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The Mystery Novel KDP Launch Checklist

An exclusive Pickzox bonus for CaseBound buyers — from finished manuscript to a live book on Amazon

Exclusive Pickzox bonus companion to the CaseBound review.

What this is: CaseBound gets you to a finished first draft. This checklist gets you from that draft to a *published book* — the step most "AI book" products skip entirely. Work it top to bottom; check each box before moving to the next phase.

Phase 1: Manuscript QC (after CaseBound, before anything else)

☐ **Full read-through in a different format.** Export the draft and read it on an e-reader or printed — errors hide on the screen you wrote on.

☐ **AI-tell editing pass.** Search for and rewrite the classic AI fingerprints: excessive em dashes, "It's important to note that," "delve," "tapestry," "In the world of…," characters nodding/smiling knowingly every page, and summaries that repeat the chapter instead of advancing it. (CaseBound Master buyers: run the Fieldwork Line Edit first, then do this pass by hand anyway.)

☐ **Continuity check.** Re-verify names, eye colors, timelines and clue placements against your case file and the Fair-Play Clue Ledger. (Master buyers: run Fieldwork Continuity too.)

☐ **Opening 10% polish.** Amazon's "Look Inside" shows roughly the first 10% — that sample sells or kills the book. Rewrite the opening chapters until they are the strongest in the book.

☐ **Beta readers (2–3 minimum).** Ask each one: *who did you suspect, and when?* If nobody was misled, your red herrings need work. If the ending felt unfair, your clues need earlier placement.

☐ **Professional proofread.** At minimum, a proofreader — not just spellcheck. Budget $200–$500 for a novel-length manuscript.

☐ Final word count recorded: _____ (novels: 50,000+; cozy mysteries commonly 60,000–80,000)

Phase 2: Amazon AI-Content Disclosure (do not skip)

Amazon KDP requires you to disclose AI-generated content. The rules are short and the consequences of ignoring them are real.

☐ **Understand the two categories.** Amazon distinguishes *AI-generated* (you prompted an AI and it created text/images) from *AI-assisted* (you wrote it, AI helped refine). Know which applies to each part of your book — for a CaseBound book, the drafted chapters are AI-generated; your revisions are AI-assisted.

☐ **Answer the KDP disclosure question honestly** when setting up the title. It asks directly whether AI was used — answer truthfully.

☐ **Cover art:** if any cover element is AI-generated, that counts too — disclose it.

☐ **Keep records.** Save your CaseBound project files, draft versions and revision notes. If Amazon ever queries the book, you want a paper trail showing a genuine authorial process.

☐ **Do not attempt to hide AI involvement.** Accounts have been terminated for misrepresentation. Disclosure does not hurt sales; getting caught lying ends your publishing business.

Note: Amazon updates these rules periodically — re-check KDP's current help pages before you hit publish.

Phase 3: Title Setup (KDP dashboard)

☐ **Pen-name Amazon account** created (use a dedicated email; keep personal and pen-name accounts' tax/bank details consistent and legal).

☐ **Title and subtitle.** Subtitle carries keywords: e.g. *A Murder in Tanner's Lane: A Cozy Historical Mystery* — subgenre words in the subtitle are searchable.

☐ **The 7-keyword strategy for mysteries.** You get 7 keyword slots (up to 50 characters each). Use them for buyer search phrases, not single words: "cozy mystery series," "historical mystery novel," "amateur sleuth whodunit," "small town murder mystery," "clean cozy crime fiction," plus 2 setting/era phrases (e.g. "1920s scotland mystery," "victorian london detective").

☐ **Categories.** Choose 2–3 precise BISAC/KDP categories (e.g. Mystery > Cozy, Mystery > Historical) rather than broad "Fiction" — you can rank in a small category; you cannot rank in a giant one.

☐ **Book description (blurb).** 150–200 words, HTML-formatted (bold the hook line, short paragraphs). Formula: intriguing hook → stakes → the detective → the question, ending on an unanswered question. No spoilers past chapter 3.

☐ **Pricing.** $2.99–$9.99 earns 70% royalties (exclusive of delivery costs); outside that band earns 35%. Most indie cozy mysteries launch at $2.99–$4.99. Enroll in KDP Select only if you want Kindle Unlimited page-read income — it requires 90-day

exclusivity.

☐ **Editorial reviews section.** Paste 1–3 short beta-reader or advance-review quotes.

Phase 4: Cover & Interior

☐ **Cover designed for thumbnail size.** 90% of buyers see your cover as a small thumbnail — test it at 120px wide. Title readable? Genre instantly clear (cozy = bright/illustrated; noir = dark/moody)? Author name visible?

☐ **Cover specs:** 2560 × 1600 px minimum recommended, JPEG/TIFF, no bleed issues.

☐ **Interior formatted.** Clean chapter headings, consistent scene breaks, front matter (title page, copyright with AI disclosure if your policy includes it, dedication) and back matter (also-by page, mailing-list signup, preview of book 2).

☐ **Back-matter CTA.** Every book ends with: a link to your mailing list, a request for an honest review, and a teaser for the next book. Series sell; standalones struggle.

Phase 5: ARC Team & Launch Week

☐ **ARC team assembled (10–30 readers).** Mystery reader groups on Facebook, Reddit r/CozyMystery, or your own list. Send the book 2 weeks before launch with a polite review request (never pay for reviews, never require 5 stars).

☐ **Launch-week checklist:** publish date set → ARC reminders sent → announcement to your list → 2–3 social posts (cover reveal graphic, "why I wrote this," launch-day post) → price set for launch (consider $0.99 launch-week price, then raise).

☐ **Also-bought seeding.** The first 48 hours matter most: every sale and also-bought click trains Amazon's recommendation engine. Drive your warmest traffic (list, ARC team, social) in that window.

Phase 6: The 30-Day Post-Launch Timeline

Week	Focus
1	Launch push: list, ARCs, social. Watch also-boughts forming. Fix any formatting complaints within 24 hours.
2	First AMS/KDP ads test ($5/day, exact-match keywords from your 7 slots). Collect early reviews — reply to none publicly, note feedback privately.
3	Evaluate: conversion rate, ad spend vs. royalties. If the book converts, raise the ad

budget; if not, fix the cover/blurb before spending more.

4 — Plan book 2. In mystery, the series is the business model — a standalone rarely sustains ads. Start the next case file in CaseBound now.

Realistic expectations (read this twice)

A first novel from a new pen name typically sells modestly — the vendor's own six books did 144 copies and ~$280 in royalties in their first weeks, and he presents that as a *good* result. That is the honest baseline. Books 2 and 3, a mailing list, and consistent publishing are what compound into real income. Anyone promising otherwise is selling you something.

Created exclusively for Pickzox readers. Pair with the Fair-Play Clue Ledger Workbook for the writing phase.