

These are the preparation steps I followed to prepare my novel for self-publication. Items in each section below are not the *only* options—just the ones I used!

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EDITOR INFORMATION:

- There are a lot of options out there for freelance editors. These are just a couple that I looked at:
 - Reedsy: <https://reedsy.com/>
 - Fiverr: <https://www.fiverr.com/>
 - ETL editing: <https://www.etlediting.com/>
- There are different types of editing available (Developmental Editing, Copy Editing, Proofreading, etc.).
- I ended up going through Reedsy.
 - I created an account on Reedsy.
 - I had written my manuscript in MS Word and personally edited my manuscript multiple times at this point, so I only requested Copy Editing.
 - I was able to narrow down editors by Horror genre, and save them in a customized list. I then selected my top 5 and requested quotes from each.
 - 4 out of the 5 responded with quotes within one day. Total quote costs ranged from \$990 to \$2,800! NOTE that Reedsy does add a fee of their own to the quote.
 - I ended up picking an edit that was somewhere in the middle (\$1,900) because I liked her credentials, and her response in the quote was

detailed and seemed like she would have the best input for my manuscript.

- I uploaded my MS Word file to her on Reedsy, and she returned the document with incorporated edits.
- **TIMEFRAME:** The end-to-end edit process, from the point I hired my editor to the point I got through all of her edits and incorporated them into my manuscript, took around 3 ½ months (took her about 7 weeks—there were some delays and longer than she originally anticipated, and then took me about 8 weeks to go through all and incorporate them). Note that I also started to do some final formatting along with including the edits, so that added extra time.

BOOK FORMAT INFORMATION:

- I did this process next, because for print versions of the book, you need to know how many pages (and paper type) there will be in the final version, as this affects the cover (and how thick the spine of the cover needs to be).
- Also, you will probably want to check the platform(s) where you will be publishing (Amazon KDP, B&N Press, etc.) to confirm the trim sizes they offer, as well as other requirements like minimum margin sizes, etc. **I based my sizings on Amazon KDP offerings and requirements.**
 - Following are the configurations I chose for the final version of my novel. Amazon KDP allows for multiple output file types for eBook, but I went with EPUB. And they require a PDF output file for paperback.
 - Font: **Garamond**
 - *NOTE: I originally had a few sentences in another font (Arial) within my chapters for effect. I learned that when using format tools (below like Atticus or Reedsy Studio), the body font can only be one font type and size. So I had to get rid of the Arial mixed in and make it all Garamond Size 11. But I did keep in different italics and bold throughout.*
 - Font Size: **11**
 - Line Spacing: **1.25**
 - Trim Size for Print: **5.5” x 8.5”**
 - **NOTES:**
 - *the trim size (as well as font size) will determine how many words can fit on a page, and therefore your page*

count. A smaller trim size and/or larger font likely will equate to more pages needed (ex. Hunger Games had 101k words, trim size of 5.5 x 8.5 = approx. 380 pages).

- *the trim size will also affect the cover design of your book. The number of pages will affect the thickness of the spine of the book cover. So you really should make this determination BEFORE starting the book cover design.*
- *The trim size can also affect print costs (and thus profit margins on each print copy sale). Most print-on-demand services charge based on page count—the more pages, the more cost. So larger trim sizes usually equate to less pages.*
- *Specific to Amazon KDP: they offer several different trim sizes you can use. They have tables that show the size specs with min/max page counts. KDP print charges include a fixed fee plus a per-page charge (so the lower number of total pages, the lower the print cost per copy).*

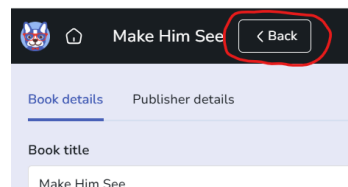
▪ Margins: **Inside (gutter) 0.75”, Top 0.75”, Outside 0.75”, Bottom 0.75”**

- Margins protect your content from running off the page and being cut off during the manufacturing process. There is a top, bottom, outside, and inside (gutter) margin. They can be different sizes in your manuscript file, or the same.
- My book was in the range of 301-500 pages, so the *minimum* margin sizes listed on Amazon KDP were: Inside (gutter) min: 0.625”, Outside min (no bleed): 0.25”.

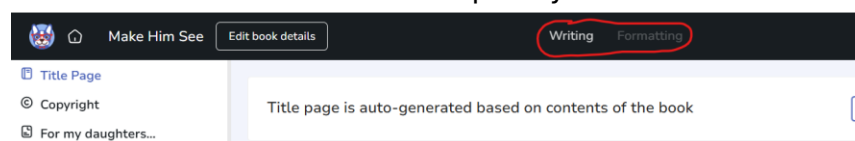
▪ Bleed: **I didn’t have any images in my manuscript, so I didn’t use the bleed option for interior manuscript file.**

- Bleed is a printing term that refers to when printed items on a page, such as images or illustrations, reach all the way to the edge of the page. All book covers on KDP require bleed. However, you can choose whether your interior has bleed or not.
- If all interior contents are safely within the margins, you generally do not need to worry about bleed for interior manuscript file.

- Some options for self-formatting:
 - Atticus: <https://www.atticus.io/>
 - Reedsy Studio : <https://reedsy.com/studio>
 - You could possibly ask the Editor you hired if they do formatting as well.
- I went with Atticus for my formatting because it had more output format options (Reedsy only offers three export templates).
 - I paid the one-time \$147 fee, and created an account. I would recommend watching/reading the tutorials they provide on formatting your DOCX file, and all others on how to use the site. They are all pretty short and quick.
 - Following are some notes on things that I thought needed some explanation.
 - I selected the option to Upload a Book, and uploaded my final manuscript that I created in MS Word (with all of the formatting they suggested in the tutorial). NOTE: Atticus will only import a DOCX file!
 - After uploading, it may start you on the “Book Details” tab, which took me a minute to figure out. If you click “Back”, it will take you to the main content of your manuscript.

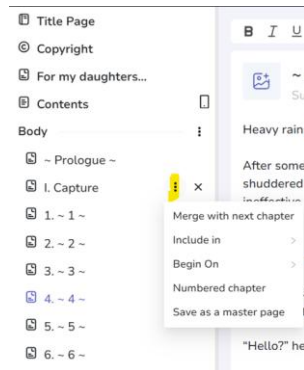


- At the top, you can toggle back and forth between the Writing and Formatting tabs. So any changes you make on the Writing tab, you can then flip over to the Formatting tab and see what it looks like. I toggled back and forth between these frequently.

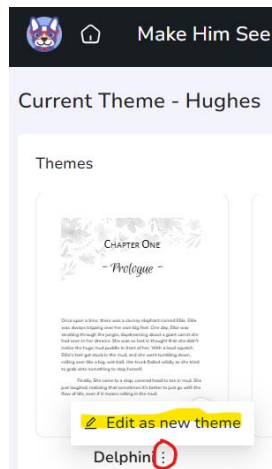


- I originally formatted my 3 Section headings as “Heading 1” type, and then all of my Chapter headings as “Heading 2” in Word. It didn’t import nicely into Atticus, so I changed all of my Chapter headings to “Heading 1” as well, and it imported better.
 - I also had a few sub-headings in some of my chapters. I ended up making those “Heading 2” type, and then they imported cleanly as well.
 - You can click and drag your chapters in the listing on the left to rearrange. I had to move my Dedication page up into the Front Matter before the Contents.

- If you hover over any of the items and click the 3 dots, you have other options for each:



- Contents: I checked “Include in→eBook only”.
 - Prologue: I unchecked the option for “Numbered chapter”.
 - Section Headings: I unchecked the option for “Numbered chapter”. I selected “Begin on→Right side”.
- **FORMATTING:**
 - I picked one of the available Themes, clicked the three dots, and “Edit as new theme”. In there, I set all the formatting options I wanted (listed above, Font, Size, Margins, etc.). I then saved it under my own theme name.
 - Note that any changes made here are universal through the entire document, every chapter, etc.



- I had some lines centered in my manuscript, but they showed up left-aligned when imported into Atticus. So I had to find all of those, and manually center them in Atticus.
- The display screens on various devices are thinner than the printed page in most cases. So I made sure to look at each page in each

chapter to assure they displayed fine on both the Print and different online device types.

- eBook FORMATTING:
 - Once all formatting is complete, click the “Create ePub” button, and it should download the file.
 - **Output file should be created as an EPUB.**
- PRINT COPY FORMATTING:
 - Once all formatting is complete, click the “Create PDF” button, and it should download the file.
 - **Output file should be created as a PDF.**
- TIMEFRAME:
 - I had already done quite a bit of formatting along with the several rounds of edits I had completed in Word. Thus, when I imported from Word into Atticus, it imported pretty cleanly. Doing all the final clean up in Atticus and getting it into final form (and export to PDF/EPUB), took me about **1 week**. I would definitely recommend doing much of the suggested formatting in Word ahead of time, as it imports into Atticus better and saves a lot of time.

ISBN AND BARCODE INFORMATION:

- To order ISBN and Barcode (if desired):
 - Bowker: <https://www.bowker.com/>
 - When selecting the ISBN option, it then sends you to: <https://www.myidentifiers.com/identify-protect-your-book/isbn/buy-isbn>
 - You first have to register on the site and provide all information.
 - I used **S. M. Pollack** (pen name) as my “Company Name”. Amazon (KDP) refers to this item as your “*imprint*.” Personal name may be used.
- ISBN:
 - You need separate/unique ISBN for eBook, Paperback Print, *and* Hardcover Print (depending on which you will be using)!
 - I needed 2 ISBNs (one for my eBook, and one for the Paperback).

- 1 ISBN cost \$125, so 2 would have been \$250. However, they offer the option of purchasing 10 ISBNs for \$295. So I went with that option, and will save the others for future books. ISBNs never expire.
- You receive your ISBNs almost immediately (and get an email confirmation).
- I then assigned the ISBNs to my eBook and Paperback by doing the following (these instructions are also included in the email you get). Your title will not be registered or entered into Books In Print until all required fields are completed:
 - Still logged into Bowker/MyIdentifiers:
 - Went to the **My Account** dropdown
 - Clicked on **My Identifiers**. It then showed my 10 ISBNs.
 - Clicked on **Assign Title** on the **first** listed ISBN.
 - Added my book title
 - Describe your book: I added in my paperback back cover blurb here.
 - Medium: **Print**
 - Format: **Paperback**
 - First Genre: FICTION_HORROR_GENERAL
 - Second Genre: FICTION_THRILLER_PSYCHOLOGICAL
 - Contributor 1 : just added my first and last name, and selected Author under Function. I didn't add any other Contributors.
 - Sales & Pricing section:
 - Best I was able to tell, once this ISBN record is completed, it is fed into the Books In Print database, which libraries, wholesalers, bookstores, etc. use to catalog and order your book. The price becomes part of the permanent metadata record tied to your MyIdentifiers account. Retailers and libraries see the retail value when looking up the book.
 - Publication date: I put in the future date I planned to make it available on Amazon.
 - Title Status: I selected Forthcoming. **NOTE:** once I hit my actual publication date, I came back in and updated this ISBN record and changed this to **Active Record**.
 - Target Audience: Trade

- Book Price:
 - It is not permanent! Changing your actual retail price on places like Amazon KDP or others does not force you to buy a new ISBN. You can always log back into Bowker and update the listed price in your metadata if it changes. **I hadn't created my book listing on KDP yet, so went ahead and added an estimated Set Dollar Amount, and updated it later as needed.**
 - After submitting, I went back out into My Identifiers. The first one showed with my book title as Pending (says it can take up to 48 hours to update). I went back in a few days later, and the two showed as "Assigned".
 - Clicked on **Assign Title** on the **second** listed ISBN.
 - Added my book title
 - Medium: **E-Book**
 - Format: **Electronic Book Text**
 - eBook File Type: **EPUB**
 - Everything else was the same as with the first entry above, except the price (I estimated a price for my eBook, and came back and updated it later).
- Barcode:
 - If you plan to purchase a barcode, then you will need to do this step BEFORE having your book cover created, and include the barcode in your book cover output file!
 - If you are not buying/including a barcode, then this step could be done after the book cover design.
 - I did **NOT** purchase my own separate Barcodes. I just left a blank space on the back cover, and allowed Amazon KDP and B&N Press to add their barcode to my cover upon printing. So I actually bought my ISBNs after my cover design was done.

BOOK COVER INFORMATION:

- Two things to consider before design:
 - Need to know the final page count first, as it determines how thick the book spine will be (which is why doing the editing above first).
 - Also need to decide if you will be printing on white or crème paper. Crème paper is slightly thicker, and could also affect the spine size.
 - I went with Crème paper.
- Some book cover resources:
 - Canva: if you are looking to design a cover yourself
 - Amazon KDP: they do offer a Cover Creator tool if you want to design yourself
 - Reedsy: you can get quotes and hire cover designers
- I used the cover specification details from Amazon KDP. When you create a paperback book on KDP, you need to format and upload two files: a **manuscript file**, which is the interior of your book including front matter, body matter, and back matter, and a **cover file**, which is the outside of your book including the front, back, and spine.
 - PAPERBACK COVER:
 - You have two cover finish options: glossy and matte.
 - I used the **Amazon Cover Calculator and Template Generator** tool. Again, I needed the final page count of my manuscript before using this calculator (the final total page count, including all Front, Body, and Back matter from my PDF file was 321). Here are the parameters I used:

Enter Your Book Information

Binding type
Paperback ▼

Interior type
Black & white ▼

Paper type
Cream paper ▼

Reading Direction
Left to Right ▼

Measurement units
Inches ▼

Interior trim size
5.5 x 8.5 in ▼

Page count
Number of pages at your formatted trim size.
[Learn more about trim size and page count](#)
321

Calculate dimensions

Download Template

[Reset book information](#)

- You then click **Calculate dimensions**, and it displays the dimensions and template.
- You can then click **Download Template**, and it downloads a zip file. The zip file contains a PDF and PNG file with the template, as well as a Readme file.
 - This output template accounts for: Front, Back cover, and Spine dimensions, with bleed and margin areas to account for printing so that there are no white edges around the cover after it is trimmed for printing.
 - Barcode info: leave the blank space on back cover based on what the calculator shows. If you do not purchase and include your own barcode on your cover when uploading your book (and specify as such), Amazon KDP will automatically generate and place a barcode on your paperback for free. It will be a standard barcode using the ISBN you assign. It is NOT a retail price barcode, so won't have a price encoded with it (so likely wouldn't work in a retail store).
 - B&N Press: will also add a barcode to your cover for free, and believe theirs DOES include ISBN

you provide, *and* a price (since they have retail stores).

- **I then gave this zip file to the person I hired to create the cover. OTHER NOTES for cover designer:**
 - **File type.** Your cover must be a single PDF file that includes the back cover, spine, and front cover as one image.
 - **File size.** Cover files larger than 650MB won't convert. We recommend a file size of 40MB or less because large files can slow down printing.
 - **Bleed.** All covers have bleed. If you want to add a background (e.g. color or image), make sure it extends 0.125" (3.2 mm) beyond the final trim line on all outside edges. All books are trimmed to size, and to ensure that the background fills the page, it needs to extend 0.125" (3.2 mm) past where the book will be trimmed on the top, bottom, and outside edges. This will prevent a white border from appearing at the edge when your book is trimmed.
 - **Images.** When adding images, make sure they extend (bleed) 0.125" (3.2 mm) beyond the final trim line on all edges. Image color, size, and quality. Images should be in CMYK color to ensure your cover looks good in print. All images should be sized at 100%, flattened to one layer, and placed in your document at a minimum resolution of 300 DPI (dots per inch).
 - **Text.** Front and back cover text: When adding text, make sure it's at least 0.125" (3.2 mm) inside the trim lines. Also, no front or back cover text should extend into the spine area. Spine text: Spine text needs at least 0.0625" (1.6 mm) on either side so the text doesn't wrap onto the front or back cover. Font size and color: Text should be at least 7-point font so it's large enough for customers to read. Also, make sure the text doesn't blend into the background. This may happen if the text and background colors are too similar.
 - **Color requirements.**

- Color profiles. Color management added to an image or file. We don't recommend including color profiles in your file. Color profiles can produce unexpected results. They are automatically removed before publishing.
- Spot colors. Color generated from ink chosen from a color system (such as Pantone Matching System). Spot colors are used in offset printing and aren't compatible with KDP's print-on-demand model, so please don't include spot colors in your files. We recommend converting spot colors to CMYK.
- Color spaces. Describes color numerically, such as RGB (digital cameras and computer monitors), CMYK (full-color printing), and grayscale (black and white printing). We don't recommend using multiple color spaces in a file because it can cause color variance and unexpected results when your book is printed.
- Color Variance. With our print on demand model, we have acceptable levels of color tolerance. Most color variance happens as a result of environmental and mechanical factors. We always strive for the best quality when printing your title. Color variance occurs for many reasons that are not related to your file, however, taking all the steps you can to perfect your file will reduce the chances of it occurring.
- **Pre-publication checklist.**
 - Save as a PDF. Your cover must be a single PDF that includes the back cover, spine, and front cover as one image.
 - Flatten all transparencies. These can cause the file to print with missing or distorted content. Consult your software's documentation to learn how.
 - Embed your fonts. Consult your software's documentation to learn how.

- Remove crop marks, color bars, template text. Crop marks are lines showing where pages should be trimmed. Color bars are strips with a series of patches used to ensure color balance during printing. Also, remove any template text, PDF creation guides, or software references.
- Ensure your cover image meets the minimum resolution of 300 DPI (dots per inch).
- Optimize PDFs. Optimization is useful to reduce your file size, allowing for higher performance when transferring, uploading, viewing, and printing the files.
- Remove file security. Locked or encrypted files will fail review.

○ eBOOK COVER:

- The cover image you upload will appear on your Amazon detail page.
- **Notes I provided to Cover designer:**
 - **File Format.** TIFF (.tif/.tiff) or JPEG (.jpeg/.jpg) format
 - **File Size.** Your cover image must be less than 50MB. Note: Try to avoid compressing your files. This can affect the quality of your cover when displayed on reading devices. For the best results, images should have a minimum resolution of 300 PPI (pixels per inch).
 - **Dimensions.** Ideal dimensions for cover files are 2,560 pixels in height x 1,600 pixels in width. For best quality, particularly on high definition devices, your image should be 2500 pixels in height. Minimum dimensions of 1000 pixels in height and 625 pixels in width. Cover image should not exceed 10,000 pixels in height and in width. Note: We apply additional compression to images when displaying them on the website. For the best results, upload your images with minimal compression.
 - **Image ratio.** An ideal height/width ratio of at least 1.6:1, meaning: For every 1,000 pixels in width, the image should be 1,600 pixels in height.
 - **DPI (dots per inch).** 72 dpi
 - **Color profile.** RGB (red, green, blue). Note: Make sure to save your image without color separation. This is usually a pre-press or color palette option. Use your image editing program or

image analysis tool (some are available free online) to verify that your image file doesn't have color separation.

- **Borders.** Cover art with white or very light backgrounds can seem to disappear against the white background. Try adding a narrow (3-4 pixel) border in medium gray to define the boundaries of the cover.
- I decided to hire someone from Reedsy, as I was happy with the editing process and the person I hired there. I wanted a professional-looking cover.
 - I was able to narrow down designers by Cover Design, then by Horror genre, and save them in a customized list. I then selected my top 4 and requested quotes from each.
 - 4 out of the 4 responded. 2 declined the project. 1 quoted a cost of \$685. 1 quoted \$850. NOTE that Reedsy does add a fee of their own to the quote.
 - I ended up going with the offer at \$685, as he was my #1 choice and very much interested in horror design.
 - **NOTE:** I created by own mock-up of what my vision was for the front, back and spine design. I think this gave him a quick idea, and probably played into the price as he felt he could use that to complete the work fairly quickly. So I would recommend providing a mock-up.
 - In addition to my mock-up, I uploaded the zip file with all the docs I created/downloaded from Amazon KDP (sizing template, etc), as well as a type-written description for the front and back-cover design. It gave the artist the “inspiration” behind my vision, and helped the process.
 - Output:
 - He supplied the Front/Back/Spine print file in the specified PDF, and a separate jpeg (of just the front cover) for the eBook.
 - TIMEFRAME:
 - I hired on 7/22. He completed the final design with all changes and gave me the files on 7/26. He definitely worked fast, and I suspect this short timeframe may not be typical. But when someone provides you a quote on Reedsy, they give you a planned start and end date for the project.

COPYRIGHT INFORMATION:

- I registered my novel for copyright. **NOTE:** I did this after I had my FINAL manuscript completed! If you register for a copyright, but then make *significant* changes to your manuscript later, you may need to end up submitting another copyright registration.
- U.S. Copyright Office: <https://www.copyright.gov/>
 - Go to the Registration Portal
 - Log into the Electronic Copyright Office (eCO) Registration System. Register as a new user.
 - NOTE: I watched the short video on how to open a request, which was helpful. But following are the steps I took.
 - On the left, under Register a Work, click on **Standard Application**.
 - Click **Start Application**.
 - Type of Work: **Literary Work**. Then check the verification box, and click **Continue**.
 - For Titles, click **New**.
 - Title Type: **Title of work being registered**
 - Title of this work: *<enter your book name>*
 - Click **Save**
 - Your title should then show up in the list. Click **Continue**.
 - Publication/completion page:
 - Has this work been published: **No**
 - NOTE: I did this registration before my book was actually published. Per my research, you don't need to go back into the copyright later and update it after you publish. The copyright is still in effect.
 - Year of Completion (Year of Creation): **2026**
 - Click **Continue**.
 - Authors page:
 - To add myself as the author, I clicked the **Add Me** button.
 - It then pulled up the next page with my name already populated. I filled out the remaining fields, and clicked **Save**.
 - On the next page, for **Author Created**, I checked the box **Text**. Then click **Save**.
 - I then showed up in the list. That is all I added here, as I was the sole author. I *think* you could also possibly add others, like an Editor, etc. if you wanted. Click **Continue**.
 - Claimants page:

- To add myself as a claimant, I clicked the **Add Me** button.
 - It then pulled up the next page with my name and address info populated. Click **Save**.
 - I then showed up in the list. I had no other claimants. Click **Continue**.
- Limitation of Claim page:
 - I left all this blank. Click **Continue**.
- Rights & Permissions Information page:
 - I clicked **Add Me**.
 - It populated my information. Click **Continue**.
- Correspondent page:
 - I clicked **Add Me**.
 - It populated my information. Click **Continue**.
- Mail Certificate page:
 - I clicked Add Me.
 - It populated my information. Click **Continue**.
- Special Handling page:
 - I left blank. Click **Continue**.
- Certification page:
 - Check the certify box.
 - Name of Certifying individual: *<add your name>*
 - Click **Continue**.
- Review Submission page:
 - Review all information. Click **Add to Cart**.
- My Cart:
 - The fee is **\$65**. Click **Checkout**.
 - I paid via Credit Card. It sends you to pay.gov to complete the transaction.
 - After submitting payment, it doesn't really give you a confirmation, and sends you back to the eCO site to log back in. I did get an email though stating that my application and fee was submitted.
- **YOU ARE NOT DONE YET! LOG BACK INTO THE eCO SITE.**
 - Under **Open Cases**, my case number was listed with **Open** status, and it showed my Fee as paid. **Upload Status** showed **Not Completed**—this is the final step. I clicked on my Case number, and it brought up the screen to **Submit Your Work**. AGAIN—this is why you should wait until your manuscript is basically final, as any major changes down the road might require you to submit a new copyright registration.

- I chose to upload my electronic manuscript PDF file.
 - Click **Select files to upload...** Then attach your manuscript file.
 - Click **Start Upload**.
 - Once uploaded, click **Click here to complete your submission after uploading all files**.
 - You should then get message: **“Claim submission completed; no further action required.”**
- Now on the Home screen, Upload Status shows **Completed**. All is submitted.
- **TIMEFRAME:**
 - This whole registration process took about an hour.
 - I opened my registration on 8/19/2026. From what I read, it can take between 3-6 months to receive the official certificate for an online filing (if there are no error or additional correspondence). However, the **EFFECTIVE DATE** is set immediately upon submission, regardless of the review backlog.
- Other **NOTES** from <https://www.copyright.gov/help/faq/faq-general.html>
 - When is my work protected? Your work is under copyright protection the moment it is created and fixed in a tangible form that it is perceptible either directly or with the aid of a machine or device.
 - Do I have to register with your office to be protected? No. In general, registration is voluntary. Copyright exists from the moment the work is created. You will have to register, however, if you wish to bring a lawsuit for infringement of a U.S. work.
 - Why should I register my work if copyright protection is automatic?

Registration is recommended for a number of reasons. Many choose to register their works because they wish to have the facts of their copyright on the public record and have a certificate of registration. Registered works may be eligible for statutory damages and attorney's fees in successful litigation. Finally, if registration occurs within five years of publication, it is considered prima facie evidence in a court of law. **I read this to mean you definitely want to copyright it BEFORE it is published. But not necessarily before finding an agent.**
- **Stealing and plagiarism:** Does it exist? Yes, of course. Should you worry about it before submitting to literary agents and editors? No. Why? Because—put bluntly—your manuscript is not a book or a product yet. Further, theft of unpublished work is very rare. Once your agent sells it to a publishing house, and once it goes into production, then yes, you wouldn't want that to be plagiarized. But it will have gone through so many rounds of revisions and edits anyway, that by the time it goes into

production it will be so unique and virtually impossible to copy without someone smelling a rat. Luckily, once you get into professional book publishing territory, you will be working with a publishing team whose job it is to register the copyright, distribute according to your contract and negotiated rights, and protect your work.

- What about literary agents? A reputable literary agent has zero interest in stealing your work. It's an agent's job to represent a writer throughout their career. They are salespeople, not writers. If they wanted to write, they would write. Equally, there's no point in them stealing your ideas. They are inundated with ideas. Trust me, they're not interested in yours, unless it's with a view to representing you.