

Writers House Inc.

A LITERARY AGENCY

ALBERT ZUCKERMAN, D.F.A.
AMY BERKOWER
MERRILEE HEIFETZ
SUSAN COHEN
MAJA NIKOLIC
SUSAN GINSBURG
KASSIE EVASHEVSKI
ANN MAURER
MICHELE G. RUBIN
FRAN LEBOWITZ
LIZA LANDSMAN
MEG O'ROURKE

January 11, 1996

Mr. Ken Follett
London ENGLAND
BY FAX: 011 44 1 71 352-5168

Dear Ken,

I am in the midst of composing a long letter to you which deals with the issues raised in your fax to me; but it's probably going to take me another day or so to get all that together.

In the interim, though, I think I need to point out to you what I consider to be a perhaps fatal flaw in the conception of the book as it now stands. The main stake presumably is Jeannie's career and position. But lurking in the shadows are somewhat hideous threats which appear to have little or nothing to do with that main stake; and yet because they are so physically threatening, they overshadow it; and as a result, it's not at all clear to the reader what the book is all about, what the main threat is, what it is most particularly you're supposed to be worrying about.

Years ago, when I was a student at the Yale Drama School, we discussed from time to time the effect of putting a black actor in what presumably would be an all-white play. And actually, there were many student productions in which there were black actors playing "white" parts. In those days, it turned out to be a terrible distraction; and even today, I find it a bit odd to see black opera singers singing Verdi or Rossini at the Met. What I'm getting at, perhaps indirectly, is that you create an atmosphere of menace, but it appears inchoate and to some extent undirected. Yes, the attack on Jeannie in Philadelphia is deliberate; but even that has no tangible tie-in with the main plot. For example, Harvey does not tell Jeannie that she had better back off in her research or there will be worse to come.

01/11/96 13:25 FAX 1 212 685 1781

WRITERS HOUSE

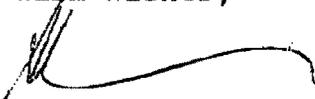
002

Another way of looking at this is to consider that the evil of Harvey and Dennis in terms of the plot (and not of course, in social terms) is somewhat frivolous. It seems to me that if we are going to have a world-class thriller with clones doing bad things, they have to be really bad and have really bad consequences. By really bad, I mean harming more than just one person with no particular goal other than to have some perverse pleasure.

By the same token, I think that what Berisford and his cronies have wrought needs to be much bigger than producing a few clones, two of whom have turned out to be psychopathic. This would make them participants in what may or may not have been a criminal enterprise; but the consequences don't seem earth-shaking. On the other hand, if they've produced some clones who have extraordinary abilities, both for good and for evil, then Berisford could turn out to be some genius of a geneticist; and the excitement of the novel as a whole could, I think, be lifted to a much higher level.

Separately, I am today sending you by courier my chapter by chapter notes on the manuscript as it stands. These point to problems in each of the chapters as they now exist; and some of these would be, I think, useful in your rewrite; but I urge you please to keep an open mind until you get my long letter, and then until we meet week after next.

Warm Wishes,



Al