopt the right mindset. Self-publishing requires preparation, adaptability, and resourcefulness—like a commander supplying troops, adjusting strategies, and using resources effectively. Unexpected challenges will arise; treat them as opportunities to improve. Key principles that form your **SELF** include:

- **Stay in command:** Ensure your voice and vision remain central.
- **Embrace challenges:** Adapt and refine as needed.
- **Leverage resources:** Use AI and Kindle-tools for efficiency.
- **Focus:** tackle manageable steps one at a time

Having embraced the commander's mindset, let's see how AI will aid in transforming your manuscript into a market-ready product.

The AI Squad: Supporting the Ps in Your Marketing Mix

As shown in Part I, Artificial Intelligence (AI) plays a pivotal role in content creation; here in Part II, AI shifts to support the critical P's of your book's marketing mix: Product, Pricing, Placement, Packaging and the overarching Process. AI can craft compelling product descriptions, serving as the first impression for potential readers and helping to effectively market your book. It also assists in optimizing placement by suggesting relevant categories and keywords to boost discoverability on Amazon. Additionally, AI contributes to packaging by generating creative cover ideas, ensuring your book stands out in a crowded marketplace. And when you're stuck on a certain field, you can always ask your AI-assistant to help in the Process.

While AI enhances these aspects, the final decisions should always reflect your vision and ensure authenticity. By staying in command, you align your book's voice and presentation with its intended audience. Embrace AI's speed and flexibility to focus on what matters most: creating a book that connects with readers and leaves a lasting impression.

With your strategy now laid out, you're ready to begin the real work of the campaign. The missions ahead will guide you step by step, starting with the task of setting up your KDP account—your command base for everything to come. This one-time mission prepares you for the action that follows, ensuring you're equipped to take the first decisive step toward publishing success.

7. MISSION ALPA ZERO: SETTING UP A NEW KDP ACCOUNT

Welcome to your first mission in the self-publishing campaign: setting up your KDP account. This mission is essential and unique—it only needs to be done once (hence *Alpha Zero*), but its importance cannot be overstated. Think of it as establishing your command base, the heart of all future operations.

Here’s how to set up your account and overcome any obstacles along the way—because no campaign is without challenges, right?

Objective 1: Initiate the Simple Setup

The key outcome of this objective is to set the base for your publishing journey by creating a streamlined and dedicated KDP account. This begins with two crucial but fortunately super-easy steps:

- (1) Go to <https://kdp.amazon.com> (you can do this!) in your browser
- (2) Click the bright button that says something like “**Join KDP**”

Take a moment to decide: Do you want to use your existing Amazon consumer account or start fresh with a brand-new one?

Using an existing account might be convenient if you already have everything set up, but it could clutter your personal Amazon activity.

Creating a new account, however, keeps your self-publishing operations streamlined and organized. Tip: Open an In-Private or Incognito browser session for a clean slate. The one reason to use your existing Amazon account is if you already paired your mobile number to it, because else you will get trapped in the “mobile verification maze” that got me. So, if you decide to use your existing Amazon account, simply scroll down and click “Sign in”. If you decide to start afresh, finish the following, second objective.

Objective 2: Secure Your Base Camp

When prompted for your name, enter your **legal name**. Don’t worry—this won’t be visible to the public. Your pen name or author brand will shine on the cover later. Here are the fields to complete:

- (1) **Your name** (First and last name)
- (2) **Email** (your working email address)
- (3) **Password** (at least 6 characters)
- (4) **Re-enter password** (repeat the same password as in step 3)
- (5) Click “**Create your KDP account**”

If the process is smooth, you'll verify your email and complete the initial setup including adding your mobile phone number; you can continue at the third and final objective. If not, face the following challenge.

Challenge: Navigate the Mobile Verification Maze

Here's where things got...interesting. Amazon flagged my *one and only* phone number as already being registered. This kicked off a frustrating journey: re-entering passwords, juggling One-Time Passwords (OTPs), and verifying emails repeatedly. The secret weapon? Stay patient, keep retrying, and eventually, your number will be verified and linked properly.

If you've never used your phone number with Amazon before, you should have breezed through this step. But if you do run into this issue, stay patient and persistent. It eventually worked for me after much trial and error. The key is to ensure your phone number is both verified and linked to this specific account. If you keep getting stuck, reset your account password using your mobile phone number and then login with your existing account. Hopefully Amazon one day changes the requirement for a unique mobile phone number so you can have multiple, separate accounts sharing the same number. You need a mobile phone number though for Amazon to send your OTP that automatically expires after some minutes for safety reasons. After all, your account will receive your financial earnings. Time to prove yourself.

Objective 3: Proving Yourself with ID, Bank and Tax Info

Once you've conquered the phone verification step, you'll see a friendly reminder to complete your account information before publishing your book. At the top of the page, click **Your Account** (it's right next to the language selector). Here's what you'll need to do next:

- (1) Verify Your Identity**
- (2) Provide Bank Information**
- (3) Complete the Tax Questionnaire**

Again, use your full legal name that must match your government-issued ID since at times Amazon may ask you to verify your identity to confirm it's really you. To finish task **(1) Verify Your Identity** you only need your common sense to fill in common fields for your Address and Date of Birth.

To fulfill task **(2) Provide Bank Details** enter the BIC (Bank Identification Code) of the bank you use. I actually used my AI-assistant to ask what my bank's BIC is but you can look it up on your (mobile) banking app or on IBAN.com.

Task **(3) Complete the Tax Questionnaire** is critical for international compliance. Select **No** if you're not a US citizen and confirm if you're not using an agent. Enter your Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN)—for my fellow Dutch authors, this is your BSN (social security number). Thanks to a tax treaty

between the Netherlands and the United States of America, I ticked the box for the 30% tax exemption, certified my information, and digitally signed by typing my full name.

Mission Accomplished: Your KDP Base Is Battle-Ready

Congratulations! Your command base is now operational, and the words "Account Setup Complete" mark your first victory in this campaign. You've secured your position and cleared this essential one-time setup—think of it as setting up your operations center for all future missions. This ensures a smooth path forward as we now focus on your next major milestone: crafting a compelling book title.

Your book title will be the cornerstone of your publishing mix, defining your Product, guiding its Placement, refining its Packaging, setting its Pricing, and anchoring it within the overarching Process that drives your campaign forward.

Let's move forward with confidence and creativity to take on the next mission.

8. MISSION BOOK FIELDS: MASTERING METADATA

In the battlefield of Amazon KDP, your book's title is your rallying cry—the first word spoken to your audience, the first impression made on the market. It's not just a name; it's the cornerstone of your campaign. A well-crafted title captures attention, sparks curiosity, and aligns perfectly with your product's purpose. Without it, even the strongest content risks being overlooked. Your mission is clear: take the next steps in Amazon KDP to fill in every field necessary to get your book published; and truth be told, there are a lot of (possible battle) fields to conquer.

The first P in the Marketing Mix—**Process**—is organized into three key objectives, mirroring the **three tabs** you will encounter on Amazon KDP. Each tab aligns with a critical aspect of your publishing strategy and four other Ps of the Marketing Mix: **Product, Placement, Packaging** and **Pricing**.

- (1) **Book Details:** defining **Product** and optimizing **Placement**
- (2) **Book Content:** refining your **Packaging** for maximum impact
- (3) **Book Pricing:** positioning for value and profitability

As you prepare for the first objective, think of it as the opening skirmish that sets the tone for your entire campaign. Defining your product and optimizing its placement on the publishing battlefield will be your first tactical victory, paving the way for every strategic move that follows, from packaging to pricing.

Objective 1: Book Details to Align Your Product and Placement

This is where you set up your command outpost, entering the core metadata of your book—everything from its rallying title to its targeted audience. Each field is a strategic move, a step in fortifying your book's placement on the publishing battlefield. Follow these basic prerequisites first:

- (1) Log in to Amazon KDP and head to your **Bookshelf** if you were not signed in anymore
- (2) Click the **+ Create** button.

You will see four options: **Kindle eBook, Paperback, Hardcover,** and **Series Page**. I recommend starting with a **Kindle eBook**, as it serves as a flexible, downloadable deliverable that can later be refined and printed into a paperback or hardcover edition. Starting with an eBook also simplifies testing the market and gathering reader feedback before committing to physical formats. Remember to click **Safe as Draft** regularly at the next step if you need time to fill in the fields.

Now it's time to conquer this large battlefield of Kindle eBook Details:

- (1) **Language:** Select the book's primary language (e.g., English).
- (2) **Book Title:** Enter your title and subtitle (remember: Amazon automatically adds a colon between them).
- (3) **Series (Optional):** If your book is part of a series, add it here.
- (4) **Edition Number:** Leave blank unless it's an updated version.
- (5) **Author:** Enter your name or pen name (e.g., Jennifer A. as first name and Ibrayne as last name).
- (6) **Contributors:** Add any editors, illustrators, or others who contributed to your book.
- (7) **Description:** Write a compelling product description to sell your book. Use your AI-assistant for help: "Write an enticing product summary under 4000 characters that convinces readers to buy my book"
- (8) **Publishing Rights:** Select "I own the copyright" (if you do and don't want your book in the public domain)
- (9) **Primary Audience:** Indicate explicit content if applicable.
- (10) **Reading Age:** Leave blank unless targeting a specific age group.
- (11) **Primary Marketplace:** Only change the default if needed.
- (12) **Categories:** Choose up to 3 relevant categories. You can use AI to find the best fit: "Suggest three Amazon categories for my book based on this genre and topic" (and even feed your manuscript if you can).
- (13) **Keywords:** Add up to 7 keywords (each under 50 characters). Here you can use AI as well to generate optimized keywords.
- (14) **Pre-Order:** Set up pre-order. You can set your eBook for pre-order by specifying a future release date (up to one year ahead). This feature helps generate early interest and build anticipation for your book. Finalize and upload your manuscript at least 72 hours before the release date to avoid automatic cancellation of your pre-order, as failing to meet this deadline restricts future pre-orders for a year.
- (15) Click **Save and Continue**

You did it—Objective 2 was no small feat. You conquered one of the most challenging battlefields in KDP, navigating fields of metadata, AI disclosures, and previews. Completing this step means your book has form, a voice, and an emerging presence in the publishing arena.

Ready your focus and sharpen your tools—the next objective awaits: Book Content. The battle for a polished, professional book begins now.

Objective 2: Book Content to Spearhead Your Packaging

This is where you take control of the supply lines for your publishing campaign, focusing entirely on **Packaging**. In this objective, your mission is to assemble and prepare your manuscript and visuals to present a polished and compelling

product. While the cover and final formatting will be tackled in separate missions, this step ensures that the core content of your book is ready for deployment (or pre-orders). Follow these steps:

- (1) **Manuscript:** Upload your manuscript. The ideal file is the KPF (Kindle Package Format) created with *Kindle Create* but for now, you can upload your original Word file or placeholder manuscript—especially if your final manuscript isn’t ready or up for pre-order. Also, do not worry about the formatting since *Kindle Create* will be covered in a separate mission.
- (2) **Add Digital Rights Management (DRM):** only checkmark this box if you want to hinder (unauthorized) copying but I leave this unchecked for personal and practical reasons, since it’s quite easy to break.
- (3) **Cover:** if you already have a cover file, great and upload it there but otherwise, select *Skip for Now* since a separate mission will guide you through creating a professional cover with Amazon’s *Cover Creator*.
- (4) **AI-Generated Content:** Amazon requires you to disclose AI-generated content. For texts you can choose from none or four levels ranging from some to your entire work, either with minimal/no editing or with extensive editing. For images you can choose from none or one/few to many, either with minimal/no editing or with extensive editing. Once you select anything but None, you have to specify which tool(s) you used to create AI-generated content in your work. You are allowed to select No if you only used AI-assisted. Thus far, this information is only used internally by Amazon and not displayed to readers on product pages or storefronts. As author you may choose to inform readers through your own descriptions or acknowledgments.
- (5) **Kindle eBook Preview:** after processing your manuscript, KDP highlights issues like missing Table of Contents or image errors. Since we’ll use *Kindle Create* in a later mission for final formatting, you can skip this preview for now.
- (6) **ISBN:** eBooks do not require this International Standard Book Number. Amazon does provide you with a free ISBN for paperback or hardcover but you are only allowed to use this free ISBN for the Amazon marketplace, not elsewhere. For eBooks KDP generates a so-called ASIN, which stands for Amazon Standard Identification Number, also used for all other products in Amazon’s catalog.
- (7) **Publisher:** You can leave this blank and Amazon will list your book as “Independently published” by default. You can also use your own (pen) name. Alternatively, you can use your own publishing label if you publish under multiple pen names and/or with other authors. This very book is published under *Technosoof*, a label under my broader publishing business that also produces music and podcasts aside books.
- (8) **Save and Continue** to move to the final tab

While this second objective was a smaller battlefield compared to the command outpost in the first objective, it served as a vital staging ground. By securing your supply lines and assembling the key elements of your manuscript, you've laid the groundwork for a successful campaign. Now, prepare for the next challenge: Book Pricing. The battle to strategically position your book and claim the rewards of optimized royalties is about to begin.

Objective 3: Book Pricing to Arm Your Royalties War Chest

This is where you set your book's price and royalty plan—a crucial step in your campaign. War comes at a cost, but it also brings rewards, and your royalties as an author are the spoils of this battle. Follow these steps to position your book for maximum value and profitability:

- (1) **KDP Select enrollment:** decide whether to enroll in KDP Select for exclusive benefits. It offers exclusive benefits like Kindle Unlimited, where you earn based on pages read instead of outright sales during the 90-day program. While it boosts earnings and allows promotions, your eBook must remain exclusive to Amazon. Details in Part III.
- (2) **Territories:** Choose “All territories” unless you're limiting sales.
- (3) **Royalty and Pricing:** Select either **35%** or **70%** royalties based on Amazon's pricing rules. For 35%: Price must be between \$0.99 and \$200.00 (if less than 3 megabyte file) For 70%: Price must be between \$2.99 and no more than \$9.99.
- (4) **Primary Marketplace Pricing:** Set your book's price (e.g., \$4.99). Amazon will auto-calculate prices for other regions. While fine-tuning all marketplace pricing is an important step, this process will be covered in the third and final part as well, ensuring your pricing strategy is fully optimized for maximum reach and profitability.

Now, do not—I repeat: DO NOT—click Publish Your Kindle eBook yet, since we skipped the Cover and formatting in the Kindle eBook Content tab, right? Therefore, click **Save As Draft** so we can prepare our next mission.

Mission Accomplished: Claimed the Title Crown

Well done! You've achieved a major milestone in your Amazon KDP journey, completing the second mission with precision and purpose. By mastering metadata in your book's details, refining your book's content, and setting its initial pricing, you've conquered the critical objectives that secure your title as the cornerstone of your book's success.

This mission marked the true start of your publishing campaign—not just for your debut book, but for every book you'll publish in the future. Each time, crafting a compelling title and optimizing its metadata will be the foundation of

your success. Ahead lies the next challenge: creating a captivating cover to armor your masterpiece. For now, celebrate! You've claimed the title crown and set your course for a lasting legacy. Onward to victory!

PREVIEW

9. MISSION COVER CREATOR: CRAFTING ARMOR

In the previous mission, you crowned your book with a powerful title, refined its metadata in detail, and set its initial pricing strategy. Yet, two crucial elements remained unfinished: the final cover and formatted manuscript, both pivotal to your book's success. This chapter focuses on the cover, dedicating the space needed to craft a definitive design that serves as your book's visual champion.

Your cover is more than just a pretty picture; it's the vanguard of your campaign, capturing attention in an instant and drawing readers to your story, setting the stage for your ultimate goal—selling your book and connecting with your audience. Your book's cover is the opening salvo in your publishing campaign, a visual strategy designed to grab attention and hold it long enough for your words to make an impact. It serves as both an armor that protects your book from being overlooked and a weapon that cuts through the noise, capturing readers' curiosity. Amazon's Cover Creator provides you with a powerful array of tools, including templates and customization options, to design a cover that reflects the essence of your work while meeting professional standards like resolution and file format requirements. This mission focuses on equipping you with the skills to use these tools effectively, ensuring your cover becomes a pivotal component in the success of your book's launch.

Your objectives in this mission:

- (1) **Stock your armory:** Gather high-quality images and AI-generated designs to craft an eye-catching cover.
- (2) **Launch Cover Creator:** Navigate to KDP's Cover Creator and familiarize yourself with its interface.
- (3) **Design, test, and deploy:** Create your cover and practice your aim by previewing it across formats—like practicing shooting before heading into battle—then finalize it for submission.

Let's start with the first objective to (re)stock your visual armory.

Objective 1: Stock Your Armory with Compatible Resources

Before launching Cover Creator, decide on the visual identity of your book. Use AI tools like DALL-E, Microsoft Designer, or Midjourney to generate unique images, but follow best practices to ensure optimal results:

- (1) **Avoid phrasing traps:** Avoid including terms like “book cover” in your AI prompts to prevent receiving images of actual books or store displays. AI tools like DALL-E and Midjourney often interpret “book cover” too literally, generating visuals of physical books instead of abstract or thematic designs. Focusing on key elements like themes,

colors, or symbols helps achieve better results.

- (2) **Leverage “meta prompts”:** Consider using a meta prompt strategy to generate multiple excellent prompts for the GenAI tool of your choosing. For example, ask the AI to create a list of 10 prompts tailored for your book’s genre and theme.
- (3) **Focus on elements:** Specify individual elements such as color schemes, symbols, or character concepts to maintain control over the visual identity.
- (4) **Ensure compatibility:** Convert your images to a supported format (JPG, PNG, or TIFF) if generated in WebP, as OpenAI DALL-E often outputs. WebP, while efficient for storage, requires conversion to ensure compatibility with Amazon's Cover Creator.
- (5) **Enhance your files:** Use online tools like upscale.media or Windows Photos to convert and enhance files as needed. This step ensures compatibility with Amazon’s requirements.

With your resources now tactically gathered, it’s time to launch the main weapon of this mission: Cover Creator.

Objective 2: Launch Cover Creator and Design Your Armor

Access Cover Creator through the middle "Content" tab in your KDP dashboard. Select the "Create a Cover" option and follow these steps:

- (1) **Choose a design concept:** Begin with a template that complements your genre. For example, sci-fi might benefit from sleek, tech-inspired designs, while romance often leans on soft, elegant visuals.
- (2) **Style and edit:** Customize colors, fonts, and layouts. Keep readability in mind, especially for titles and subtitles.
- (3) **Preview the design:** Visualize how your cover will appear as a thumbnail, in grayscale, and in full color. This ensures clarity and professionalism across all formats.

With Cover Creator ready, let’s address some challenges you might face and how to overcome them.

Challenge 1: Hard Reset to Truly Start Over

If you’ve played with Cover Creator before and saved your experiment, starting over isn’t always easy: resetting Cover Creator completely may require uploading a placeholder file before launching the tool again. This step ensures you start with a clean slate and can create your definitive cover without remnants of previous drafts. Additionally, KDP will show a checkbox to confirm that your design still complies with the AI-Generated Content statements you’ve previously made.

Challenge 2: Paperback or Hardcover Also Requires a Back Cover

If you are publishing a paperback or hardcover instead of a Kindle eBook, your layout will be different because it needs to include a back cover alongside your front cover. The back cover serves as a critical part of your book's visual and marketing strategy. Typically, it features:

- (1) **Blurb:** Summarize your book in a few compelling lines to hook potential readers.
- (2) **Barcode:** Essential for retail purposes, ensuring your book is scannable in stores and online platforms.
- (3) **Optional additions:** Include author bios, endorsements, or reviews to build credibility and entice buyers.

Thoughtful placement of these elements is key. For instance, keep the blurb concise and centered, position the barcode unobtrusively in a lower corner, and choose a font and color scheme that complements the front cover. Lastly, ensure the back cover aligns with the overall tone and theme of your book, solidifying a professional and appealing design.

Now that you're equipped with solutions to these challenges, let's move to the final objective.

Objective 3: Design, Test, and Deploy

With your gathered resources and a clear strategy in place, it's time to bring your cover to life. This objective turns preparation into execution: shaping your visuals, validating their impact, and locking in a cover that is ready for the battlefield. This objective consists of five steps:

- (1) **Assemble the First Draft:** Start by deciding whether your cover will be image-based or typography-driven. Upload your chosen image (or begin without one), then add your title, subtitle, and author name exactly as defined in the previous mission. Select a layout that establishes a clear hierarchy—title first, subtitle second, author last. At this stage, aim for strength and clarity, not perfection.
- (2) **Refine Layout, Color, and Typography:** With a solid draft in place, fine-tune the details. Adjust font sizes, spacing, and alignment so the title dominates at a glance. Experiment with Cover Creator's suggested color schemes rather than forcing custom colors; these are often optimized for contrast and readability. Pay attention to white space—your cover should breathe, especially at smaller sizes.
- (3) **Run Visual Field Tests (Preview Mode):** Treat previewing like target practice before deployment. Check the thumbnail view to see whether the title is instantly readable, the grayscale view to confirm contrast on

black-and-white e-readers, and the full-color view to spot clashes or imbalance. If something fails here, adjust and retest—this loop is expected and part of the process.

- (4) **Stress-Test for Context:** Evaluate your cover in the environments where it will actually compete. Imagine it on a crowded Amazon search results page, on a mobile screen, or next to similar books in your genre. Your cover doesn't need to be perfect in isolation; it needs to hold its ground in context.
- (5) **Finalize and Submit:** Once satisfied, confirm any required AI-generated content disclosures, save your design, and submit the cover in KDP. Do a final check in the Bookshelf view—the small thumbnail here is often the most honest test of all.

With your design finalized and submitted, you've completed one of the most visually important aspects of your publishing journey.

Mission Accomplished: Created Your Cover, Time to Fire!

Congrats again! Your cover is now a battle-ready vital piece of your publishing campaign. As we move forward, prepare for the final mission: formatting your manuscript with Kindle Create, a tool that enhances professionalism by ensuring polished layouts and seamless formatting, and deploying your book for the world to read.

10. MISSION DESIGN DELTA: FORMATTING W/ KINDLE CREATE

In the previous mission, you crafted your armor. Your manuscript is the blueprint. Mission *Design Delta* is where everything changes state. This is the phase where ideas stop being expressive and start taking form. Intention must survive translation without distortion, without friction, without drama.

Formatting is not creative. It is transformative.

Get it wrong, and the reader feels resistance before they can name it. Get it right, and the book magically disappears to the background, leaving only your voice behind. That is the goal of this mission: to let structure disappear so the reader can move forward without friction.

By the end of this mission, you will have imposed structure through discipline and styles rather than manual fixes, and verified flow, navigation, and readability across Kindle devices and apps. This is the moment your manuscript stops being a document and becomes a Kindle-ready formatted book, packaged as a Kindle Package Format (KPF).

Your objectives in this mission are:

- (1) **Know the weapon you're holding:** Understand what Kindle Create is (and is not) so you approach formatting with the right mental model.
- (2) **Prepare your ammo before loading:** Discipline your manuscript in your word processor so it fits the weapon you are about to use, eliminating defects before they can cause jams.
- (3) **Lock and load your manuscript:** Bring weapon and ammunition together by importing, checking, and correcting until structure, flow, and navigation are ready.
- (4) **Stage the front and back matter:** Assign semantic roles so orientation, reading flow, and exit behave correctly across Kindle devices and apps.
- (5) **Verify the final package before deployment:** Perform final checks, commit to a theme, and export your Kindle Package Format with confidence.

Let's start with the first objective.

Objective 1: Know the Weapon You're Holding

Before you open Kindle Create, you need the right mental model. Kindle Create is **not** a word processor. It is not a place to write, revise, or experiment. Its sole purpose is to translate a finished manuscript, typically created in Microsoft Word, into something Kindle devices and apps can reliably interpret. That distinction matters more than most authors expect.

Think in clear phases. Microsoft Word is where you think, draft, and revise.

Kindle Create is where you align structure and convert format. The KDP Previewer is where the (proof)reader quietly stress-tests your work.

Amazon reinforces this separation by providing sample manuscripts, including classics like *Pride and Prejudice*. These are not there to teach writing. They exist to demonstrate formatting conventions. Kindle Create assumes discipline upstream.

When authors struggle with Kindle Create, the tool is rarely the problem. What feels like resistance is usually feedback. Kindle Create does not improvise, compensate, or guess intent. It reflects structure exactly as it receives it. Treat this objective as conceptual, not technical. Once you understand what Kindle Create is, and what it is not, the rest of the mission becomes predictable.

Objective 2: Prepare Your Ammo Before Loading

With the mental model in place, attention shifts from the weapon to the ammunition. Your manuscript is the ammo. Kindle Create will not fix it, reshape it, or compensate for defects. Whatever you load is exactly what will be fired. So even before thinking of opening Kindle Create, the manuscript must already be prepared to specification. This is not a technical preference. It is a reliability requirement. Poorly prepared ammo does not fail loudly. It jams.

Prior to loading anything into Kindle Create, perform the following steps in your manuscript if not done already:

- ✓ Convert all chapter titles to real Heading styles, not visually styled text.
- ✓ Ensure body text relies on paragraph styles rather than manual spacing.
- ✓ Remove tabs, improvised line breaks, and visual alignment tricks.
- ✓ Use page breaks only where structure genuinely demands them.
- ✓ Confirm that each chapter has one clear and unambiguous starting point.

Most formatting failures originate here. Authors often return to the Word manuscript after conversion, making small textual changes that feel harmless. In reality, those changes alter the ammunition after it has already been loaded. Once the source changes, the conversion must be repeated. There is no safe shortcut.

Another common failure is trusting manual formatting over structure. Kindle Create does not misunderstand your intent. It ignores anything that is not structurally defined. What looks acceptable on the page may never reach the reader intact. So, if Kindle Create feels uncooperative, it is usually signaling a problem with the ammunition, not the weapon.

Objective 3: Lock and Load Your Manuscript

With discipline in place and the ammunition prepared, it is time to bring weapon and ammo together. This is the moment where preparation becomes readiness.

Lock and load does not mean firing. It means ensuring that what you have prepared can be brought into position cleanly, safely, and without surprises. This phase involves concrete steps, and they should be followed in order.

- (1) **Install and launch Kindle Create.** Open the application and select: *Create New* → *Kindle eBook*. This initializes a fresh project and signals that you are working with a finished manuscript.
- (2) **Load the ammunition.** Import your .doc(x) and allow Kindle Create to analyze it. Chapters are detected, a table of contents is generated, and a default theme is applied. Treat this moment as reconnaissance, not judgment. You are observing how the weapon responds to the ammunition you prepared.
- (3) **Check the chamber.** Confirm that all chapters are present, ordered logically, and free from duplicates or phantom entries. Ensure the table of contents reflects the structure you intended.
- (4) **Verify the feed.** Read through the body text to confirm that paragraph spacing feels natural, emphasis is preserved, and lists and italics survive intact. Look for breaks or jumps that would interrupt the reader's momentum.
- (5) **Confirm the loadout.** Review the front matter carefully. Title page, copyright, dedication, foreword, and preface should appear exactly where you intended them to. Chapter numbering must begin where you decide it begins, not where the tool guesses.
- (6) **Lock it in.** Correct only what affects structure, flow, or navigation. This is not the stage for visual experimentation. Cosmetic tinkering introduces more risk than value and often creates new problems downstream.

At the end of this objective, the weapon is loaded, the chamber is clear, and nothing unexpected remains.

Objective 4: Stage the Front and Back Matter

At this point, your manuscript is loaded, readable, and structurally intact. Now you must do something Kindle will not do for you: tell it what the book *means*.

Kindle Create does not understand *intent*. It understands *roles*. If you do not assign those roles explicitly, Kindle will guess—and guessing creates subtle navigation errors that quietly damage reader trust.

This objective exists to prevent that. Formatting is already behind you.

This is all about semantic staging with the following steps:

- (1) **Classify Front Matter:** In Kindle Create, verify that the Title page,

Copyright page, Dedication, Foreword, and Preface are marked as Front Matter rather than chapters. These sections should orient the reader without incrementing chapter numbering or appearing as Chapter 1. Reassign section types if needed so they are excluded from chapter navigation.

- (2) **Define Where Reading Begins:** Decide where the actual reading journey starts—typically the Introduction or Chapter 1—and explicitly verify this in Kindle Create. Ensure “Go to Beginning” lands there and that chapter navigation skips all front matter. This choice must be intentional.
- (3) **Curate the Table of Contents:** Review the auto-generated Table of Contents, remove entries that should not be navigable, confirm the correct order and hierarchy, and test all TOC jumps. A clean TOC reinforces trust; a sloppy one quietly undermines it.
- (4) **Exhibit Back Matter as a Clean Exit:** Decide which sections belong outside the narrative arc—such as About the Author, Calls to action, or Appendices—and verify their placement after the final chapter. Ensure they do not interfere with chapter navigation unless intentionally designed to do so.

Before moving on, confirm that front matter orients cleanly, the first chapter begins where intended, navigation behaves predictably, and back matter exits without friction. Once meaning is locked, proceed to the next objective as final verification and export.

Objective 5: Verify the Final Package Before Deployment

This final objective is all about restraint and responsibility. Once you enter this phase, half-measures are no longer helpful.

Kindle Create works with themes, not pixel-level control. This is not a limitation. It is a deliberate constraint. Choose a theme and commit to it. Adjust chapter title presentation, control spacing between major sections, and apply emphasis consistently. Resist the urge to recreate print layouts or force visual tricks. Fighting the rendering system is a losing battle.

Kindle books are fluid by design. Readers control font size, margins, and spacing. Formatting for control fails. Formatting for trust survives.

Before exporting, perform a final, explicit check:

- ✓ Use the table of contents to jump between chapters.
- ✓ Move forward and backward using next and previous chapter controls.
- ✓ Preview the book across phone, tablet, and desktop views.

Navigation failures quietly destroy trust, even when readers cannot explain what went wrong. When the flow holds and navigation behaves:

- (1) **Save** the project.
- (2) **Export** it as a Kindle Package Format (.kpf).

As the name suggests, Kindle Package Format is the preferred format for Kindle Direct Publishing and minimizes surprises during upload.

NOTE: avoid editing the Word manuscript after this point. If changes are required, repeat the mission. No shortcuts. Sorry, not sorry.

Mission Accomplished: Packaged Your Verified KPF File

This mission is not about perfection. It is about trust. Trust that your words arrive as intended. That structure supports meaning. That the reader never has to think about formatting. With this mission complete, your manuscript is no longer merely written. It is deployable.

Next up: *Mission Execute*.

No more staging. No more preparation. Just action.

11. MISSION EXECUTE FINALE: PULLING THE TRIGGER

This is it.

Everything up to this point has been preparation: calibration, discipline, repetition, and restraint. You gathered tools, refined structure, crafted armor, and packaged your work into a clean, validated Kindle Package Format (KPF). You learned when to act—and, just as importantly, when not to.

At this stage, a subtle realization tends to surface: nothing meaningful is missing anymore. The impulse to add, tweak, or optimize is no longer driven by quality but by hesitation. What feels like unfinished business is often just discomfort with finality. Readiness feels uneasy precisely because it is real.

Mission Execute Finale is therefore not about doing more. It is about deciding.

This is the moment where authorship leaves the safe perimeter of intention and enters the open world of readers, algorithms, reviews, silence, noise, sales, and time. It is not the loudest mission in the campaign, but it is the most irreversible. You are no longer shaping the book; you are releasing it.

This final mission has fewer or shorter objectives than the others, not because it matters less, but because complexity has already been resolved upstream. At this stage, simplicity is strength.

Your last steps in this mission are all aimed at **FIRE**:

- (1) **Finalize readiness** without reopening old battles
- (2) **Initiate the upload** with deliberate finality
- (3) **Release control** without panic
- (4) **End the campaign**

Let's walk them through in order.

Objective 1: Finalize Readiness Without Reopening Old Battles

Before you press *Publish*, there is a familiar temptation to reopen everything: one more typo check, one more wording tweak, one more metadata improvement, one more cover adjustment “just to be sure.”

This is not diligence; it is fear wearing a productivity mask. Readiness at this stage does not mean perfection. It means alignment. Ask yourself three simple questions:

- ✓ Does the KPF file reflect the structure and reading flow you intended?
- ✓ Does the cover accurately represent the book you actually wrote, not the book you wish you had written?
- ✓ Does the metadata describe the book honestly and clearly for the reader it is meant to reach?

If the answer to all three is yes, **you are ready**. Do not reopen Word. Do not reopen Kindle Create. Do not renegotiate decisions that you have already made with a clear mind for good reasons. Readiness is not about eliminating doubt; it is about acting despite it.

Objective 2: Initiate the Upload with Deliberate Finality

Now we move from mindset to mechanics. At this stage, execution benefits from clarity. Each step is simple, sequential, and required.

- (1) **Return to Your KDP Bookshelf:** Sign in to KDP and navigate to your Bookshelf. Your book will appear with its current status and a prominent Continue setup button. This button is your re-entry point into the publishing flow.
- (2) **Click Continue setup:** Selecting Continue setup advances you into the final configuration screens. This does not reopen the campaign; it resumes it exactly where it was paused.
- (3) **Confirm Book Details:** Review your language, title, subtitle, author name, description, categories, and keywords. At this stage, these are confirmations, not creative decisions. Make changes only if something is factually incorrect. Click Save and Continue to save all Book details.
- (4) **Click Upload manuscript:** Upload your .KPF file which will overwrite the placeholder manuscript during your first mission.
- (5) **Select Yes or No to apply DRM:** Digital Rights Management (DRM) protects the rights of copyright holders but makes it harder for your reader to share the file on different devices (or with different people). I prefer No DRM, which requires to check the box to understand the consequences with an unprotected PDF or EPUB file.
- (6) **Verify Content and Upload Files:** Confirm that your finalized KPF file is uploaded and processed correctly. Verify that the cover will be displayed. If the system flags issues, resolve them before proceeding.
- (7) **Preview and Approve:** Open the previewer to review how your book appears on Kindle devices and apps. Once you are satisfied, Save and continue to approve the preview and go to the next step: Pricing.
- (8) **Confirm Pricing and Territories:** Check your publishing territories, list price, and royalty option. These choices determine how and where your book will be sold.
- (9) **Publish Your Kindle eBook:** When all required fields are complete, the Publish Your Kindle eBook button becomes active. Clicking it submits your book and metadata to Amazon's automated review pipeline and freezes the current version as public.
- (10) **Choose to Start the Paperback Now (Optional):** Immediately after publishing the Kindle eBook, KDP may prompt you with Start your paperback now. This is an invitation, not a requirement. Selecting it

opens a new publishing flow for a paperback edition, using much of the information you have already provided. Declining or postponing this option does not affect your Kindle eBook's review or release.

After publishing, the status will show as In Review. This review typically completes within twenty-four to seventy-two hours. During this time, resist the urge to interfere.

Once approved, your book becomes searchable, purchasable, and readable. Sometimes this happens quietly. Sometimes it happens quickly. Often, it unfolds unpredictably. This is not a launch event. It is a release event.

Do not refresh compulsively. Mission Execute means execute.

Challenge 1: Release Control After Publish

The hardest part of publishing is not writing. It is letting go.

Once your book goes live, you no longer control who finds it first, how it is interpreted, or whether silence or response arrives before feedback. That loss of control is not a flaw in the system; it *is* the system.

Many authors expect immediate signals: reviews, rankings, or validation. What often arrives first is nothing at all. This is not failure. It is normal.

A published book is not a broadcast; it is a seed. A few seeds sprout quickly. Most require time, context, or rediscovery. Some are found by a single reader who changes everything later.

Every campaign ends with a quiet stretch. The inbox stills. The dashboard refreshes slowly. The adrenaline fades. This is where authors are tempted to panic-edit metadata, rush into advertising without understanding the terrain, emotionally devalue their work, or immediately start something new to avoid sitting with the outcome.

Resist that impulse.

The space after publishing is not emptiness. It is room for reflection, learning, and perspective. It is the space where the *Aftermath* begins.

Mission Accomplished: End the Campaign Successfully!

You have done what most people never do. You did not just write a book. You finished it. You packaged it. You released it.

From this point on, the work no longer belongs solely to you. It belongs to readers, to algorithms, to time, to interpretation, and to consequence. That is not loss. That is authorship.

You have completed *The Campaign*. What follows is not strategy, but response. In the next part, we will examine what actually happens after publishing, how to interpret signals without obsession, how selling works after integrity, and how to decide what to do next and what not to do.

Welcome to *The Aftermath*.

PART III:
The Aftermath

*From author to publisher
in an algorithmic world*