



# IS THIS A PUBLISHING SCAM?

## Quick Author Reality Check

Print this. Keep it beside your laptop. Use it before you reply to any flattering email.

### 1) THE MONEY DIRECTION TEST

- ☐ They want me to pay to be published
- ☐ They call it an investment, contribution, or publishing fee
- ☐ They require a marketing package to move forward
- ☐ They charge for distribution or bookstore placement
- ☐ They suggest I buy my own books to boost sales
- ☐ They promise guaranteed sales or ROI

If any box is checked: You are the customer, not the author they want to publish.

### 2) BOOK CLUB FEATURE REALITY CHECK

- ☐ They charge a small processing fee to share my book
- ☐ They charge to create discussion questions
- ☐ They charge to host an author Q and A
- ☐ They guarantee a number of readers or reviews
- ☐ They say payment is required to be considered
- ☐ They cannot explain how books are chosen without mentioning money

Truth: Real book clubs read books. They do not send invoices.

### 3) LANGUAGE THAT SHOULD TRIGGER YOUR ALARM

- ☐ Guaranteed bestseller
- ☐ Guaranteed reviews
- ☐ Limited spots or offer expires soon
- ☐ We discovered you with no specifics
- ☐ Processing fee for basic tasks
- ☐ We will handle everything with no details
- ☐ Traditional publishing opportunity with fees

### 4) CONTRACT AND RIGHTS RED FLAGS

- ☐ No clear list of services and timelines
- ☐ No termination clause
- ☐ They want broad rights for a long time
- ☐ They control pricing and I cannot change it
- ☐ They own the ISBN or files
- ☐ Pressure to sign quickly

### 5) QUESTIONS THAT SEPARATE LEGIT FROM NOPE

- 1 What is the total cost to the author, including all required fees?
- 2 How do you make money from readers instead of writers?
- 3 Can I speak to authors you did not select?
- 4 What happens if I decline paid add-ons?
- 5 Who owns the ISBN and the rights?

### 6) YOUR TWO-STEP SAFETY MOVE

- 1 Pause for 24 hours before replying.
- 2 Search the company name + scam, complaints, Writer Beware.

Bottom Line: If it starts with flattery and ends with an invoice, it is a scam in a party hat.

Created by TracieJoy.com

# LEGIT PUBLISHING VS PAID SERVICES

## TRADITIONAL PUBLISHING

- 1 Publisher pays the author
- 2 Advance and royalties
- 3 No required fees
- 4 Publisher invests in editing and cover
- 5 Clear contract and rights
- 6 Bookstores reached through the publisher

## ETHICAL SELF-PUBLISHING COSTS

- 1 Hiring an editor you choose
- 2 Hiring a cover designer you choose
- 3 Formatting services you choose
- 4 Advertising you choose
- 5 You keep your rights
- 6 You can walk away anytime

## VANITY OR SCAM PUBLISHING

- 1 Required publishing packages
- 2 Pay to be considered
- 3 Guaranteed results
- 4 Pressure deadlines
- 5 Vague marketing promises
- 6 Rights grabs
- 7 Book club or review fees

## REAL BOOK CLUB FACTS

- 1 Clubs are groups of readers
- 2 Books are chosen by interest
- 3 Authors may be invited, not charged
- 4 Discussion questions are free
- 5 Enthusiasm cannot be purchased





## **BEFORE YOU SIGN ANYTHING**

- 1 Read every line of the contract
- 2 Get a second opinion
- 3 Never pay for guaranteed reviews
- 4 Never pay a book club
- 5 Trust slow decisions

## **REMEMBER**

Your book has value without an invoice attached. Real readers do not come with price tags.

Share this checklist with a writer who needs scam repellent.