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Dear Ken:

I gathered all my notes and ideas on *The Third Twin* over the holidays. I think you've got the plot well in hand now, and knowing from the last book how much work you do between draft one and draft two, I'm going to concentrate on some of the structural and character questions I have—many of which you've probably already thought about.

Primary among them for me is Berisford. I'm not really sure he should open the book, and I feel we need to know more about him. The way he reads now, he's a womanizer, he teaches (at what level? does he still do research?), and he remains part of Genetico—which I imagine would mean that he would be in charge of doling out the grants (as per outline), and that someone like Jeannie in fact is funded by a Genetico grant. Wouldn't Berisford be in the position of overseeing grants, so as to protect his colleagues and his past; perhaps it's even the reason Jeannie was hired at the university, so Berisford could keep an eye on her. (i.e., to be in the position to buy patents early, know about competition, etc.)

One thing I do have a problem believing in this draft is the way he comes on to Jeannie so artlessly and that her having turned him down is a motivation for him wanting to get her. This just doesn't ring right to me, and it makes him a bit of a buffoon. I think he needs to be sort of the evil center, a man who thinks he's manipulating everything but in his overly zealous attempts to control ends up foiling himself, which indeed happens. This doesn't really involve many changes, just a few tweakings of his character as it is. He also seems to

genuinely love his son. I find this interesting and would like to see it dealt with more, i.e., perhaps he started out having him as an experiment but then he turned into a real father. And what indeed makes Berisford tick? He doesn't seem to want to take over the world, although he clearly wants to protect it for rich white men, and he seems perhaps to have set himself up as the protector of the technology for the brave new world. Did they continue their experiments because they believed it was the right thing to do and it would help society? Or did they continue them for money? Or the thrill of discovery? The back story is still sketchy, but I do think Berisford needs to come clear as a character. His motivations and inner drives have to be brought to the fore, and his relationship with the university and with Genetico need to be pinned down.

Genetico as an entity itself needs to be more fully explored. Did they pioneer genetic research? Are they a private company or traded publicly? Have there been articles about them or is it all shrouded in secrecy? If they pioneered in vitro fertilization, did they then pursue genetics or fertility issues? Do they have an ethics panel? And is their research all politically motivated? (i.e., does it shore up *The Bell Curve* debate or advocate genetic manipulation in the children of criminals and derelicts and drug addicts?) There are so many moral/philosophical/political implications blowing around this issue currently that I hope you'll explore much more fully. The avenues through which to do that are Berisford and Steve.

Jeannie's character I think is great. I really like her, and I'm assuming that you're intending to beef her up as the rebellious-poor-kid-up-against-all-the-odds who wants to make herself into something. This is quite good, especially when she's opposed to Berisford. I think her attraction and relationship with Steve are well on the way, but you can probably do more to bring out through their relationship the way she sees Steve as a rich kid, the kind she could never deal with or be. There's a lot of good class resentment potential, especially between her and Berisford, that might play in with Steve. You're really good at that, and I hope you'll enhance it, vis a vis her relationship with Steve, Berisford, her mother, and her father. She is trying to prove something about potential, and nothing was easy for her: there's a larger theme permeating the plot—the old nature versus nurture debate—that I'd like to see strengthened in all its strands.

Steve: I like him, but he needs to have a much stronger, more disturbed and questioning reaction to the discovery of his origins. Many of the issues can be played out by our watching him come to terms with this new knowledge. This also will strengthen his bond to Jeannie—she has the scientific knowledge he'll want to explore. He should play out for us the emotional and ethical ramifications of the secret.

I do think the book begins awkwardly now, and it's too far along before we know what the crux of the story's going to be. Berisford's telling his ex-wife about his expected windfall doesn't ring true to me. I know it sets him up with a son, an ex-wife and as political pundit, but it sends the book off in the wrong direction. Could you perhaps open with Jeannie being late for her tennis match because she's watching Berisford on "Larry King?"

This false start is reinforced by the rape. Because so much time is spent on it, we think, up until about Chapter 5 that the book is going to be about rape. I know that you have positioned it to put doubt about Steve in the reader's mind, but I think the point of view switch into the rapist's mind is awkward. It sends us off course and we've just met Jeannie—we want to stay with her longer since she's our protagonist. I wonder if you could do this from Jeannie's point of view and keep the tension.

Page 10

I have a real problem here with the involvement of Steve's parents. Jeannie's actions do seem to me an incredible violation of their privacy. I can't imagine Jeannie testing Steve's parents and then telling Steve in front of them that he's adopted and has a twin. I think you have to rethink the involvement of the parents, even though I understand they're essential to the plot. They also don't seem the type of people who would just come up to be part of a study. Steve should be part of the study, and the parents should be brought in later; otherwise, what Jeannie is accused of by *The New York Times* is more than true. Also, does she really need to tell Steve right away that he's a twin?

Page 3

I'm disturbed by the point of view switch here, and I wonder if you can't end Chapter 2 when Jeannie walks off with Lisa. Then have Chapter 3 told from

their point of view. I understand the seed of doubt you're trying to sow, but I really do think it once again pushes the book in the wrong direction. Since we just met our main character, I think we need to stick with her a little longer.

Pages 23-24

Throughout, we need a lot more of the relationship between Lisa and Jeannie. Are they both helpful underdogs to one another? Does Lisa perhaps have a background similar to Jeannie's? We need a lot more, whether they're best buddies, confidants, perhaps the two raised themselves together or have known one another since high school. It will also provide you with an opportunity to let us get to know Jeannie better. I was also hoping that Lisa could be a little more present in the book. Obviously she can't be her assistant because if she met Pinker, the whole game would be foiled, but I do hope she doesn't disappear for as long as she does in this draft.

In addition, although I admire Jeannie's heroism, I found the rescue of Lisa too easy and awkward; it felt false somehow. How about if she just lets the fireman rescue her and goes with her to the police station? Once again, this starts to become a rape saga, which it really isn't. It's the fuel but not the fire.

Page 36-40

I know you did a lot of research here, but I can't help but wonder if this much rape follow-up is really needed, if they couldn't just go off to the police station and leave it at that, rather than dramatizing it. Once again, I'm trying to get to the heart of the book sooner, and since it's really Mish's entrance that goes with the rest of the story, I wonder if this is necessary.

Chapter 5, page 41

Here again I really don't think the parents should be included. This really is an invasion of privacy. Also, vis a vis Jeannie's character, what is the significance of the gold nose ring? Is it a fuck-you-I'm brilliant-I'll look-however-I-want attitude? And what is Jeannie's relationship to science? To authority? Clearly, she decides to study criminal behavior because of her father and has questions about herself. I'm looking forward to learning a lot more about her. And what is the source of her strength, her mother? It doesn't seem to be. Or is it pure aggressive/rebellious determination? And how does that fit into her study?

Page 48

Jeannie seems especially cavalier here. I think her openness needs to be toned down.

Chapter 6

I really like Berisford coming in and freaking out, but the whole dinner situation seems odd to me, especially since he repeats it later when he needs to get the committee members on his side. Better just to call her in and ask her the questions and leave the whole dinner and attempted seduction out. Again, I think we need to know what role Berisford played in hiring Jeannie. A project like this is always funded by a grant, not by the university, and I would assume it would be Berisford's Genetico grant money and that Berisford would be involved in reading the proposals for that. I think this could be a nice subplot for their relationship, where he has her there in order to keep an eye on her and now all his fears are coming to pass. I would cut the dinner altogether and let us know what Berisford knows because of the circumstances of her getting hired at Jones Falls.

Also, the first chapter leads me to believe it's summer, and I'm just not sure what semester we're in, what season we're in or exactly how long Jeannie's been there and what her relationship with Berisford is. Is he a mentor figure with ulterior motives?

Page 59

Here I wonder why Berisford doesn't plant the suspicion on Steve or why Jeannie herself doesn't make it. The connection is made on page 87, but in the reader's mind, it comes up here.

Page 61

This is the perfect place for us to learn about Berisford as perceived by Jeannie and what exactly his hand in her job has been.

Page 66

Can Steve recognize the same kind of fire in Jeannie that he feels in himself, the barely controlled aggressive power? He's a good character, and I think he needs more. I think his relationship to her has to be more than just the

physical, it has to be his recognizing a kindred soul so that the aggressive gene loops throughout everything. And his need to understand *who he is*.

Page 76

Once again, I would cut the whole dinner scene. Also, Jeannie's telling him to help himself to a drink while she dresses doesn't seem believable. In fact, I didn't find any of this scene believable. Perhaps she goes to him after the brief meeting in the office and after her visit with Lisa to try and make amends, but I think the dinner date, knocking him down, and the foiled come-ons don't really work.

We also need more consistency in Berisford's character. When he goes to the media, he plays the heavy, and yet when he's with Jeannie, he seems a buffoon. I would keep him as the zealot heavy, the man on the long mission protecting his flank for the longer mission, in other words, slightly mad at the end of the day. Also, Jeannie could so easily slap him with a sexual harassment suit for his behavior that the whole scene begs more questions than it answers.

Page 81

Here again I noticed the point of view inconsistency. It skips around a lot, and I know in the second draft it will be lessened. I wonder here in Chapter 8 if you don't want to once again use Jeannie's point of view rather than the others.

Page 89

Enter the villains. I like seeing this, and I hope we'll get even more on why they have all stayed involved, what Berisford's philosophical view is, what exactly the program was, what each of the man's relationship to the company is, both philosophically, financially and politically. Previous power struggles between them? What are Genetico's current products?

Page 92

Berisford gives the philosophical background as to why they're doing this; however, it isn't completely clear *what* and *how*. It would seem to me that some scientific work that the Nazis did might be appropriate to throw in here. (Every good thriller always needs a Nazi connection.) This should be the philosophical underpinnings of what these guys are doing, and I hope you'll expand it appropriately.

Page 104

Wouldn't Berisford be in charge of the grants?

Page 110

You may have other plans for this Penny episode, but it seems thrown in here and unnecessary. I know you've planted it so later when she is threatened she thinks back to Penny, but it seems like a very underdeveloped strand.

Page 116

Is "wild child" a technical term? You use it in several places but I'm not sure if it's just something she refers to, or if it's a technical term that's come out in her research. We need to know.

Chapter 14

On page 123, it seems Jeannie would know when her dad was getting out; otherwise, how did he find her since she's moved recently? They must have had a letter correspondence. I like his entrance here, but I do think we need quite a bit more of their relationship and past.

And does her dad steal everything? How about just her laptop computer?

Is Jeannie's at the university as a visiting scholar with a grant, or does she teach? This all needs to be clarified, especially in Chapter 15. By whom exactly is she employed? And does the grant money come with her?

Chapter 15

Here again we need to know who's funding Jeannie and what rights the university has to stop her research. This all seems a little too easy at this point, and I really wonder on page 135 if this is how a university would handle this. I'm ignorant in these matters, but it somehow strikes me as too easy. Perhaps Jeannie holds an endowed chair, one that's funded by Genetico, so that Berisford is in fact her boss. If that's the case, going through the faculty hearing would all be unnecessary, wouldn't it? Which came first—her job at Jones Falls or her Genetico grant?

Chapter 17

Here I'm still wanting to learn more about the back story behind the relationship between Proust and Berisford and Barck. What have they done together throughout the years, and what, exactly, is Genetico as an entity?

Page 154

During this discussion of wild children, might not Steve ask Jeannie if she was a wild child?

Page 162

There might be further opportunity here for us to see the story behind the infernal trio and to see what Paul Barck is up to.

Page 165

Rather than having her fired, can Genetico somehow find a missing piece in her contract to get rid of her? All this would do would be avoiding meeting the other characters. I would assume Jeannie would still have right to counsel and that the whole Steve situation could still be done that way.

Page 169

As far as I know, neither Berisford nor the *Times* knew that Jeannie was using the FBI files, nor is there any mention of it in the article as reprinted on page 173.

Page 175

I find it hard to believe that she wouldn't immediately print out these files, or take the disk home with her, knowing that she was in such trouble.

Page 183

Here again, I think Berisford's attraction to Jeannie is beside the point. Better that he's been trying to control her all along and realizes how hard she is to control. And again, if she has a funded chair, would he need to go through and meet with all these people? Wouldn't it just be a decision between him and the university president? I don't think too much would be lost by losing all this.

The most important thing throughout this book is to keep everything absolutely credible, since it's a somewhat incredible story. I'm not sure Berisford's manipulations here don't strain credulity a little too much. It seems to me, depending upon how she's funded, that there would be an easier way to get rid of her.

Page 209

I don't understand why sergeant Mish Delaware would know where Dennis Pinker is. How would she have the information? The connection to Mish Delaware seems awfully tenuous here. I don't understand why Jeannie would call her, as she's only seen her once and Lisa's been out of the story for too long. This whole strand of the plot does not seem as integrated as it needs to be.

Page 233

This is good background on Jeannie where we learn that she did everything herself and also the idea of having someone standing behind her, which Steve represents. This is good motivation that can be built on elsewhere.

Page 239

Mish states that Steve has a record of previous violent crimes, but in this country, juvenile records are sealed when a person turns 18.

The red Mercedes: how could Jeannie afford to buy even an old Mercedes? They're quite expensive. Could it have been a present from the fiancé who jilted her?

Page 241

It could never be stated that Paul Barck would be Proust's main financial backer. There are rules in America, limits on campaign funding, so it could never be reported on the news or happen in such an open manner. Better that Proust knows simply that if the truth of his past comes out, he won't have a prayer of election.

PAC ?

Page 243

My guess is even if the funding for her private research were withdrawn, the university would still have to discipline her and the hearing should be changed to whether or not the university disciplines her. ???

Again, Jeannie's accusation of the kissing: if she were going to use this, she would have used it before and in a much stronger way with a sexual harassment suit. I suggest cutting .

Page 241

Here Berisford talks about Paul Barck as president of Genetico, but this would imply that the whole situation mentioned before would have to be different, that Genetico would take away its funds and then ask the university to censor Jeannie.

Page 252

Here again, it should be Genetico that is funding Jeannie. Change the questioning appropriately.

Page 253

Again, Genetico couldn't announce that it's financing Senator Proust.

Page 269

If Jeannie had already run the file, she wouldn't have to go to the trouble of getting in there, she would just have to use her disk. This may be one break in that isn't necessary. I find it just a little too incredible that Daddy comes in just when she needs him. I find this whole subplot with Jeannie's father somewhat unnecessary (although probably cinematically strong). Do you perhaps want to cut it or change it to her seeking him out?

Page 288

Again, how would Mish Delaware know that Pinker is dead? After all, she's on the sex crimes unit in another city.

Page 305

I believe Steve's juvenile record would not be admissible.

Page 313

The term "wild child" again: is this the same thing as "hyperactive" or is there a technical term for what you mean?

Page 235

Is it really necessary for Jeannie and Charles to get busted in the Pentagon? This starts to strain credibility. I can see that it would be great in a movie, but I wonder if yet another escape is necessary. Couldn't they just walk out with the information? That would make Chapter 35 more straightforward, as they just get the information; hard to believe that the infernal trio would be able to mobilize themselves to find this out soon enough.

More suspense

Chapter 39, page 351

Is it necessary for Proust and to know that Jeannie has the print out? Can't the plot work just as well with this all coming as a surprise at the end? Otherwise, it just strains credulity. If she could just walk off with it without having any of them notified, I think the plot would not suffer.

Page 360

It seems that Steve is overreacting here. It just doesn't feel right to me. Perhaps he just needs to get away, but he should leave things more up in the air.

Chapter 41

Ditto. Does the trio need to know that Jeannie has the names?

Page 368

Given his feelings for Jeannie, hard to believe he wouldn't immediately look at the tape to see if she called.

Page 372

Here it's October, although it seems that the semester is well underway; only a week ago he was out by his pool. The time needs to be straightened out here.

Page 397

I think the pitch to get the twins down there has to be much *much* stronger than this. She's got to tell them more to make it sound like there's a major life and death event going on; otherwise, who would drop everything for what

could well be a crank caller and take the risk of going to the airport where there may or may not be a ticket waiting? Also, none of these guys appears civic-minded or philosophically or politically inclined. This is hard to believe.

Page 398 and following

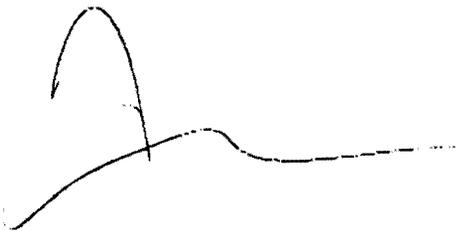
I'm not so sure that Steve impersonating Harvey doesn't also strain credibility too much. Is it really necessary to have this happen? I like the idea, it's very dramatic, but I'm worried that the real key to pulling off this story is to make every detail absolutely plausible. This, combined with getting the other twins down, is a plot point that may need to be changed to keep the believability airtight. In other words, I think the end isn't quite there yet. Let's all put our heads together and perfect it.

I haven't discussed anything with Al, as requested. As I'm sure you already know, he just had a bypass operation but seems okay.

I haven't done any live notes on this draft—anticipating concentrating on that on that next draft. I can expand further on anything you want to discuss. Call me!

And HAPPY NEW YEAR.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'A' followed by a long, horizontal, wavy line that tapers off to the right.

AP:rw