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Mr. Ken Follett
London ENGLAND
BY FAX: 71-352-5168

Dear Ken,

As I believe Amy told you, I'm only just back from Italy, or I would have responded more quickly on your new outline for **THE THIRD TWIN**.

This one holds together more strongly than your previous version; but for me, I'm afraid it's still not working. Still, I think you have the materials here for what could be a terrific thriller.

The main conflict, I believe, should be between Jeannie and a possible love interest on one side, and on the other side, Berisford and his cohorts. This is implied in what you have now; but you don't have concrete back-and-forth maneuvers between these two sides until perhaps the last chapter. What I'm suggesting is that the present action of the novel should begin more or less on your page 11, which is where I believe the issue becomes joined between these two sides; and the stuff you have in the earlier pages could work itself in as back story.

For Berisford and his cohorts, the stake becomes the success of the merger. If it goes through, he and his colleagues become rich men; and the stakes could be made even bigger if he's in some financial difficulty. Maybe he has pretty much bankrupted himself trying to reign in, retrain, and rehabilitate his super-aggressive son. Or he could be in more conventional trouble, gambling debts, living beyond his means, etc. Also of course the stake for him is the possible disgrace (not to mention possible killer legal action) if the illegal stuff he did years ago should come to light. And I think the most interesting way to treat him would be to make him

into someone who is not really a bad guy. The job at the time was an exciting scientific challenge, something no one had ever been able to do before; and at the time he was convinced that this experiment would be in the national interest, something that would help America in its battle with evil Communism. Now, perhaps his views have changed, and he possibly feels guilty about what he did, but there is no way to undo the past.

For Jeannie, the stake is her livelihood and her reputation as an up and coming young scientist. Also, if she becomes aware fairly early in the novel that the root of her problems is Berisford and/or his associates, then she would be getting clear dramatic objectives as opposed to searching for clues, which is what we have her doing now.

One thought I had would be to make either Brian Mulligan or The New York Times reporter into someone who is unleashed against her by Berisford; but in the course of his investigations, he and Jeannie fall in love; and he then becomes her ally in discrediting Berisford and his colleagues.

As you have it now, Berisford does not seem to be a point-of-view character, and I think the book would be improved if he were to become one. I'd like to see him be the most rational and humane of the three; and then he would have to deal with his more violent colleagues at the same time as trying to cope with Jeannie and her investigations. At some point, Proust and Barck may decide that Berisford is just not up to the job of stopping Jeannie, and they may resort to more violent means than he wants to use; and that might put him in the awkward position of trying to warn or help Jeannie.

The bottom line to me is for this to work as a thriller, your main characters need to be in jeopardy, and as you have it now, this isn't happening. Sure, Jeannie has some threatening and upsetting episodes with the super-aggressive clones, but there is no particular one coming after her with any consistency; nor does there seem to be a concerted plot against her by Berisford, except of course for the fact that he fires her from her job.

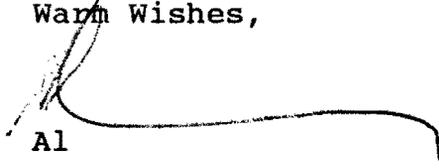
Some exciting action, I think, could be built around documentation, data which she has or videotapes or audiotapes which are incriminating and which they need to steal from her. Conversely, there could be documentation of their work which she somehow gets a hold of and they are desperate to retrieve. Also, as you have it now, the clones operate completely independently. Might there be a way for at least one of them to act on behalf of the bad guys?

If you like these ideas, and if you think that a merger can and should be the stake for Berisford, Barck, and Proust, then you probably are going to need a character who now is not in the story who is opposed to the merger. I realize that you in this novel are not interested in any kind of business intricacies and that whether

or not this company gets milked of its assets is probably a side issue; but dramatically, I think that if Berisford and his cronies have someone else to worry about in addition to Jeannie; and if Jeannie learns that there is this other power center opposed to them, this could interestingly heighten the conflict.

Ken, I guess what I've tried to do is take your materials and illustrate one way that a high-paced, high-tech thriller could be derived from them. All the scientific research you've done could be woven into this story as could some of the episodes you now have (although probably many of them would occur off-stage); but I don't really see any other way to go. After you've had a chance to read and consider all this, please call me, and we can hash it all over on the phone.

Warm Wishes,



Al

P.S. Separately I'm sending you back the outline with a few little markings which I made on it, but I don't think they're all that crucial.