

# Writers House Inc.

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Mr. Ken Follett  
LONDON, ENGLAND  
FAX:

Dear Ken,

Bravo! You have on the whole once again pulled the rabbit out of a hat. As you know, I was dubious about your being able to make this story work; but I think you've pretty much succeeded.

Still, my feeling is that there are several weeks of work ahead to bring the chapters that are weaker up to the standard of the ones that deliver. I am by courier sending you my notes on the first 508 pages which you should have by Wednesday.

For now, I'll discuss in general terms what I perceive to be the main areas which I feel could benefit from some rethinking and revision.

The weakest parts of the book, in my view, are the Berisford scenes in the first half of the novel. We spend a fair bit of time with him; and he is not sufficiently interesting. I see two ways to approach this problem, and of course there may be others that I'm not thinking of. The first would be to make him a lot more evil than he is. Richard III is the model that comes to mind. The second alternative would be to make him a much more tortured soul than he is. 1. He has a crush on Jeannie. 2. He sees her becoming the kind of ground-breaking scientist that he had longed to be but never became. 3. He is in awe of what she's accomplished; 4. and he foresees that in the future she could do things that are greater and of possible enormous benefit to mankind and to science. 5. He also knows how she has struggled to get where she is, and he respects her for that too. So, if you go ahead and make him so appreciative of her and so sympathetic to her, then it becomes torture for him to do things against her which he has to do. You give us an inkling of this here and there, but not much; and I would urge you to consider changing his character along these

lines. Some of this, of course, is suggested in the marginal notes which I am sending you, but I wanted to give this special emphasis.

On a much lesser note, though, also about Berisford, I wonder about his having professorships at two or three other universities. You mention this in the beginning; but as the story proceeds, it sounds more and more as if his sole affiliation is right here in Baltimore with Jones Falls University. If you think it's important that he have these appointments at these other universities, then you're going to have to weave in (phone calls, demands that he be away, something to give all this some reality which it now does not have. On another note, we learn that he has a delicious evening with some young woman affiliated with the college; and it might be nice to weave in a bit more about her and that relationship, make him more appreciative of her.

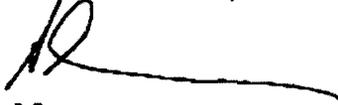
I'm very happy with how you have developed both Steve and Jeannie. Steve, I think, also needs a bit more of an anchor into his own life. He is supposed to be a law student; but he never appears to have classes to attend, exams to prepare for, briefs to write, etc. Or is this his vacation period? Either way, this has to be made clear.

I found myself wondering about Jeannie's winning a championship sponsored by a cigarette company; but then of course I recalled that there actually is such a thing. How crazy! But people who rise to the top in a game like tennis usually do nothing else; they don't go to college or graduate school; they just play tennis all the time. <sup>9</sup> If she had been the lead player on the Princeton women's varsity, that I think might be accomplishment enough to account for her tennis prowess, and then it would make more sense that she went on to the career that she has undertaken. It would still leave her as being a pretty terrific tennis player. \*

Coming back to Berisford, another way to give depth and richer interest to his character, I think, would be to give him more feelings than we now have from him about Barck and Proust. <sup>10</sup> If we knew more about what he likes and dislikes about each of these men, we'd get to know them better; and at the same time we would acquire some richer insight into Berisford.

Call me please if you want to talk about any of this stuff; and I'm hoping to have the balance of my notes over to you no later than Thursday. I'm tied up tonight; but I hope to finish the book Tuesday evening and I'll call or fax you Wednesday morning.

Warm Wishes,



Al