

// BOOT SEQUENCE COMPLETE

The Starter Novel

a template you are supposed to break

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COLOR EDITION

Starter Press

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This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and events
are products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously.

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Typeset in L^AT_EX with the **memoir** class.
(Readers who care about this line always look for it here.)

*For everyone who opened a word processor,
sighed, and went looking for something better.*

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BLOG ARCHIVE // tkgpublishing.com // THE WHY

So, You Finished a Book?

SO, YOU finished a book? That's cool. What are you going to do about it? I had the same thought. What *was* I going to do with it? I needed to publish it. But... like... how? I wanted to keep everything in one place, but also, I didn't want the writing to stop with my first novel, or my forthcoming titles after it. I didn't (don't) want it to just stop.

After rejection letter number one, and five, and twenty, and a billion, I was starting to get discouraged. Not just discouraged, defeated. The book existed, it was written, it was edited professionally, it was typeset, it was read and reread to ensure the story was just right. I had a beautiful manuscript and no one who wanted to take it. No way to get it out into the world, and more importantly no place to house it.

A traditional publishing option wasn't for me. Self-publishing is a real option. Places like IngramSpark and Amazon's KDP make it a real thing. I will get into the how in another post, but it is enough to say: I founded an LLC.

So, that is the why.

* * *

TKG Publishing is an indie publisher who seeks stories that tell something more than just the words on the page. Whether that is through the prose, the formatting, or the meta narratives, we seek stories. We take risks, and have a firm belief that all stories are worth telling, but TKG Publishing is ambitious in looking for the ones that break the mold. Sometimes that being told part requires some work to get the point of the story right, but a story that says something will move readers.

TKG Publishing, as an indie publisher, is not looking for the hot new trend. We want to publish things that tell the story that wants to be told. Sometimes that *is* something hot, but more often than not it is the thing that is *not* hot.

I founded TKG Publishing on a principle of the love for telling stories. The biggest reason we stick together is through shared stories: a myth everyone understands and accepts as real, within the context it lives in. A series that is beloved. The shared story about capitalism. The shared story of religion. Everything boils down to a shared story, and TKG Publishing wants to seek those stories.

I am here for the stories. So, yes, I am the author and the publisher, but that is what makes me unique. As an author I can seek those stories, instead of just profits. I can find the joy in what is created instead of just the bottom line.

I want to help people find that reason to write. Sometimes that isn't about what is going to get that publishing deal with that big publishing company. Sometimes that just means sitting down and writing what *you* want to write. So, go, write something, *anything*. Stop seeking permission for your writing to exist in the world and forge your own path to *make* it exist in the world.

TKG Publishing believes in stories.

As a result, the best publishing company reviewed and approved my first novel. No rejection letters, no *well this won't sell right now*. And the reason why it's the best? Because it's mine.

So, you wrote a book? That's cool. Go make it exist.

@tkgpublishing

pinned

Looking for an editor? Mine was wonderful — Odessa Taylor: <https://odessataylor.journoportfolio.com/>

BLOG ARCHIVE // tkgpublishing.com // TYPESETTING (1/2)

How the Hell Do You Typeset?

PROGRAMMER AND educator by trade — ironic for owning a publishing company, I know. But I did find a solution, and it was unique to me. L^AT_EX! But let me give you some background so the payoff is worth it.

I finished my first novel and then looked at the document and thought, “this is a complete mess.” I spent days wrestling with Word. Then I switched over to Google Docs and struggled there to get my book to look even presentable. I was lost. What is a gutter? How do I space lines to not look like the words are all just a single block of black ink on the page? Who programmed these tools?

Frustrated, defeated, and all around dejected, I resigned myself that my story was good but in a format that would never reflect that. I searched online for what to do. A lot of sources online suggested I hire a professional typesetter or pay the equivalent of my college loans to *rent* the software to do it. As an indie publisher without a book to be sold, and thus no income, none of these options were viable.

I didn’t even know the term typesetting until very late. Even after founding the publishing company I didn’t know what it meant. It is taking the words that you wrote and setting them on the page intentionally. It is making each page flow and have natural breaking points. Chapters end and the next one starts on a new page. Even small details like header and footer formatting (something that no one thinks about and often doesn’t even look at until it is midnight and they need to know what page they are on).

Typesetting is one of those things that nobody notices until it is *bad*. It is invisible if it is decent or good. But a glaring issue if it is a notch down from that. Your story could be the next number one

book, outselling the Bible, but without correct formatting you are left with a story in a book that can't be read (or at least refuses to be read). And even at its best, poor typesetting can quietly make a book feel cheap.

Tools like Word and Google Docs were mostly made with business suites in mind. You need to create a boring report on the reasons the sun sets? Perfect, you can do that and add a table to it as well. Book setting? Not so much. It *is* possible and is an option, but it wasn't the original purpose.

Vellum and InDesign (the aforementioned software) are programs made for typesetting. They have a bit of a learning curve and a lot of important features are behind a paywall. Hiring a typesetter on Fiverr will most likely use these tools or something similar.

So, no money, a story that was good but looked horrible, I was lost.

Then I remembered something! \LaTeX . I used it in college to do my math homework (and arguably that is what it is intended for (the math part, not necessarily homework)). \LaTeX is a pseudo programming language, but don't let that scare you or force you to stop reading.

Hey, me here from the end of the article. Don't worry, I am providing a solution and a downloadable project for you to use and play with. It is at the end. Okay, keep going.

BLOG ARCHIVE // tkgpublishing.com // TYPESETTING (2/2)

Define Once, Then Just Write

CUSTOM COMMANDS are the payoff. \LaTeX allows you to write your own — small instructions you define once and can reuse to format things exactly how you want them. A drop cap to open a chapter, a unique look for a specific voice, a header that works for you and not against you — you name it once, and it stays that way. AND it allows you to keep things consistent across your series. Like what you did in the first book and want to do the same thing in the second without wrestling a new Word doc? Just copy over the custom commands and use them.

Here is what the “define once” half looks like. This is the hard, ugly part — the upfront cost, paid one time, in one file:

```
% preamble.tex --- define once

\definecolor{sysgreen}{HTML}{3A6A3A} % system voice
\definecolor{dimgray}{HTML}{666666} % timestamps
\definecolor{corrupt}{HTML}{CC3333} % glitch red

\newcommand{\cmdline}[1]{%
  \par\noindent\hspace{1.5em}%
  {\small\ttfamily\bfseries\color{sysgreen}\#1}%
}
\newcommand{\stamp}[1]{%
  \par\noindent\hspace{1.5em}%
  {\small\ttfamily\color{dimgray}\#1}%
}
\newcommand{\syserror}[1]{%
  \par\noindent\hspace{1.5em}%
  {\small\ttfamily\color{corrupt}\#1}%
}
```

And here is the other half. Once those commands exist, the prose stays clean — what follows is real chapter markup, compiled live by this very starter kit’s copies of the same commands:

```
author@localhost> timequery --source ntp --verbose
16:38:59
```

I keep typing the command, my panic slowly starting to boil back up. The time service is giving inconsistent answers. This makes no sense. I ask it one more time.

```
author@localhost> timequery --source ntp --verbose
Error 0608: System time unstable. Local device
cannot reconcile with network source.
Please try again later.
```

Now, notice something. The preamble is... confusing and difficult. That *is* the hard part. But the prose? It is just the commands I defined in the preamble. So, once the command is defined, prose becomes simple and clean.

That is why I now write my books directly into L^AT_EX. Define the commands I think I want (and go back to add some when something new comes up), and then... just write.

There is a drawback though. It isn’t just a pull it out of the box and start using it. There are a lot of guides online about L^AT_EX that will get you started, but the same downside of tools like InDesign applies here. Learning. The thing about L^AT_EX is that it is free. You still might find yourself wrestling with formatting at some points, staying up until 3 AM trying to figure out why a single ‘i’ had tipped onto its side. It happens, and it happened to me. But once I got it, I was able to use it for the next book, and the book after that, and... You get it.

* * *

At TKG Publishing we believe in telling stories. Some of those stories extend outside of the words on the page and into how the words play with each other on the page. The formatting of the story can say something as loud as the words themselves. I wanted to be able to typeset my books in a way that allowed that story to be told, and the words to be an extension of that format. L^AT_EX lets me do that, and more.

The sad part of it? No one will notice it. That *is* the point, though. You don't want people to notice it. It hopefully is a subconscious signal to the reader. Certain times of day in my first novel — 11:45 AM, 11:52 AM — are expressly formatted in a separate font from other times. Easy to miss, exactly how I want it. When someone passes those times, I want them to *feel* something, and not even know why.

So, if you are looking to format your book how **you** want it formatted, then think about using L^AT_EX. As promised earlier, there is a zip file with a starter L^AT_EX project for you to download and play with — you are, in fact, holding its output right now. Feel free to mess around, play with it, break things. That is all the point. We are writers and publishers. Part of writing is exploring places people don't normally go. This time, instead of a world that no one has explored, it is a `.tex` file.

```
you@yourmachine> unzip novel-starter.zip
```

```
no better time than now
```

Bottom line: find solutions that work for you.

APPENDIX // FOR THE TINKERER

Style Guide

This appendix shows each command defined in `preamble.tex`. Compare this page between the color and grayscale editions to see the palette switch at work.

Terminal voice — `\cmdline`, `\stamp`, `\syserror`:

```
user@host> run --the-thing
11:45:00
Error 404: Thing not found.
```

Terminal dialogue — `terminalblock` with `\termAlex`, `\termSam`, `\termSys`:

```
ALEX> Say something in blue.
SAM> Say something in purple.
SYSTEM> No.
```

Text messages — `\textmsg`, `\msgfail`:

```
Hey, did the build finish?
Not Delivered.
```

Found documents — `foundnote`:

A letter, a diary page, a note taped somewhere it shouldn't be.

Social media — `feedpost`:

@your.handle

just now

Post body goes here. Sans-serif, framed, timestamped.

Damage — \redact, \glitch, \sysbreak:

The password is [REDACTED] and the logs show [UNRECOVERABLE] at midnight.

[EXAMPLE RUPTURE --- REMAIN CALM]

Scene divider — \divider:

* * *

Drop cap — \dropcap (see any chapter opening). That's the whole toolbox. Now go rename everything and make it yours.

END OF FILE

Acknowledgments

This starter kit exists because typesetting a novel with multiple typographic voices—terminal output, text messages, found documents, glitches—is genuinely hard in a word processor and genuinely pleasant in L^AT_EX, once the preamble is paid for.

Built with the `memoir` document class, plus `xcolor`, `lettrine`, `mdframed`, `microtype`, and `hyperref`.

No rights reserved: this template is released under CC0. Gut it, rebrand it, ship your book with it. The only thing you owe anyone is a finished draft.