

THE SLUSH PILE

Logline

Welcome to Kodiak books, where hapless editor Annie struggles with an eccentric boss, a bewildering assistant, and a series of unhelpful, unwholesome and unhygienic authors.

Treatment

Editorial director Zelda Tantrum wants Kodiak to be the biggest publisher in the world. Editor Annie just wants to keep her job, and maybe work out the difference between 'its' and 'it's' at some point in the future. In house writer Martin wants more pills to make everything go away. And assistant editor Hilde just wants some yellow paper so she can make another origami giraffe.

Kodiak is going through difficult times. Everyone's talking about e-books and Apps (Zelda isn't sure what Apps are, but she has nightmares in which they're like even scarier Orcs). As sales plummet and the budgets get tighter (which might also have something to do with Zelda spending the budget on botox) she turns to increasingly desperate ways to keep the company afloat.

Could her editors write the next *50 Shades of Grey*, in house? Could 'z-books' be the future of publishing? Would an undercover mission into the offices of Kodiak's main rival, Blue Bear Books, be a cunning way to get new ideas? Do books really need words, anyway?

Annie is forced to carry out Zelda's essentially bonkers schemes, while she also looks after a variety of eccentric authors.

There's the one who locks her in his house, with just him and his hamster, Gladness, and won't let her leave until he's recited to her all twelve volumes of his novel.

Then there's the infamous, edgy novelist who's thinking of becoming a vicar – Annie is charged with trying to help him remember his wild (and marketable) bad boy ways. There's the happiness self-help guru who can't stop crying. There's the racy erotic fiction writer, who's not really a problem as such: it's just that she's also Zelda's mother.

At the same time as dealing with the writers, Annie does want to sort out her own life. Her goals are to sort out her career, find romantic love... oh, and deal with the problem that is Hilde.

Hilde: assistant editor, cult member and origami enthusiast, spends her days trying to break world records (she holds the current world record for "balancing a milk bottle on head" – 36 hours). Hilde's cheeriness drives in house writer, Martin, even further into depression, as he drinks Tesco's Value Brandy from a Lucozade bottle, and dwells on his not super appropriate and entirely futile

crush for much younger designer, Bonita. And writes picture books like "Runover Bunny" and "The Mouse That Died."

As the publishing industry goes through turbulent times, will Kodiak manage to survive? Will Annie find love? Will Zelda find her mug? Will Martin stop taking codeine? (Er, no, he probably won't).

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Characters

ZELDA TANTRUM (pronounced 'Tamsin' – by her) is a grandiose aspiring Super Boss, who wants success for Kodiak more than anything else. In these difficult times, she's not afraid of thinking "out of the box" to make her business succeed. She's certainly got a bullying side – well, she does own a golf club fondly named Genghis, and she's not afraid to wave it around. Her worst fear is that someone will one day find out she never went to university, and doesn't really know anything about books.

ANNIE OWL is a hapless, incompetent editor. When in doubt about what to do, she watches Miss Marple for inspiration. She is a confined kidult – aged 27 she can't drive a car, ride a bike, or cook a meal that's not toast based. Her history of relationships is not a great success. She's turned two men gay, another became a monk, and oh yes, there was Bernard, who went to Afghanistan to live "as a goat". She is however, a mentor of sorts to Hilde, the editorial assistant and "gender-neutral-child-woman" of the office.

HILDE finds a lot of life confusing. What with roads to cross, and shoelaces to not trip over, it's a miracle she's still alive, at the grand old age of 25. She's never seen an actual boy naked (although she claims that she has "history" with someone named Claude – apparently they once accidentally brushed hands in the canteen). Hilde is, however, the happiest member of the office. She's also in a cult which follows the slogan "Life is limitless" and "You Can Do Anything!"* (*Apart from drinking, having sex, taking drugs, going to the cinema, playing badminton, eating rice, the list goes on. And on).

MARTIN – the in house writer – is terrified of his wife and by his two young children. Is often heavily sedated at work. Is usually either deadpan, or simply unconscious. Is in love with the designer, Bonita.

BONITA is a designer, and Kodiak's youngest member. She uses the workplace as a good place to get ready for going out. She dates a lot of different men, often footballers. She doesn't like, or read, books.

Episode Outlines

Purple Lace

Zelda wants to launch a new erotic imprint, and tells Annie, Martin and Hilde to write a collection of erotic short stories. Martin writes a story about someone called “Wanita”, Hilde takes refuge on a tall pile of manuscripts and refuses to come down, and Annie is forced to confront her own romantic past, or lack of it. Meanwhile Zelda finally finds a sizzling erotic novelist – who turns out to be someone she knows a little too well.

I Can Make You Smile

Kodiak is about launch a self help book called I Can Make You Smile, tipped to be a massive best seller. There’s only one problem – the fake tanned, spiky haired author, Jenson Tradmore, can’t stop crying. Can Zelda and Annie cheer him up enough to get through the book launch? And could depressive Martin hold the secret key to happiness?

Undercover

Zelda needs some great new ideas for the London Book Fair, and sends Annie undercover to rival publishers Blue Bear Books to find some. Hilde comes along on the mission, and Annie and Hilde are caught red handed, and punished by the Blue Bear’s eight year old publishing director, into a sleepover. Annie escapes with the documents just in time for Zelda to make her speech at the London Book Fair. But are they the right documents? Should Zelda really claim to be publishing all her new books in a language that no-one has ever heard of?

Organised Fun

Zelda’s more successful sister turns up, and taunts her about Kodiak’s lack of success. In a panic, Zelda gets conned into spending lots of money on multiplatform “z-books” – that don’t work. And then splashes out on a summer party, to prove that Kodiak is a success. At the party, Martin declares his undying love for Bonita. Which Bonita finds very funny. Annie tells Zelda far too much about her life, and Hilde finally breaks free from her cult – in order to join a new one (her old one didn’t have enough rules).

Number One Fan

Annie goes to a remote farmhouse to find out what’s happened to a children’s author who hasn’t handed in his manuscript. When she tells him she’s his “number one fan”, he locks her up and won’t let her leave until he’s recited to her all 12 volumes of his novel about Gladness the Hamster and her hamster friends. Can Hilde save her? Or will she be too busy editing out the word “badminton” from all Kodiak’s books?

The Jimmy Coronet Affair

When Zelda’s special mug goes missing, she puts Annie on the case. Every crime has a personality – so could Jimmy Coronet, glamorous I.T. guy and tea connoisseur, be responsible? Is he just doing it for kicks? Where is the mug anyway?

Intro to extract

The London Book Fair is days away, and Zelda needs some great new ideas to present. When everyone's out of ideas, Zelda sends Annie, undercover, into the offices of Kodiak's biggest rival, Blue Bear Books, to steal their presentation. Meanwhile, Martin has to do a children's workshop at the London Book Fair in Cantonese. Which he speaks, according to his CV - just not according to reality.

THE SLUSH PILE EPISODE TWO: UNDERCOVER

By

Sarah Courtauld

sarahcourtauld@yahoo.co.uk
07814 434 943

1. INT. ZELDA'S OFFICE - DAY

ZELDA, a sharp suited businesswoman in her mid forties, sits behind her desk in an office filled with brightly coloured children's books. She looks up as ANNIE comes in. ANNIE is in her mid-twenties, and has anxious air, as if she's just remembered that she's not wearing any pants.

ZELDA
Annie - we have a problem.

ANNIE
It wasn't me.

ZELDA
Annie -

ANNIE
Ok, it probably was me.

ZELDA
The London Book Fair is in two days. We have to present our new list to the most important publisher in China, and we've got nothing. We've had to withdraw our two lead titles - The Hunger Crosswords, and Game of Crones, on totally spurious grounds.

ANNIE
The fact that we stole the titles from actual books?

ZELDA
We didn't steal, Annie. We followed our key ideals: Talent, Heritage, Energy, Foresight and Tenacity.

Zelda points to a sign which spells out the acronym T.H.E.F.T.

ZELDA
The point is, we've got to think quickly. We need some big ideas to present to Lao Jiang, or we're up the spout.

ANNIE
Ok, I'm sure we can all brainstorm, and in a few weeks -

(CONTINUED)

ZELDA

This afternoon, Annie. I need at least a couple of ideas by this afternoon. And by a couple, I mean six. By ideas, I mean titles. And by this afternoon, I mean yesterday.

ANNIE

And by "I mean", you mean?

Zelda gives Annie a look of death. Annie backs away, mouthing "sorry".

2. INT. ANNIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Annie sits at her desk. Sitting near her is HILDE - a gormless looking girl in her mid twenties, who's making a collage, and MARTIN, a careworn looking man in his mid-thirties. Hilde suddenly puts up her hand.

HILDE

I've got it!

ANNIE

If this is another Origami Jesus Book - please don't.

Hilde puts her hand down.

ANNIE

What about you, Martin?

MARTIN

What?

ANNIE

Ideas. For the London Book Fair. New children's book titles. Fiction or non fiction. Anything!

MARTIN

Mmmnnn.

ANNIE

Ok, you see how massively massively urgent this is.

MARTIN

Yeah.

(CONTINUED)

HILDE

What about - 50 Shades of Grey, the children's version! I've heard it's very popular.

ANNIE

Hilde, it's about -

HILDE

- a man who's painting fifty donkeys for a mural in his church. I know, I'm "hip."

ANNIE

Just - no. Martin? Martin, what are you on?

MARTIN

Larium, hand sanitiser, and the pill.

ANNIE

Okay...

MARTIN

Oh. Here's one. I saw this film last night, a house in Tokyo. It was haunted by this murderer. She got everyone in the end. She had terrifying white face...

ANNIE

Children's books, Martin. Children's.

MARTIN (ALMOST TO HIMSELF)

She reminded me of my daughter.

BONITA, who's young and pretty, enters and goes up to Martin's desk. Martin doesn't see her, since he's pouring liquid from a bottle that says Tesco's Value Brandy, (badly hidden inside a plastic bag) into a lucozade bottle.

BONITA

Hi Martin!

MARTIN

Bonita.

BONITA

So, as you probably know, we're all going like ape over this meeting with this speech for this Chinese

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BONITA (cont'd)
dude at the London Book Fair,
right? And then I saw on your CV
that you speak Cantonese - amazing.

MARTIN
What?

BONITA
Yeah - get you! So, I'm going to be
part of the impress Lao Jiang crew.
We're doing this children's
workshop at the Book Fair. And I
thought I could do it in English,
and you could translate!

MARTIN
Um, sorry, I can't.

BONITA
Apparently Lao Jiang has got like,
ten children coming with him.

MARTIN
Yeah, no. I'm sorry. That's a no.

BONITA
Ok, great! We are going to be such
a killer team!

As Bonita turns to leave, she sees a photo on Martin's desk.

MARTIN
No, really -

BONITA
You're so modest. You'll be great!
Aw - your kids are so sweet!

MARTIN
Oh no - that photo came with the
frame.

BONITA
Oh, I totes thought you had kids -

MARTIN
No, I do. I had a picture of Damien
and Arwen in there but my doctor
told me to take it out. It was bad
for my hypertension. But, Bonita -

(CONTINUED)

BONITA

Later!

Bonita leaves.

ANNIE

You speak Cantonese.

MARTIN

Um... yup.

ANNIE

It's definitely not something you just randomly added to your CV that you thought you'd never be called on.

MARTIN

Nope.

Malcolm takes a desperate swig from his Luzocade bottle.

3. INT. ZELDA'S OFFICE - DAY

Annie walks into Zelda's office.

ANNIE

You wanted to see me?

ZELDA

Titles. Titles. Titles. Titles. Hit me like a shark.

Annie looks down at her note pad. It says: "Dave the Rat guy! 07815675212,"

ZELDA

You're taking up air, and I'm not hearing titles.

ANNIE

Ok.. Um. The History of... English... staplers. Um... A Guide to London's... London's... to London's best outdoor... trees...er... What if the London Eye was actually, made of human eyes...

ZELDA

You've got nothing. It's alright. I'm not angry.

(CONTINUED)

ANNIE

Oh, wow, OK.

ZELDA

That was a joke. Of course I'm angry. Anger is my fuel. I use it like I use yoga, tibetan bells, and electric shock therapy. It gets me up in the morning. But I'm not going to punish you, Annie.

ANNIE

Really?

ZELDA

No. I'm just going to launch phase two. You are aware that our "greatest rival", Blue Bear Books, has been tweeting "all week" about how it's going to storm the "London Book Fair"?

Annie looks a little confused by Zelda's random "quotation marks" finger gestures.

ANNIE (LYING)

Definitely. I don't just follow David Hasselhoff.

ZELDA

Here's your mission. You go undercover into Blue Bear Books. You steal their presentation, and we pitch it to Lao Jiang before they get a chance. We win, Blue Bear Books go home crying to mummy. Except they're a company. So they haven't got one.

ANNIE

I can't do that!

ZELDA

You can and you will.

ANNIE

I can't and I won't.

ZELDA

You shall and you must.

(CONTINUED)

ANNIE

I daren't and I oughtn't?

ZELDA

You dare and you do.

ANNIE

I - I, didn't and I widn't?

ZELDA

Annie - I'm holding here a copy of your internet browsing history, and your criminal record. Which would you prefer to be blackmailed with?

ANNIE

They're both impeccable.

ZELDA

No, they're both very, very peccable. 21st of November, 2011, you were charged with breach of the peace for proposing marriage to one of the lions in Trafalgar Square.

ANNIE

Not "one of" the lions, a specific lion -

ZELDA

Yesterday, in office time you spent more than an hour doing Google image searches of "Rat Exterminator, London", "Camden Council Rat Exterminator - David".

ANNIE

I - yeah. He's very attractive.

ZELDA

So. You're going. Don't worry. I'm not going to send you into the Den of the Blue Bear empty handed. Meet me in my office, in five.

ANNIE (WHISPERS)

We are in your office.

4. INT. ANNIE'S OFFICE - DAY

It's lunch time, Martin is now alone in the office, eating his lunch. He opens up a sandwich and puts some pills into it, takes a bite, and clicks on his computer.

VOICEOVER (FROM MARTIN'S COMPUTER)

There are tens of thousands of characters in the Chinese alphabet. Luckily, for functional literacy, you only need between three and four thousand characters. Let's begin with a few basic sounds. Lui. Looo. Laa. Lo.

MARTIN (ECHOING HIS COMPUTER)

Lui. Loo. Laao. Liuooooaa.

Bonita walks past. Martin desperately scrambles to shut down the web-page.

MARTIN

La la la di la ooh ooh ooh da di da
- just singing some beach boys
there.

Bonita gives him a weird look, walks right by.

5. INT. ZELDA'S OFFICE - DAY

Annie and Zelda are still in her office. Zelda is holding a black briefcase.

ZELDA

Good to see you, Agent WD40.

ANNIE

Er, hi.

ZELDA

I named your number after your age

ANNIE

I'm not -

ZELDA

Your hair age. Listen, I've got some gadgets for your little trip to Blue Bear, and I think you'll be very impressed. Take this, for example. What is it?

(CONTINUED)

She open up the briefcase, and holds up what looks like a pen.

ANNIE

A biro?

ZELDA

Wrong. This is a spy-ro. It records sound, light and heat, and detects movement at up to 2000 metres. But do you need it?

Zelda throws it out of the window. There's a squawk of pain - it's hit a pigeon, mid flight.

ZELDA

No, you don't.

She now holds up what looks like a paperclip.

ZELDA

This looks like an ordinary paperclip. But what is it?

ANNIE

A... paperclip.

ZELDA.

No. It will pick any lock in Western Europe...

Zelda picks up a pamphlet, reads it.

ZELDA

...excluding synagogues and Water Towers. But, do you need it? No.

Zelda throws the paperclip out of the window. Another cry of pain. She produces a pair of glasses.

ZELDA

These might look like an ordinary pair of glasses. But they film and photograph everything that you see. Do you need them?

ANNIE

Yes?

Zelda throws the glasses out of the window. A louder crash.

(CONTINUED)

ZELDA

All gone. Because you, Annie, have a secret weapon better than all of them.

Zelda pulls out a children's book. The title reads: "The Kodiak Spy's Handbook".

ANNIE

Oh God.

ZELDA

Yes, it was our best seller in 1980 in the 6 to 8 year old range. And yes, if we'd had this book in the Second World War, we might even have won it.

Annie opens her mouth to speak, changes her mind.

ZELDA

We are going to take down Blue Bear Books using our very own espionage doctrine. Take this book. Use it well.

6. EXT. BLUE BEAR BOOKS OFFICES - DAY

Annie is outside the Blue Bear Books offices, reading from "The Kodiak Spy's Handbook". She is looking through two holes cut out of a newspaper.

ANNIE

In order to look less suspicious, try "playing idly with a leaf..."

She tries, unsuccessfully to pull a weed out of the pavement, as Hilde appears, next to her.

HILDE

Greetings!

ANNIE

What are you doing here?

HILDE

Coming with you on the mission.

ANNIE

What? You can't! How did you even find out about this?

(CONTINUED)

HILDE

Because I'm an extremely observant person. Because you made me buy your disguise. And because you told me.

ANNIE

Hilde, you are a liability. You're in a cult, remember? They have rules. About things like lying and stealing and -

HILDE

Annie, there are some things that are just plain wrong - like laundering money, so it gets all wrinkled in the machine, or necrophilia, when people just like necks too much! But this mission is a matter of honour for Kodiak Books. And as your friend, I am coming with you.

ANNIE

Hilde. I mean this in the nicest possible way - you're going to ruin everything. Please leave.

HILDE

Yes I will join you.

ANNIE

Jesus!

HILDE

He's fine with it.

ANNIE

Ok. If you must come, this is the plan. We wait here till night falls. Then, I'm going to try and get in through that window -

Annie looks up, to see that Hilde has already buzzed on the door, and is being let in. Cursing under her breath, Annie follows her inside.