Proofing Sucks - but we've got a book!

I don't know how, but proofing the paperback for Whiskey Dogs was a literal nightmare this time.



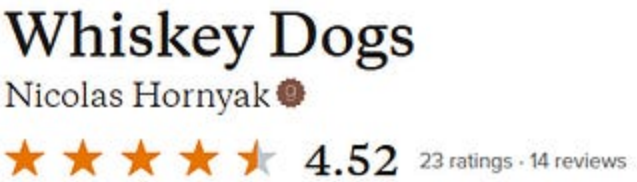
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When I started getting the ducks together for Whiskey Dogs, I knew that, unlike my last two novels, I would primarily focus on getting this story out there. Trying to release a physical book would've slowed me down; it's been almost a decade since I did it!

So Whiskey Dogs released, exclusively on Kindle.

To tell the truth, I lasted about a week before deciding that yes, it deserved to be in paperback, but it was certainly better than trying to do both at once.

Now we're a month and a half out, and here's what people are thinking about the book:



Goodreads with 4.52 stars, and the rating pops up next to the Amazon listing now too! Thank you so much!



Amazon! Where did all 18 of you come from?!

Amazon with 4.6 stars, and more reviewers than I honestly expected when I decided to start publishing again this year. Thank you everybody!

Every week, I check casually, and there's a few more reviews. And we're holding steading in that 4.5 zone, where people are actually reading it, and it's not perfect, but it's pretty damn good. Thank you to everyone who's checked it out so far, and BIG thank you to everyone who took time to review it too!

Paperback Woes

That took me into July, and a quick foray to Philadelphia for a vacation during the Fourth of July weekend. (Shout out to D.C. 33 for the trash strike, the Parker piles were a small price to pay for what you're rightfully due!)

Afterwards, I opened Word, got to work with the templates, and immediately ran into problems.

Something I do regret is not learning InDesign in school when I had the chance, but in nobody's defense, I'm not paying Adobe a cent of my own money for these outrageous subscription fees. Give me Inkscape. Give me GIMP. And next time we do this, I'll be picking up Affinity Publisher.

Anyway.

I thought it'd be as simple as I felt it was for *Aimless Sky* and *The Phoenix Express*. I have such a critical eye for detail, which is the reason

those books look really, really professional while reading.

But then the first proof came.

The margins were *all* wrong. The headers and page numbers were crammed right next to the text.

Okay. Easy fix. It was a side effect of working this out on the computer.

Then the second proof came.

The printer managed to warp the cover art, so it had an odd white stripe at the top. Manufacturer error, perhaps in part because we're ordering a single proof from the nearest available printer. (Fun fact: I got two proofs that were printed in North Haven, CT. The one with the cover art issue was from Middletown, DE.)

I would've been okay at that point, except...I noticed something.

Justification errors. Visually, it would look like a paragraph ended, but then the following line didn't have an indent.

I knew where this came from. In trying to assemble the pages, avoid orphans and widows, and wrestle with Word on what were frankly some completely obtuse style challenges, these were the paragraphs I'd manually split on my first pass.

Unfortunately, this error was pretty rampant. I did some Google searching, found a means by which to search for them, and implemented the fixes. There was another error popping up too, where maybe two or three words would be justified, making the line look R I D I C U L O U S. Like that. But that was my bad too! I gave Amazon a DOCX file instead of a PDF, so it's coming out different when Amazon processes it. ARGH!

I ordered a third proof.

First random page I opened, bam. Same issues.

Lo, I had to go through my entire book and manually find every single paragraph that did this. The very big and grievous ones. And the ever so tiny ones that only I would notice.

A Humble Request

As of writing, there's nothing more I can spot. I'm fretting that this might be my roughest paperback yet. So I humble ask: if you're reading the physical version, and you notice something? Say something. Leave a comment here. I can always fix it, per the beauty of print-on-demand.

But yes. YES. **WHISKEY DOGS is now AVAILABLE IN PAPERBACK!**

And it looks really good. G&S Cover Design Studio gave me some great guidance. It has an absolutely unhinged tagline on the back too. *(Sex work is work. Magic is real. And he's about to bite back.)* I really look forward to signing a couple of copies in the near future.

I do not look forward to proofing the next book. Such is the way of it, though.

"Bro, why is this book fifteen bucks?" - my sister, probably

No lie, I clicked the Publish button, saw the pricing I assigned to it, and bugged out for a moment though. I had to go digging back to why I priced it like that.

As it turns out, the royalty rate is calculated before printing costs. With every copy costing $5.15 to print, you'd think I'd be taking 60% of $9.84,

which comes out to $5.90.

Nah. They calculate 60% of $14.99, which is $8.99, and THEN they subtract the printing costs. So $8.99 - $5.15 = $3.84.

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...

Y'all remember when Jodie Foster in Contact called math the only true universal language?

It's probably also the only true universal weapon.

Damn self-publishers. They ruined self-publishing.

Back to more about why we're at $14.99, I did question if this threw me into the higher end of the paperback market now. Turns out, I've landed at the *lower* end.

This is a great article about Why Are Paperback Books So Expensive that describes the issue from multiple angles: the shift from mass market to trade paperbacks, the rise in paper costs since 2020, hidden costs of publishing, etc. As of the time of this post, it's only a couple of weeks old. It's extremely relevant.

In a peculiar turn of events, my royalty for an ebook is $3.44. Only four dimes lower than the paperback.

We'll see if keeping it below the average price of a paperback (currently $15.99 - $18.99) makes a difference.

Ah, the life of an artist.

To Do

I have been working so hard on this proof for a physical copy of Whiskey Dogs that most everything else has fallen to the wayside. I wish I could share something exciting besides how many great reviews/ratings it has, but I'm overdue for some marketing courses and need to fix my ad campaigns. That's my focus heading into August.

Speaking of which, I'll be at Flame Con on August 16-17 in New York! I'm only attending, but I just heard something about this Queer Little Library thing they do, and you know how much I love seeding little libraries with something special. :D

A release of *Shepherding Butterflies to the Land of the Dead,* be it a freebie or printed, is still in consideration. No real reason except it'll take time

A release of *Niagara Falls* is still in consideration, primarily because commissioning cover art will be a new ballgame if I need to refresh the cover of *Aimless Sky* too. This may be my autumn project, though.

A release of *Human Hawke* can and should happen, but I'm seeking a cover art that evokes illustration, that feels like you're not reading about our own Earth, but some cartoon version.

Writing for the Whiskey Dogs sequel is *all over the place*. I'm skipping to the parts I'm excited about. I'm leaving holes behind. But storywise, I'm scaring the *shit* out of me and my characters. It'll certainly be some time before you see it, but...let's call it **WHISKEY DOWN** and leave the reveal at that, mmk? ;)

Currently Reading

I finished *The JOLT Effect: How High Performers Overcome Customer Indecision* by Matthew Dixon and Ted McKenna. Like most sales books, it's not only a lesson about the people you sell to, but the person who's reading it and will end up doing the selling. My takeaway was that

indecision tends to constitute a second phase of my sales cycles, and that helps me figure out the next move.

Naturally, I finish one sales book, I'm somehow assigned another. I was provided a copy of *The Transparency Sale* by Todd Caponi. I finished it on my work lunches. And let me just say, it compiled a lot of stuff I've learned about B2B sales these past few years. Value selling, sales emails, etc. It was an extremely validating read.

Another book I finished was a re-read of *The Westing Game* by Ellen Raskin, which was one of my middle school curriculum assignments, and given to me right around the time I figured out that writing wasn't merely third-grade cursive lessons. I still greatly enjoyed it, although it's a little more problematic with age.

Somewhere on BlueSky #BookSky, I ran into another indie author name A.C. Harper, and proceeded to read his short story *The Shoreline.* It's *such* a good read about discovering who you are and what the trans experience can be sometimes. Really recommend it if you have a dollar to spare. :)

And lastly, I am currently reading *The Once And Future King* by T.H. White, but so far, um...I'm not getting it. Maybe it starts slow. Or I'm really in the mood for something else. I have *You Only Live Once, David Bravo* by Mark Oshiro calling my name after I found it on a Giovanni's Room excursion down in Philly. Maybe I need to pivot.

[Muffled sounds of gorilla violence]
Nico