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Dear H,

Re: TWIAW

Thank you for submitting **TWIAW to Daniel Goldsmith Associates** for assessment.

Please find below a few notes put together regarding the narrative, the style, the plot, the characters and other general aspects of my reading. Please always keep in mind that, no matter how professional, one's reading has certain limits to being a highly personal view of the book and no more than that. My notes aim to improve the market score of the book rather than the manuscript itself, as the latter will always be an infinitely debatable matter.

Style

The style of your writing is quite consistent throughout the book, quite pretentious in places, e.g.: "Bomb, the seemingly vulnerable young

woman (...) her day, I imagine.” (p. 45) or rather journalistic in other places, e.g.: “Specialising in (...) Sunday lunch being especially favoured.” (p. 234), but one can easily agree that you keep a consistent style from one chapter to another, which is a sign of good writing potential.

Characters

One general feeling about the characters is that they do not have enough depth to convince the reader and to attract strong feelings on the reader’s side. Lucas, due to the first person narrator, seems to be the only one portrayed in enough depth for readers to have a complete image about him. Bomb fails to impress because she’s not present in action enough and because she’s not consistent enough throughout the book. She’s a strong woman, but not strong enough to influence the course of the action and to attract reader’s admiration, love, hate etc; she’s also vulnerable, but not vulnerable enough to attract reader’s interest and feelings about what’s going to happen to her next/in the end. And there’s of course the shocking episode of Bomb accepting to have sex with Carole’s business partner to compromise his image within the company which could attract disapproval from some audience towards Bomb for the rest of the book. In most plots, authors build good, strong feelings around their feminine characters, we like them and we are concerned about what’s going to happen to them and this becomes a major reason of why we follow the story until the end. In this particular case, it is vitally important that readers like Bomb, as all main character’s actions are around her, therefore the entire action of the book won’t be justifiable if Bomb is a poorly and inconsistently portrayed character.

To build more depth around your characters, one good technique is to build more atmosphere around them. E.g.: consider a romantic dinner between Carole Wood and Gregory Pavlovitch.

To increase action during the long Scotland episode as well as atmosphere around the characters' portraits, consider making the paid assassin more active. Consider focusing the narrative on the private scene of Tomasin listening to classical music (pp. 280-281) and drinking a favourite drink, cleaning and preparing his luxurious gun, all scenes that might seem cliché, but very effective, especially to the feminine audience. You could also consider a failed murder attempt by Tomasin in Bomb's room or in Lucas's room to increase the action and suspense significantly.

Also, consider revising your protagonist's age. It would be a lot more attractive to be in his late 50s, rather than his late 60s. This would improve the consistency and plausibility of the plot, as readers could associate the hero's sudden interest in Bomb and a desire for change in his middle-class, bourgeois-style life as the famous male mid-life crisis symptom.

Readers can easily get confused about who is who among the Eastern European characters, mainly due to the poor portraying of each of them. I personally got confused at some point and took Tomasin to be the watcher described as untidy and smelly and made a note regarding its inconsistency with other descriptions as being smartly dressed and quite educated, until I reached page 292, where Lucas makes things clear and I understand they are two different characters. I must say this is a common risk with poorly defined characters, therefore consider improving transparency and insisting on each character's personality so readers get a clearer image and a clearer "feeling" about each character. Creating a specific feeling around each character will help, such as the romantic dinner, the intimate preparation of a hit by an assassin, as well as building up readers' feelings towards each character.

Readers need help in gaining bad feelings about bad characters and good feelings about good characters.

Consider revising a few names in the book, such as the three Carol(e) Woods and the need for identical names for the three of them. It appears that the coincidence is justified only as a conversation starter in the hospital waiting room and there is no apparent need for at least Mac to be called Carol Wood as well. Kirovithka, which is hard to pronounce, contains a sound that doesn't exist in Russian or any other Slavic language and that is "th", apart from not respecting the rules of gender formation in Slavic names. Feminine surnames in Slavic language are formed by adding "a" or "aya" in Russian to the masculine form of the name. See Anna Karenina as the wife of Alexei Alexandrovich Karenin, Anna Dostoevskaya, the wife of Fyodor Dostoevsky etc. Therefore consider choosing a name that respects this rule of formation, as Ludmila's name would have to be formed after her father's name, which is referred on page 105 as Kirovithka, too. Consider Kirov for the father and Kirova for the girl.

Plot

Consider revising the levels of plausibility in the story. The fact that three Carol(e) Woods meet in the same emergency waiting room is a big coincidence. The fact that one of them is in a relationship with a mafioso who wants another one of them killed is an unconvincingly massive one. Consider choosing a different name for Mac, as the story doesn't require her name to be Carol Wood too, and choose a different topic to start the conversation in the waiting room. Also consider changing the story slightly so two of the Carol(e) Woods knew each other previously, maybe they were highschool colleagues. This choice would also improve the plausibility of Carole's gesture of offering her flat to Bomb.

The plot doesn't answer a major question and that is why Ludmila Kirovithka was murdered. We understand that it has something to do with her father in a mafia-style vendetta, but exactly why is still an open question that the book hasn't solved yet. This would definitely count as a

plot fault to any careful reader. Consider adding private scenes of dialogue between Ludmila's parents or her father and his mafia crew to enhance the story and fill the plot gap.

Narrative

The general feeling about the narrative is that it lacks the power and depth of what makes a great story. There is not enough action in the book and there is too much irrelevant dialogue and irrelevant information in the story. E.g.:

- 1) the choice of narrating Maxy's death in the past tense. For a book that contains mainly narrative dialogue and past tense narrative, an action episode that unfolds as we go would be a good break. Besides, Mr Flatholme's presence at the scene just enlarges the implausible chain of coincidences in the book. Consider choosing to present the scene in the present tense and use the neutral narrator for the scene. Maybe it's worth considering to involve Maxy more in the action prior to his death, as the story builds up his character as a frightening one, especially as far as Bomb is concerned, therefore readers are bound to expect more from his side. The fact that he dies in a scene narrated by DCI Flatholme to her daughter is a weak, unconvincing manner and you take the risk of disappointing your readers by choosing the "easy" way.
- 2) The choice of narrating the end of the story and the solution for the plot in the past tense. Choosing to end the story with "I wasn't there. When the climax came I was on the phone to Jazzy and missed the whole thing." (p.374) could be considered as an easy choice again, maybe not the most convincing one. Your readers started following the Scotland story – where things are expected to happen – on page 154, 320 pages later, after following the characters through not a

lot of action and unpredictable events, to encounter this “I missed the whole thing” could be considered as a cheat.

I strongly recommend revising this last, crucial episode of the book. My suggestions would be to consider changing the neutral narrator to the first person narrator in the heart of events where the personal point of view will improve the dramatic aspect of the climax. It's true that sometimes readers identify themselves with the main characters and judge the characters' choices of action through their own perspective, therefore your readers are bound to prefer to at least be there when the end of their story is taking place. To unfold the story later through the third person point of view is not a preferable choice.

Also, consider revising the fragment on page 407, concerning a dog-walker in Banff finding Tomasin's body in the sea. The classic plot of a mystery/detective story involves a last one-to-one conflict that readers are anticipating throughout the book between the good guy (in this case, as there is no hero, the good guys would be the Police) and the bad guy (in this case, Tomasin, as he is presented as the hitman following the main characters everywhere with the intention of killing them). It is natural to think that readers will expect from Tomasin to deliver a great level of action and create obstacles through the story that the main characters surpass. He doesn't, his presence is barely noticed throughout the book, as there is no major dialogue involving Tomasin, no memorable scene and no strong enough portraying to support his outstanding personality among other Eastern Europeans appearing in the story here and there.

However, a greater involvement is expected from him at the end of the story, where he should at least attempt to kill Bomb and Lucas, in a maybe face to face scene, in front of the Police, as the books promises at some point.

You offer a good résumé on pp 114-115: “What she had been told (...) seemed to know”, as it helps readers resume the story. Consider using this technique more often throughout the book.

Consider revising the fragment on page 103: “Notwithstanding his Russian name, (...), as now when he was going to be dealing only with Western Europeans”, where there is a so-called capability transfer in the point of view from the neutral narrator (limited) to God’s eye point of view (unlimited). This inconsistency of the narrative is usually treated as a firm sign of amateurism. Besides, the fragment about Gregory Pavlovitch’s origins is rather redundant, doesn’t improve the story in any ways, it rather contributes to the clutter of information that could “overwhelm” the reader in the end. Especially that, over the next 2 pages, there is a great amount of more information demanding the reader’s concentration and memory and one proof is that no less than nine countries are listed as parts of mafia routes: England, Poland, France, Bulgaria, Albania, Russia, Czech Republic, Germany and Holland.

Marketability

Due to the fact that most good characters in the story are feminine, we believe **TWIAW** addresses the feminine market interested in the detective genre. Knowing your audience is a crucial factor in writing a good story. As Saussure said, the author writes with the ghost of his readers daunting his text from one end to the other. Therefore, from the theme of the book to each minor gesture of your characters, everything must be meant to **impress** your audience. A book that addresses everybody very often fails to impress at all.

The fact that you address such a large audience makes your project highly desirable for publishers at least from this point of view. As agents and publishers seemed to agree at the latest London Book Fair in April 2007, the supermarket culture is currently reshaping the literary market in

Britain. The business lady or the housewife doing her weekly shopping in the supermarket and turning to the books shelves for home entertainment is what publishers are targeting now. The old, little curiosity book shop, full of character is a place that we very rarely visit these days, sadly.

I personally believe **TWIAW** could stand a fair chance as a publishing project, given more attention to detail.

Final notes

The book feels too long because, as from Ludmila Kirothvika's murder, there is no direct action. The Maxy episode is narrated in the third person by the DCI to her children. All the Scotland episode seems very long as not much happens and the narrator seems to try to stretch out the story by focusing on what time it is – too often mentioned in the book for no apparent reason –, the heavy weather and other minor events with no relevance to the plot or even to the story. Consider concentrating the story in one week instead of two, this way each day will represent more action.

Seriously consider adding more depth to your characters, reducing their number and creating more atmosphere around them, by changing locations more frequently and adding new locations of events and dialogue.

Also consider making the story less "policey". Too many Police characters are involved in the story and the narrator is too concerned with the Police characters, as the main part of your audience is expected to be less interested in Police matters, procedures, methods etc.

Consider revising minor plausibility faults: the policeman drinking whisky while on duty and gathering information – not plausible (p.135).

I believe that following the above suggestions would improve the market score of the book as far as literary agents and publishers are concerned.

We don't consider **TWIAW** ready for agent submission yet, but can appreciate the potential of an intricate plot, of a consistent style and of a good, sustained pace, given attention to the details highlighted in this report.

The different points of view narrative makes **TWIAW** highly suitable for a screenplay, too. The fact that the action focuses on different locations, such as Lucas's PoV, Bomb's PoV, the detective's PoV would sustain very well the structure of a screenplay.

I hope my suggestions will be of some help to you in revising **TWIAW** and I insist that, after all, my reading is a highly personal reading.

Please do not hesitate to contact us for further help if you decide to consider any of our suggestions and require a re-assessment and a free agent submission, subject to our reassessment. Our re-assessment fee is still £200 regardless of the number of pages above 200.

Looking forward to hearing from you again,

Lorena Goldsmith, MA, Editor