

A Modest Proposal

Why Fair Partnerships Matter More
Than Marketing Budgets

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Pen Odyssey

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Contents

Author's Note	IV
1. Chapter 1 - The Experiment	1
2. Chapter 2 - Marketing on a Fixed Income	4
3. Chapter 3 - When Fees Are Certain, and Outcomes Aren't	8
4. Chapter 4 - Why I'd Give Away 100% of My Royalties	13
5. Chapter 5 - 160+ Books and Why I'm Still Here	17
6. Chapter 6 - Why 85% for Marketing Undervalues Authors	20
7. Chapter 7 - The 50-50 Future	24
8. Chapter 8 - Why Athletes Aren't Asked to Give Up Their Value	28
9. Chapter 9 - An Invitation, Not a Pitch	32
Epilogue - What I Hope Happens Next	35

Author's Note

This short book is not a how-to guide, a memoir, or a complaint.

It's a position shaped by time.

After decades in business-to-business marketing and more than 160 published books, I've had the unusual opportunity to see patterns most authors never get to see—what works occasionally, what fails reliably, and what persists simply because no one questions it.

The title is a deliberate nod to *A Modest Proposal*, not in tone but in intent. Swift used reason to expose a broken system by taking its logic seriously. I'm attempting something similar here—calmly, without satire sharp enough to wound, but with the same belief that accepted practices deserve scrutiny.

What follows is not radical.

It only sounds that way because the system it questions has gone largely unexamined.

Chapter 1 – The Experiment

I didn't set out to challenge the economics of book marketing.

I set out to sell some books.

Like many authors, I eventually reached the point where organic discovery slowed. I had readers. I had a catalog. What I didn't have was momentum. So I did what sensible people do—I looked for help.

Through LinkedIn, I connected with a marketing consultant who specialized in Amazon advertising. The arrangement was straightforward enough. Ads would be run. Data would be analyzed. Adjustments would be made. Visibility would increase.

Some of that happened.

What didn't happen—at least not in a meaningful way—was sustained reader growth.

That doesn't make the experiment a failure, and it doesn't make the consultant dishonest or incompetent. If anything, it made something clearer that I had previously understood only in theory: in

book marketing, effort and outcome are often only loosely connected.

Fees, on the other hand, are not.

I could have been more hands-on. I could have asked better questions. I could have stopped sooner. All of that is true. Responsibility here is shared. But shared responsibility doesn't change the underlying structure of the arrangement.

The consultant was paid whether the books sold or not.

I absorbed the risk either way.

That's not unusual. It's standard.

And that realization—not the disappointing results themselves—was the beginning of this book.

I'm a retired marketer. For most of my career, I worked business-to-business, where results mattered and budgets were tied—sometimes uncomfortably closely—to outcomes. You learned quickly what worked because you couldn't afford not to. Fixed fees divorced from performance were rare, and when they existed, they were treated with caution.

Publishing operates differently.

In publishing, "awareness" is often treated as success. Metrics multiply. Dashboards fill. Conversations sound busy. But the author still asks the same simple question at the end of the month:

Did anyone new actually read the book?

For authors with deep pockets, this ambiguity is frustrating.

For authors on a fixed income, it's decisive.

Retirement has a way of clarifying things. When the runway is finite, you become allergic to vague assurances. You don't have the luxury of funding experiments indefinitely in the hope that something might eventually click.

And yet—despite that constraint—I'm still here.

I've published more than 160 books. I've written across genres, for adults and children, for entertainment and reflection. I've given away more than a thousand copies with no expectation of return. I haven't stopped because I enjoy losing money, or because I believe effort alone entitles me to readers.

I've continued because I believe stories matter—and because I believe systems should reward contribution more than proximity.

This experiment didn't fail because marketing is useless.

It failed because the incentives weren't aligned.

Once you see that clearly, it becomes difficult to unsee it. And once you unsee it, a different question presents itself—one that's harder to ignore than ad dashboards or optimization reports:

What would book marketing look like if everyone involved benefited only when readers actually appeared?

That question is where this modest proposal begins.

Chapter 2 - Marketing on a Fixed Income

There is a certain kind of advice that only makes sense if money is abstract.

It's the advice that assumes you can keep trying, keep testing, keep spending—because eventually something will work. The timeline is vague, but the optimism is absolute. If results don't appear, the solution is rarely to stop. It's to refine, iterate, reinvest.

For many authors, that advice is not merely unhelpful. It's inapplicable.

Retirement changes how you hear promises. When income is fixed, every expense carries weight. You stop evaluating ideas on whether they sound plausible and start evaluating them on whether they respect reality.

In marketing conversations, this distinction is often invisible.

Much of the prevailing wisdom around book promotion is built for authors who either have outside income, institutional backing, or a willingness to treat losses as tuition. There is nothing wrong

with that—unless it becomes the default assumption. When it does, authors who don't fit that profile are quietly excluded, not by intention but by economics.

A fixed income imposes discipline, but it also exposes misdirection.

You begin to notice how often marketing language drifts away from outcomes and toward effort. Campaigns are described as “building presence,” “gaining traction,” or “raising awareness.” These phrases are not dishonest, but they are incomplete. They describe motion without destination.

For an author living within clear limits, motion is not enough.

Awareness that does not translate into readers is not a step along the path—it's a cul-de-sac. You can spend months circling it, refining copy, adjusting bids, tweaking keywords, all while convincing yourself that progress is being made. The data looks busy. The experience feels engaged. But the question remains stubbornly unchanged:

Is anyone new actually reading the work?

This is where fixed-income thinking becomes clarifying rather than constraining. It strips away the romance of marketing and replaces it with something more practical: accountability.

In business-to-business marketing, accountability is unavoidable. Budgets are finite. Stakeholders ask uncomfortable questions. If a campaign fails to produce results, explanations are expected—and eventually, strategies change.

In publishing, accountability often dissolves into optimism.

That doesn't make marketers irresponsible. It makes the system permissive. When fees are paid regardless of outcome, the burden of risk naturally shifts to the author. The author funds the

experiment. The author absorbs the disappointment. The author is encouraged to try again.

For some, that's manageable.

For others, it's simply not.

What's rarely acknowledged is that authors on fixed incomes are not risk-averse—they are risk-aware. They are willing to invest when the structure makes sense. What they resist is open-ended exposure disguised as opportunity.

There's another misconception worth addressing here: that authors who question marketing costs are somehow unserious about their work. In my experience, the opposite is true. The authors who ask hard questions about value, alignment, and sustainability are often the ones who have committed the longest.

They've written through obscurity.

They've published without applause.

They've continued without guarantees.

That kind of persistence is not fueled by disposable income. It's fueled by conviction.

When marketing advice fails to account for this reality, it doesn't merely miss a demographic—it misses an ethical dimension. It assumes that authorship is a hobby until proven otherwise, rather than a contribution that deserves proportional respect.

A fixed income doesn't diminish the value of the work.

It sharpens the demand that the work be treated seriously.

This is why so much conventional marketing advice feels out of tune for authors like me. It's not that the tactics are wrong. It's that the underlying assumptions don't hold.

When you can't afford to chase maybes indefinitely, you begin to ask different questions. You stop asking how loudly a book can be promoted and start asking how honestly it can be introduced. You stop measuring success in impressions and start measuring it in readers who stay.

That shift doesn't make marketing impossible.

It makes it accountable.

And once accountability enters the conversation, it becomes difficult to ignore the deeper issue—not of tactics, but of structure. Of who bears the risk, who benefits from effort, and why those roles have been accepted for so long without challenge.

Those questions don't arise from frustration.

They arise from clarity.

And clarity, once gained, has a way of insisting on the next step.

Chapter 3 - When Fees Are Certain, and Outcomes Aren't

Most systems don't fail because people behave badly.

They fail because incentives are misaligned.

This distinction matters, because it changes the conversation from blame to structure. It allows us to examine outcomes without assigning motives, and patterns without inventing villains. In publishing—and particularly in book marketing—the outcomes we see are not accidental. They are the predictable result of how risk and reward have been arranged.

In most book marketing relationships, one thing is guaranteed and one thing is not.

Fees are guaranteed.

Outcomes are not.

This is rarely stated so plainly, but it is the foundation upon which nearly all marketing arrangements in publishing rest. Consultants charge retainers. Agencies bill monthly. Platforms require upfront spend. Success may follow—or it may not—but payment is not contingent upon it.

That alone does not make the system unjust. Many professions operate this way. The issue arises when certainty and uncertainty are consistently assigned to the same parties.

The marketer's income is certain.

The author's return is speculative.

Once this becomes normalized, disappointment stops being an anomaly and starts being a feature. Authors are encouraged to think of marketing as a necessary gamble, a cost of doing business, a toll paid on the road to discovery. If results don't appear, the explanation is rarely structural. It's tactical. The wrong keywords. The wrong audience. The wrong timing. Try again.

And again.

From the outside, this persistence looks like optimism. From the inside, it often feels like drift.

What's striking is how rarely the underlying arrangement itself is questioned. We scrutinize copy, bids, covers, categories, and algorithms with forensic intensity, while leaving the economic model untouched—as if it were a law of nature rather than a human decision.

But models shape behavior.

When compensation is disconnected from outcomes, effort naturally shifts toward activity rather than effectiveness. Reports proliferate. Adjustments are made. Conversations continue. Everyone

remains busy. And yet the author's central question remains unresolved:

Is this producing readers?

This is not a critique of individual marketers. Many are skilled, conscientious, and genuinely invested in their clients' success. The problem is not intent. It's insulation. When the financial consequences of failure are borne almost entirely by one side, feedback becomes muted.

Incentives don't need to be malicious to be distorting. They only need to be uneven.

In business-to-business environments, this kind of imbalance is difficult to sustain. Clients eventually demand performance-based arrangements, shared risk, or clear exit criteria. Not because they are adversarial, but because accountability sharpens decisions. When both sides feel the outcome, both sides pay attention to what actually works.

Publishing has largely avoided this reckoning.

Part of the reason is cultural. Writing is still treated as a passion first and a profession second. Authors are expected to be grateful for any attention, tolerant of uncertainty, and patient with systems that rarely explain themselves. Marketing, by contrast, is treated as specialized labor—technical, time-consuming, and therefore deserving of guaranteed compensation.

The asymmetry is subtle but powerful.

Authors supply the product, assume the risk, and absorb the disappointment. Marketers supply the process, receive payment, and move on. When this cycle repeats across thousands of authors, it creates an environment where failure feels personal rather than structural.

If your book doesn't sell, the implication is often that you misjudged its appeal, its positioning, or your persistence. Rarely is the question asked whether the system itself is optimized for anyone other than those who charge within it.

This is where clarity becomes uncomfortable.

Because once you see that fees are protected while outcomes are optional, it becomes difficult to argue that the system is designed primarily to serve authors—or readers, for that matter. It serves continuity. It sustains itself by normalizing risk asymmetry and dressing it in the language of opportunity.

That doesn't make it immoral.

But it does make it fragile.

Systems that survive by shifting risk downward eventually encounter resistance—not from anger, but from arithmetic. From authors who run out of runway. From retirees who can't subsidize uncertainty indefinitely. From creators who value their work too much to treat it as an endless experiment.

This is the point at which new questions emerge. Not tactical questions, but structural ones.

What would change if marketing partners shared in uncertainty instead of being shielded from it? What would happen if compensation followed readers rather than activity? How differently would campaigns be designed if success were not optional?

These are not rhetorical questions. They are design questions.

And once you begin asking them, the traditional model starts to feel less like an inevitability and more like a habit—one that has gone unexamined for far too long.

The purpose of this chapter is not to dismantle marketing.

It's to prepare the ground for alignment.

Because before any alternative can be proposed, the existing structure must be seen clearly—not as a collection of individual choices, but as a system doing exactly what it was built to do.

And systems, once recognized, can be redesigned.

Chapter 4 - Why I'd Give Away 100% of My Royalties

At first glance, the idea sounds unreasonable.

Why would an author—particularly one on a fixed income—offer to give away all of their royalties? Why surrender the only guaranteed return in an already uncertain endeavor?

Those questions are natural. They're also revealing.

They assume that royalties are the reward for writing, rather than the residue of a system that rarely aligns effort with outcome. They assume that protecting a percentage is more rational than designing a partnership that produces readers. And they assume that certainty, even when small, is preferable to risk, even when shared.

I no longer believe those assumptions hold.

The proposal to give away 100 percent of my royalties did not emerge from frustration or bravado. It emerged from a simple design problem: how to align incentives so that everyone involved is working toward the same result.

If readers appear, everyone benefits.

If readers don't, no one is rewarded for motion alone.

That's the entire logic.

Under traditional arrangements, marketing partners are paid to try. Under my proposal, they are paid only if the work succeeds. The difference is not semantic—it's structural. It moves marketing from a service to a partnership, from an expense to an investment.

For a limited, agreed-upon period—say, one year—I would willingly step aside from royalty income entirely. Not because I believe my work has no value, but because I believe its value is best demonstrated through readership rather than percentages.

This is not charity. It's leverage.

By removing my own claim on royalties temporarily, I create room for a different kind of relationship—one in which the marketer has a direct stake in outcomes rather than activity. Decisions become sharper. Waste becomes visible. Effort gravitates toward what produces readers, not reports.

In such a model, marketing becomes selective by necessity. No one would agree to promote a book they didn't believe in, or a strategy they couldn't defend. That selectivity is a feature, not a drawback. It replaces persuasion with conviction.

Critics might argue that this shifts too much risk onto the author. But the truth is that authors already bear nearly all the risk. The difference here is that risk is acknowledged, named, and shared. The marketer's time and capital are now exposed alongside the author's work.

That changes behavior.

It also changes the conversation. Instead of asking, “How much should I budget?” the question becomes, “Is this book worth betting on?” Instead of discussing monthly fees, the focus shifts to reader acquisition, retention, and momentum. The metric that matters—actual readers—moves to the center where it belongs.

There is another, quieter reason for this proposal.

After publishing more than 160 books, I no longer need to prove that I can write. What I care about now is whether the work finds its audience. Royalties are a proxy for that, not the goal itself. If giving them up temporarily creates a structure that produces readers, then the trade is rational.

And it is temporary.

The intent is not permanent surrender, but renegotiation. If a partnership succeeds—if readers appear, if momentum builds, if value is clearly created—then a more balanced arrangement becomes not only possible, but obvious. A 50-50 split no longer sounds idealistic. It sounds fair.

What’s important here is not the percentage, but the progression. Risk first. Proof next. Equity after.

This approach does something else that traditional marketing arrangements rarely do: it filters seriousness. Only partners confident in their ability to produce results would consider it. Only authors confident in their work would offer it. Everyone else is spared a costly mismatch.

In that sense, the proposal is modest indeed. It asks nothing extraordinary of either party—only that both believe enough in the outcome to stake something real on it.

When people hear “100 percent of royalties,” they often focus on what’s being given up. What matters more is what’s being invited: accountability, alignment, and a shared definition of success.

Readers.

That is the currency that makes everything else possible. And if a temporary surrender of royalties is what it takes to bring readers into the equation honestly, then the proposal is not reckless at all.

It is simply logical.

Chapter 5 - 160+ Books and Why I'm Still Here

Volume changes perspective.

When you've published one book, everything feels personal. Each review matters. Each sale feels symbolic. Each setback feels like a verdict. You wonder whether the work is good enough, whether the timing is wrong, whether persistence will eventually be rewarded.

When you've published ten, patterns begin to appear.

When you've published more than 160, something else happens entirely. You stop confusing validation with value. You stop chasing explanations for every fluctuation. And you stop mistaking endurance for stubbornness.

At that scale, continuation becomes a choice rather than a reflex.

I didn't arrive at this number by accident, nor did I arrive at it chasing trends. I wrote because writing was the most honest way I knew to think. I published because publishing was how those thoughts were shared. Some books found readers quickly. Others found them slowly. Some may still be waiting.

That's not a complaint. It's a description.

Along the way, I gave away more than a thousand copies—sometimes deliberately, sometimes pragmatically, sometimes simply because it felt right. I did not do this as a marketing tactic. I did it because the work mattered to me, and because withholding it in the name of artificial scarcity felt wrong.

What that experience taught me was unexpected.

Giving books away does not guarantee readers.

Neither does charging for them.

What creates readers is resonance—the moment when a voice, an idea, or a story meets someone at exactly the right point in their own thinking. No amount of optimization can manufacture that moment. At best, marketing can make the meeting possible.

That distinction becomes clearer the longer you stay.

At this point, I don't continue because I'm chasing success as it's commonly defined. I continue because writing has become a long conversation—with readers I know, readers I haven't met yet, and sometimes with myself. The catalog is not a ladder. It's a landscape.

Some people hear "160 books" and assume ambition. Others assume compulsion. What it actually represents is commitment without urgency. I am not racing toward a finish line. I am building something that accumulates meaning over time.

That's why the proposal in the previous chapter is not a gamble.

It's informed consent.

I know what it takes to keep going. I know what it feels like to publish into silence. I know the difference between being visible and being read. And I know that I would rather redesign the conditions

of discovery than continue repeating rituals that produce motion without momentum.

If I were early in my publishing life, this proposal might sound reckless. At this stage, it sounds responsible.

Because staying this long teaches you what doesn't matter.

It teaches you that algorithms change, platforms shift, and strategies decay. It teaches you that bursts of attention fade, but thoughtful readers return. And it teaches you that dignity—creative and economic—comes not from guarding small certainties, but from choosing structures that reflect your values.

I'm still here because the work still feels alive. Because the questions keep changing. Because there is still something to say—not loudly, but clearly.

And because after writing this much, I no longer feel obligated to pretend that persistence alone is the problem.

The problem is not that authors don't try hard enough.

The problem is that the systems surrounding them rarely try differently.

Staying long enough to see that distinction is a privilege. Acting on it is a responsibility.

That is why I'm still here.

Chapter 6 - Why 85% for Marketing Undervalues Authors

There is a number that circulates quietly in publishing conversations.

Sometimes it's spoken plainly. Sometimes it's implied through layered fees, bundled services, or "all-in" packages. However it appears, the effect is the same: by the time the math is finished, the author retains a surprisingly small share of the value their work generates.

In some arrangements, marketing claims as much as eighty-five percent of the proceeds.

This is usually justified as necessary. Marketing is framed as expensive, technical, labor-intensive, and risky. Writing, by contrast, is treated as already done—sunk cost, completed effort, creative impulse. The labor of authorship is acknowledged rhetorically but discounted economically.

The imbalance is rarely challenged because it has become normalized.

But normalization does not make it reasonable.

When marketing absorbs the majority of value, it implicitly reclassifies the author's role. The writer becomes a content supplier rather than a principal contributor. The book becomes raw material. The intellectual labor—the years of thinking, drafting, revising, and committing—is treated as antecedent rather than foundational.

This framing distorts priorities.

Marketing is important, but it is not generative. It does not create meaning. It does not produce stories, insights, or voices. It amplifies what already exists. When amplification is rewarded more generously than creation, something essential has gone out of balance.

The justification often rests on risk. Marketing, we are told, must be paid generously because success is uncertain. But uncertainty does not automatically confer primacy. If anything, it argues for alignment, not extraction. Risk shared is risk managed. Risk isolated is risk exploited—whether intentionally or not.

Consider what happens when marketing claims the lion's share of proceeds. The marketer is incentivized to prioritize volume over fit, reach over resonance, activity over intimacy. The author, meanwhile, is pressured to accept unfavorable terms because visibility has been positioned as a privilege rather than a partnership.

Readers are the quiet casualties of this arrangement.

When marketing is optimized for spend rather than belief, books are promoted because they exist, not because they matter. Campaigns scale, but conviction thins. Attention is captured briefly,

then released. The reader becomes a metric rather than a participant in a conversation.

None of this requires bad faith. It requires only momentum.

Once a system begins rewarding one form of labor disproportionately, it reinforces itself. Prices rise. Expectations adjust. Authors are told this is simply “how it works.” The longer the pattern persists, the harder it becomes to imagine alternatives.

But alternatives exist.

The first step is acknowledging that authorship is not a passive input. It is the central act. Without the book, there is nothing to market. Without the voice, there is nothing to amplify. Without the work, there is no system at all.

Recognizing this does not diminish marketing’s role. It contextualizes it.

An author is not a client to be billed down. An author is a partner whose contribution precedes—and enables—everything else. Any arrangement that treats the author’s share as residual rather than primary has already answered the question of whose value it prioritizes.

Eighty-five percent for marketing is not a reflection of effort.

It is a reflection of leverage.

And leverage, when left unexamined, becomes entitlement.

This chapter is not an argument against marketers. It is an argument for proportion. For recognizing that the labor of creation deserves not just praise, but parity. That the person who brings the work into being should not be left negotiating from the margins of its success.

Once that principle is accepted, the path forward becomes clearer.

If authorship is foundational rather than incidental, then the economic structure surrounding it must change accordingly. Not dramatically. Not vindictively. Simply fairly.

That is where the next chapter begins.

Chapter 7 - The 50–50 Future

Once imbalance is recognized, the instinct is often to overcorrect.

That's not what I'm proposing here.

The case for a fifty–fifty partnership between author and marketer is not an appeal to fairness in the abstract. It's an argument for stability. For a structure in which both parties are rewarded in proportion to their contribution and exposed in proportion to their risk.

Fifty–fifty is not a moral gesture.

It's a design solution.

In such a model, the author brings the work: the voice, the ideas, the accumulated labor that cannot be outsourced or replicated. The marketer brings belief, strategy, capital, and execution. Neither role is incidental. Neither role is dominant. Each depends on the other for success.

This balance does something important: it re-centers the relationship on outcome rather than effort.

When both sides benefit equally from success, decisions change. Books are chosen more carefully. Strategies are defended more rigorously. Waste becomes intolerable. Momentum matters because it belongs to everyone involved.

Contrast this with the current norm, where imbalance is often justified as realism. Authors are told that giving up the majority of value is simply the price of access. Marketers are told that guaranteed compensation is necessary because outcomes are uncertain.

But uncertainty does not disappear in a fifty-fifty model. It is acknowledged—and shared.

That sharing is the point.

A fifty-fifty partnership does not guarantee success. Nothing can. What it guarantees is alignment. When both parties feel the upside and the downside equally, there is no incentive to confuse activity with progress. There is no comfort in motion without meaning.

It also changes how success is measured.

In a balanced model, impressions lose their allure. Vanity metrics fade. What matters is whether readers appear, stay, and return. What matters is whether a book finds not just an audience, but a community of attention.

This is healthier for authors, but it is also healthier for marketers.

Under the current system, marketers are often asked to defend results they cannot fully control, while being insulated from the consequences of failure. This creates pressure without ownership—a frustrating position for skilled professionals who care about their craft.

A fifty-fifty model restores dignity to marketing by tying it directly to belief. If you're willing to share in the outcome, you're also empowered to say no—to books you don't believe in, strategies you can't defend, or timelines that don't make sense.

That selectivity improves the ecosystem for everyone.

It's worth noting that this model is not unprecedented. In other creative industries, revenue-sharing arrangements are common. Agents, managers, producers—many work on percentage precisely because it aligns incentives. Publishing's resistance to this logic is not principled. It's habitual.

Habits persist until alternatives prove viable.

That is why the earlier proposal—giving away one hundred percent of royalties temporarily—is not a contradiction of this chapter, but a bridge to it. Risk first. Proof next. Equity after. The path matters as much as the destination.

Fifty-fifty is not where you begin when trust is absent.

It's where you arrive when trust has been earned.

The future I'm describing does not require regulation, platforms, or sweeping reform. It requires individual authors and marketers to ask a simple question before entering into partnership:

Are we willing to succeed—or fail—together?

If the answer is yes, the math becomes straightforward. If the answer is no, no amount of optimization will compensate for that misalignment.

This is not a call for confrontation. It's a call for courage—the quiet kind that chooses balance over familiarity, and partnership over precedent.

The next chapter widens the lens one final time. To understand why this idea feels radical in publishing, it helps to look at a field where it doesn't feel radical at all.

Chapter 8 - Why Athletes Aren't Asked to Give Up Their Value

There is a useful thought experiment when trying to understand distorted systems.

You take an assumption that feels normal in one context and place it, unchanged, into another. If it suddenly sounds absurd, the problem is not the assumption's clarity—but its original acceptance.

Consider professional sports.

An athlete trains for years, often decades. Their performance is uncertain. Injury is always possible. Results are never guaranteed. Careers can end abruptly and without warning. And yet, despite all this uncertainty, athletes are rarely asked to surrender the majority of the value they create in exchange for promotion.

No one tells a professional athlete, “First, give up most of your earnings. Once we see how popular you become, we’ll talk about fairness.”

The idea would be laughed out of the room.

Instead, the opposite is true. Agents, managers, sponsors, and leagues align themselves around the athlete's value. They earn percentages. They invest resources. They take risks—but they do so because the athlete's contribution is understood to be primary.

The athlete is not treated as content.

The athlete is treated as the event.

This distinction matters.

In sports, promotion exists to amplify performance, not replace it. Marketing follows excellence; it does not justify extracting it. When success occurs, the athlete's share is not considered negotiable—it is foundational.

Publishing tells a different story.

In publishing, authors are often treated as hopeful entrants rather than principal contributors. Their work is framed as abundant, replaceable, and speculative. Marketing is positioned as the true differentiator, the gatekeeper of success, the mechanism through which value is supposedly created.

But marketing does not create the book any more than advertising creates athletic ability.

It reveals. It amplifies. It accelerates.

The underlying value must already exist.

The reason this comparison feels uncomfortable is not because it's inaccurate, but because publishing has normalized a different hierarchy. One in which creation is emotionally celebrated but economically minimized. One in which authors are encouraged to be grateful for exposure rather than compensated for contribution.

This hierarchy did not emerge because authors are less valuable than athletes. It emerged because authors are more isolated.

Athletes operate within visible systems. Their performance is public. Their value is measurable. Their leverage is collective. Authors, by contrast, work alone, negotiate alone, and fail alone. Their labor is dispersed across time, and their results are fragmented across platforms.

Isolation weakens leverage.

And where leverage is weak, imbalance persists.

The sports analogy is not about glamorizing authorship or suggesting that writing should mirror athletics in every respect. It is about reminding us that uncertainty does not justify dispossession. Risk does not require surrender. And contribution does not lose its worth simply because outcomes are unpredictable.

If anything, uncertainty should encourage partnership rather than extraction.

When an athlete succeeds, many benefit—but no one questions that the athlete deserves their share first. When an author succeeds, the benefits are often distributed widely, while the author is invited to be satisfied with the experience.

That inversion is not inevitable. It is cultural.

And cultures change when their assumptions are examined side by side with alternatives that make more sense.

The question, then, is not why authors aren't treated like athletes. The question is why we've accepted a system that pretends they shouldn't be.

Once that question is asked honestly, it becomes difficult to defend arrangements that treat writing as a speculative hobby rather than

a central act of creation. It becomes difficult to justify models that reward amplification more generously than authorship.

And it becomes easier to imagine a publishing ecosystem in which value flows toward the work first—and outward from there.

This is not envy.

It's perspective.

And perspective, once gained, rarely leaves quietly.

Chapter 9 - An Invitation, Not a Pitch

By this point, it should be clear what this book is not.

It is not a demand for attention.

It is not a complaint disguised as theory.

It is not an attempt to recruit agreement through urgency.

What it offers instead is an invitation—to think differently about how value is created, shared, and sustained in publishing.

An invitation does not insist. It does not persuade by force. It simply opens a door and makes clear who is welcome to walk through it.

This proposal is not for everyone.

It is not for authors who are comfortable treating marketing as an endless experiment, regardless of cost. It is not for marketers who prefer guaranteed compensation over shared accountability. And it is not for systems that depend on imbalance to function smoothly.

It is for people who believe that alignment matters.

For authors who want readers more than validation, and partnerships more than promises. For marketers who believe in their ability to produce outcomes and are willing to be judged by them. For readers who sense—perhaps without naming it—that something in the current ecosystem feels misproportioned.

Most of all, it is for those who are willing to replace habit with intention.

Nothing in this book requires confrontation. It requires clarity. The clarity to ask whether the structures we've accepted actually serve the people they depend on. The clarity to recognize that fairness is not a sentimental ideal, but a practical one. And the clarity to understand that when systems fail repeatedly, the problem is rarely effort—it is design.

This is why the proposal is modest.

It does not seek to overhaul publishing. It does not call for regulation or reform. It simply suggests that when authors and marketers succeed together, they should also risk together—and that when value is created, it should be shared proportionally.

That idea is not radical.

It is merely unfamiliar in this context.

If this way of thinking resonates, you don't need convincing. You already feel the friction it addresses. You've likely encountered it in your own work, perhaps without language for it. This book exists to offer that language—not as doctrine, but as a starting point.

If it does not resonate, nothing is lost. The system will continue to operate as it always has, sustained by momentum and expectation. No argument here seeks to interrupt that.

An invitation, after all, respects refusal.

What matters is that alternatives are named. That silence does not masquerade as consensus. And that those who are inclined to try something different know they are not alone in their thinking.

If this book has done its job, it has not persuaded you of anything new. It has simply clarified something you already suspected: that readers matter more than metrics, that partnership matters more than process, and that fairness—quietly, persistently—has a way of asserting itself.

The door is open.

What happens next depends not on enthusiasm, but on alignment.

And alignment, once chosen, tends to speak for itself.

Epilogue - What I Hope Happens Next

I didn't write this book to end a conversation.

I wrote it because a conversation had been missing.

For years, I sensed a quiet tension in publishing—one that didn't announce itself as conflict, but as fatigue. Authors tired of trying harder without understanding why effort didn't translate into readers. Marketers tired of defending processes that felt increasingly detached from outcomes. Readers overwhelmed by abundance, unsure where to place their attention.

Everyone moving.

No one quite arriving.

What I hope happens next is modest.

I hope authors feel a little less alone when they question arrangements that don't sit right with them. I hope they recognize that skepticism is not ingratitude, and that wanting alignment is not the same as wanting guarantees.

I hope marketers feel invited—not accused—to imagine partnerships built on shared belief rather than protected distance. I hope some of them read these pages and think, Yes, that’s the kind of work I want to do.

And I hope readers continue to do what they’ve always done when something resonates: pause, reflect, and follow curiosity rather than noise.

I don’t expect systems to change overnight. Most don’t. They change because individuals quietly try something different, discover that it works better, and repeat it often enough that habit gives way to intention.

If this book does anything at all, I hope it gives language to instincts people already had but hadn’t yet named. Language has a way of making the invisible visible—and once something is visible, it can be chosen or refused with clarity.

Nothing proposed here requires permission.

It requires only honesty about what matters, and patience with the work of aligning means with ends.

The rest will take care of itself.

If this argument resonates—or provokes—I welcome thoughtful replies.
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