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**PAGE 1 OF 3**

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please give this fax to Ken

thanks

Georgetown  
January 29, 1996

Dear Ken:

Thanks for letting me read the first draft of THE THIRD TWIN. As always with your books, I didn't want to put it down once I'd started reading it. It's a gripping plot and I particularly liked Jeannie, she's a great, down-to-earth, compelling heroine. In length and in structure I suppose the book most resembles Night Over Water. I remember reading the first draft of that and I like The Third Twin much more.

Basically I really didn't find anything in the book that glared at me as implausible or untrue. I do have a few comments, you'll notice most of them refer to places where I wanted more reaction to something. So, for what they're worth, here are my comments ...

- ✓ • You don't mention the other girls who were felt up and harassed in the locker room during the fire. When they are all outside the gym, half naked and safe from the fire, I think there would be a ripple of horror about the security guard who touched or frightened some of them.
- ✓ • I mentioned already, on the way to Elaine's, that I think Lisa Hoxton would have more of a reaction to her rape. It need not be a huge explosion, it might be an utterly repressed explosion, perhaps one that only Jeannie sees and that Lisa herself doesn't even recognize. She might insist "No really, I'm completely fine" and then reveal the opposite is true by accidentally smashing this gorgeous glass vase that her grandmother gave her ... or whatever. As far as I know most people who are raped by a stranger tend to divide their lives into the time before and the time after the rape, the wound is deep even if they heal fast and they are always scarred, though some less hideously than others.
- ✗ • I liked Dawn and Lisa and it seem to me that you could use them a little bit more than you do, as confidantes or good girlfriends of Jeannie. I wanted to see more of them. ✓ When Lisa dips out of the story it seemed too obvious to me that she was out of the picture for plot reasons, namely that if she were to meet Steve sooner she would immediately identify him as the rapist. Because of that she feels like a creature of the plot more than a well-rounded character. Could she go away to recover with parents in the country somewhere near Baltimore and be out of the picture for a while that way, then come back for the identity parade? That would solve two problems. Also a near miss, when she *almost* sees Steve, might add tension. ✓
- ✓ • Would Jeannie come to the conclusion that there is a third twin as quickly as she does? I felt it was a few beats too fast. Not because it isn't the obvious answer, but because the obvious answer is just so incredible, even Jeannie would take a bit longer to accept that this is what Genetico have been up to.
- ✓ • I don't think Steve Logan would give up so easily on going to the hearing with Jeannie. He needs to be compelled, by the threat of arrest, or something else that makes it absolutely impossible for him to go to her hearing. Otherwise, if I'm remembering it correctly, he seems to cave too quickly to Mish's request. He and Jeannie have spent

most of the night preparing and there is so much riding on this. Also, the time line on the day of the hearing seems implausible as is. If Jeannie manages to get to the line up after her hearing, surely Steve could have gone to the hearing with her?

- ✓ • pg. 296 you've called him Dennis Skinner instead of Pinker!
- When Jeannie meets Wayne the sadist in New York City I thought she'd be searching his face for signs of recognition, just as we are as readers. She seems to treat it too much like a normal meeting, when in fact he may have tried to rape her only yesterday. When he shows no signs of recognition she realizes that either he's a very good actor, or that there are more clones. I felt I wanted you to take me through these steps.
- As a general point, (and I think I mentioned this to you in New York last week,) Jeannie spends most of the week besieged by rapists and sexual harassers, it's very creepy and it takes an unusual woman to be so resilient in the face of it. You don't have her remarking on this fact, pausing for breath to reflect on how crazy things have gone, talking it over with Lisa or Dawn - something to give us and her a short break from it. Obviously you don't want to make this a big psycho drama about rape and sexual harassment victims, but I just wanted more reaction from Jeannie and perhaps a bit more space between the rape and attack scenes, without losing the current pace.
- Finally and by the way, your point of view shifts from chapter to chapter are really good and very useful for me as they illustrate perfectly the comment you made about character point of view in HEARTLAND!

Hope this is helpful. Keep well.

lots of love  
Jann.