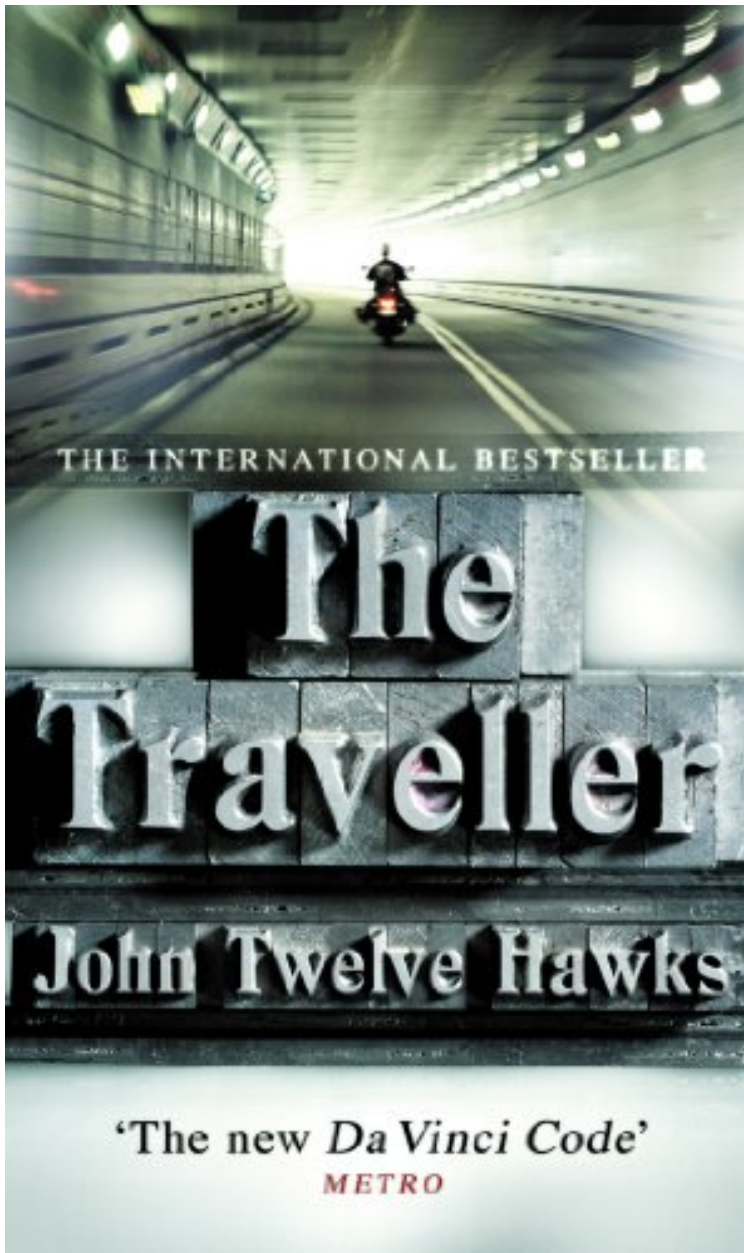


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# The Traveller



*Par John Twelve Hawks*  
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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurWHAT LIES AHEAD IS ALREADY HERE...America is a difficult place to live below the surface. But Gabriel and Michael Corrigan are trying to do just that. Since childhood, the brothers have been shaped by the stories that their father has told them about the world in which they live. After his mysterious disappearance, they have been living 'off the grid' - that is, invisible to the intrusive surveillance networks that monitor our modern lives.But no-one is as invisible as they would like to believe. Nathan

Boone, a mercenary, has been tasked to hunt down the brothers. The only person who stands between them and certain death is Maya, a tough young woman playing at leading a normal life. But her background is anything but normal. She has been trained to fight and survive at whatever cost. When she is summoned to protect the brothers, she must leave everything behind if she is to succeed....co.uk

Sometimes--not very often--a debut novel comes along which marks out a new writer as a consummate craftsman, seemingly fully formed with that first book. The Traveller is such a book; the mysterious John Twelve Hawks is such a writer (his publishers give no information about him, except that he lives off the grid). The first thing that strikes the reader about this unusual novel is its ambitious panoply, which is as exuberantly international as one could wish, moving through a vividly realised Prague, London and Los Angeles. His characters are disparate but characterised with great individuality, such as the brothers Gabriel and Michael Corrigan, who have been brought up in Los Angeles under the mesmerising spell of their fey father; he appears to possess certain unnatural powers. After he dies a violent death, the brothers vanish off the grid of society, living in a clandestine underworld. Meanwhile, in London, Maya is a self-possessed young woman whose everyday life conceals a strange secret: she is the last of a dynasty whose responsibility is to protect those in the human race who are differently gifted. She is called to Prague by her sick father, and learns about Gabriel and Michael, whose lives are now in serious danger. In California, a desperate race against time begins: who will track down the brothers first--the protective Maya or the murderous Boone? Readers tired of the parochial thriller that has held sway in Britain for so long will embrace this intoxicating (if outrageously unlikely) novel with open arms. True, a certain suspension of disbelief is required, but Twelve Hawks is the kind of writer who is able to persuade even the most sceptical among us. A remarkable debut. --Barry Forshaw

Extrait PRELUDE KNIGHT, DEATH, AND THE DEVIL Maya reached out and took her fathers hand as they walked from the Underground to the light. Thorn didnt push her away or tell Maya to concentrate on the position of her body. Smiling, he guided her up a narrow staircase to a long, sloping tunnel with white tile walls. The Underground authority had installed steel bars on one side of the tunnel and this barrier made the ordinary passageway look like part of an enormous prison. If she had been traveling alone, Maya might have felt trapped and uncomfortable, but there was nothing to worry about because Father was with her. Its the perfect day, she thought. Well, maybe it was the second most perfect day. She still remembered two years ago when Father had missed her birthday and Christmas only to show up on Boxing Day with a taxi full of presents for Maya and her mother. That morning was bright and full of surprises, but this Saturday seemed to promise a more durable happiness. Instead of the usual trip to the empty warehouse near Canary Wharf, where her father taught her how to kick and punch and use weapons, they had spent the day at the London Zoo, where he had told her different stories about each of the animals. Father had traveled all over the world and could describe Paraguay or Egypt as if he were a tour guide. People had glanced at them as they strolled past the cages. Most Harlequins tried to blend into the crowd, but her father stood out in a group of ordinary citizens. He was German, with a strong nose, shoulder-length hair, and dark blue eyes. Thorn dressed in somber colors and wore a steel kara bracelet that looked like a broken shackle. Maya had found a battered art history book in the closet of their rented flat in East London. Near the front of the book was a picture by Albrecht Durer called Knight, Death, and the Devil. She liked to stare at the picture even though it made her feel strange. The armored knight was like her father, calm and brave, riding through the mountains as Death held up an hourglass and the Devil followed, pretending to be a squire. Thorn also carried a sword, but his was concealed inside a metal tube with a leather shoulder strap. Although she was proud of Thorn, he also made her feel embarrassed and self-conscious. Sometimes she just wanted to be an ordinary girl with a pudgy father who worked in an office a happy man who bought ice-cream cones and told jokes about kangaroos. The world around her, with its bright fashions and pop music and television shows, was a constant temptation. She wanted to fall into that warm water and let the current pull her away. It was exhausting to be Thorns daughter, always avoiding the surveillance of the Vast Machine, always watching for enemies, always aware of the angle of attack. Maya was twelve years old, but still wasnt strong enough to use a Harlequin sword. As a substitute, Father had taken a walking stick from the closet and given it to her before they left the flat that morning. Maya had Thorns white skin and strong features and her Sikh mothers thick black hair. Her eyes were such a pale blue that from a certain angle they looked translucent. She hated it when well-meaning women approached her mother and complimented Mayas appearance. In a few years, shed be old enough to disguise herself and look as ordinary as possible. They left the zoo and strolled through Regents Park. It was late April and young men were kicking footballs across the muddy lawn while parents pushed bundled-up babies in

perambulators. The whole city seemed to be out enjoying the sunshine after three days of rain. Maya and her father took the Piccadilly line to the Arsenal station; it was getting dark when they reached the street-level exit. There was an Indian restaurant in Finsbury Park and Thorn had made reservations for an early supper. Maya heard noises blaring air horns and shouting in the distance and wondered if there was some kind of political demonstration. Then Father led her through the turnstile and out into a war. Standing on the sidewalk, she saw a mob of people marching up Highbury Hill Road. There weren't any protest signs and banners, and Maya realized that she was watching the end of a football match. The Arsenal Stadium was straight down the road and a team with blue and white colors that was Chelsea had just played there. The Chelsea supporters were coming out of the visitors gate on the west end of the stadium and heading down a narrow street lined with row houses. Normally it was a quick walk to the station entrance, but now the North London street had turned into a gauntlet. The police were protecting Chelsea from Arsenal football thugs who were trying to attack them and start fights. Policemen on the edges. Blue and white in the center. Red throwing bottles and trying to break through the line. Citizens caught in front of the crowd scrambled between parked cars and knocked over rubbish bins. Flowering hawthorns grew at the edge of the curb and their pink blossoms trembled whenever someone was shoved against a tree. Petals fluttered through the air and fell upon the surging mass. The main crowd was approaching the Tube station, about one hundred meters away. Thorn could have gone to the left and headed up Gillespie Road, but he remained on the sidewalk and studied the people surrounding them. He smiled slightly, confident of his own power and amused by the pointless violence of the drones. Along with the sword, he was carrying at least one knife and a handgun obtained from contacts in America. If he wished, he could kill a great many of these people, but this was a public confrontation and the police were in the area. Maya glanced up at her father. We should run away, she thought. These people are completely mad. But Thorn glared at his daughter as if he had just sensed her fear and Maya stayed silent. Everyone was shouting. The voices merged into one angry roar. Maya heard a high-pitched whistle. The wail of a police siren. A beer bottle sailed through the air and exploded into fragments a few feet away from where they were standing. Suddenly, a flying wedge of red shirts and scarves plowed through the police lines, and she saw men kicking and throwing punches. Blood streamed down a policeman's face, but he raised his truncheon and fought back. She squeezed Father's hand. They're coming toward us, she said. We need to get out of the way. Thorn turned around and pulled his daughter back into the entrance of the Tube station as if to find refuge there. But now the police were driving the Chelsea supporters forward like a herd of cattle and she was surrounded by men wearing blue. Caught in the crowd, Maya and her father were pushed past the ticket booth where the elderly clerk cowered behind the thick glass. Father vaulted over the turnstile and Maya followed. Now they were back in the long tunnel, heading down to the trains. It's all right, she thought. We're safe now. Then she realized that men wearing red had forced their way into the tunnel and were running beside them. One of the men was carrying a wool sock filled with something heavy—rocks, ball bearings—and he swung it like a club at the old man just in front of her, knocking off the man's glasses and breaking his nose. A gang of Arsenal thugs slammed a Chelsea supporter against the steel bars on the left side of the tunnel. The man tried to get away as they kicked and beat him. More blood. And no police anywhere. Thorn grabbed the back of Maya's jacket and dragged her through the fighting. A man tried to attack them and Father stopped him instantly with a quick, snapping punch to the throat. Maya hurried down the tunnel, trying to reach the stairway. Before she could react, something like a rope came over her right shoulder and across her chest. Maya looked down and saw that Thorn had just tied a blue and white Chelsea scarf around her body. In an instant she realized that the day at the zoo, the amusing stories, and the trip to the restaurant were all part of a plan. Father had known about the football game, had probably been here before and timed their arrival. She glanced over her shoulder and saw Thorn smile and nod as if he had just told her an amusing story. Then he turned and walked away. Maya spun around as three Arsenal supporters ran forward, yelling at her. Don't think. React. She jabbed the walking stick like a javelin and the steel tip hit the tallest man's forehead with a crack. Blood spurted from his head and he began to fall, but she was already spinning around to trip the second man with the stick. As he stumbled backward, she jumped high and kicked his face. He spun around and hit the floor. Down. He's down. She ran forward and kicked him again. As she regained her balance, the third man caught her from behind and lifted her off the ground. He squeezed tightly, trying to break her ribs, but Maya dropped the stick, reached back with both hands, and grabbed his ears. The man screamed as she flipped him over her shoulder and onto the floor. Maya reached the stairway, took the stairs two at a time, and saw Father standing on the platform next to the open doors of a train. He grabbed her with his right hand and used his left to force their way into the

car. The doors moved back and forth and finally closed. Arsenal supporters ran up to the train, pounding on the glass with their fists, but the train lurched forward and headed down the tunnel. People were packed together. She heard a woman weeping as the boy in front of her pressed a handkerchief against his mouth and nose. The car went around a curve and she fell against her father, burying her face in his wool overcoat. She hated him and loved him, wanted to attack him and embrace him all at the same...