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Jeannie must talk to Lisa about Steve
"our park"

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Send disk.

Mr. Ken Follett
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Dear Ken,

As I'm sure I will have told you by the time you receive this letter, I was really pleased to read the manuscript—not only was it good to work again, but it was really gratifying to see that this is about five hundred percent improved over your first draft. The story *works* now, its details are filled out very nicely, and it runs with an engine. Of course I found all sorts of little fixes, which I'll go through page by page. Nothing that I think will take any substantial rethinking, just little dropped ends and fixes.

There are only two overall aspects I think could be deepened further. One is the emotional intensity of the story. Especially in the beginning (1) when Jeannie leaves her mother in the nursing home, I'd like to see you pump up the emotional impact; ditto (2) when Harvey is in his car I think he can be even more fiery and scary; (3) and I'd like to see more emotion around the rape and scenes between Jeannie and Lisa and Steve.

(4) I also hope you might make Berisford more complex. You have increased him in subtlety, and I see here an opportunity to increase his subtlety even further. What I'm suggesting I think is here in embryo and will make him a lot more interesting if you bring it out in this next draft. Berisford believes in the American dream—kids raise themselves up by their bootstraps rather than being helped by welfare and quotas. Native intelligence (nature) will win out over adverse background (nurture). Wouldn't he see his own political theory realized in Jeannie? Couldn't he see in Jeannie everything he hoped Harvey would be? Couldn't he have taken her on as his protégé because he sees in her something of himself at a younger age? And since he does like women, maybe he could *really* like her. And maybe rather than just being the villain, he can really be very torn about what he has to do. For example, rather than just being an egomaniacal, vain womanizer, maybe he truly loves women, and the egomania is really a foil for his insecurities at being a short scientist running with the rich boys and having made it. That way, he, although he is the controller of the plot, is the nicest of the evil trio. And I think his being more torn about what he has to do will add some real interest

to his character. I've always had a problem with him trying to seduce Jeannie. I would much rather see a paternal relationship that she shares. The his betrayal will hurt her even more and play off nicely against what happens with her real father.

⑤ The other thing I focused on was how quickly Jeannie accepts Steve, and the fact that she never really deals with Lisa about her belief that Steve is not really the rapist. You've done an excellent job integrating the rape plot, and Lisa and Mish, into the story, but I think the remaining "click" is making us believe that Jeannie accepts Steve, and ⑥ that she deals with it with Lisa in a way that doesn't bruise their friendship.

SUNDAY, Chapter 1

I think you could punch this up to make it even more scary. You've got a very good start on it, but I think one more go-through will make it even more gripping.

You refer to the girls as a hockey team. I don't know if you mean field hockey or soccer. Field hockey is big at preppy schools, and Jones Falls is an Ivy League school. Even better, though, would be a women's lacrosse team. It's very preppy and very American (I checked this with an American sports expert).

Also, throughout the manuscript, I've marked "car park." They're not called car parks here; they are called either parking lots or garages, so you should have your computer change that throughout.

Chapter 2

This is a good chapter that sets out a lot, but it is about twenty pages longer than any other chapter in the book, so you may or may not want to break it into two, just as a structural consideration. I also hope Jeannie can have an even stronger reaction to her mother's being left at the home. Rather than just thinking about how she can get more money, she should think about all she's done for her, how she's abandoning her—let's pull the emotional strings even harder. You've got them tuned up pretty tight, but I think you could tune them even lighter here. Rather than talking about the mechanics, have them talk about the emotions more.

p. 22: Perhaps start a new chapter with the tennis match? X

p. 52: If you agree with my suggestion, perhaps this would be a good place to point up Berisford's insecurities, talking about how far he's come, perhaps his mixed feelings about his compatriots. Maybe he sees himself as the pure scientist working for the good of humanity and sees them more as power mongers? In the true right wing fashion, I think it's good that he does have his beliefs, but it is also true that the one not quite redeeming—but almost—value of every right-winger I've ever come in contact with or heard about is that they are fiercely loyal to their people, which would perhaps make Berisford more loyal to Jeannie.

Chapter 4

p. 59-65: I know why you have Steve have this run-in with the cops—to show us who he is—but it feels like this should come later, like when he's arrested. Without

it ever making a reappearance it seems like a loose end. I would suggest deleting it or integrating it elsewhere.

p. 70: Steve's fight with Tip really looks to me like self-defense, especially since Tip took the tire iron first. For Steve to feel as guilty as he does, wouldn't he have to be the one to pick up the tire iron first? x

p. 92: Here I think Jeannie does need to have more thought about what it means to someone who doesn't know they're adopted that they're adopted. This is the one place where her ethics can be called into question. And I think she needs to soul-search about it a little more, not necessarily here, but perhaps when the *Times* reporter first calls her up or at some point. I think she can certainly come around to thinking it's necessary for science but that she could have handled it better, but I don't feel that she ever adequately deals with this issue in her own mind. Telling someone they're adopted when they don't know they're adopted is quite an invasion, it seems to me.

Chapter 7

p. 101: Perhaps here Berisford could wonder how his star protégé could do this. I think it's really best that they do have a mentor-protégé relationship, and that he is truly committed to her, and hurt by what's happening here. I also think that it's okay if he has a crush on her and is maybe in love with her, but I don't think Jeannie is the type of girl who would ever even take the chance of fucking with the boss. Also, most twenty-nine-year-olds aren't attracted to people in their sixties. I think it's better if Berisford sort of tries to make a pass at her during the dinner and makes it clear that he's done this before, but Jeannie edges him off. Or keep it on a paternal level.

p. 119-120: Here's an opportunity for Jeannie to think further about the implications of telling someone they're adopted.

p. 127: I'm a bit baffled on how Steve gets arrested here. How would they have found him so quickly? And wouldn't there have been questions from Mish about what Jeannie is doing with him? Would it perhaps make better sense if the cops were to get them after drinks, so at that point we can see Steve convincing Jeannie to believe him? This all happens so fast that I find it hard to believe that Jeannie is certain that Steve is innocent, and I can't figure out how the cops found him so quickly. Possible to put this off until after they have drinks? Also, Mish really does have to say something to Jeannie about her being with her friend's rapist, and Jeannie has to freak and realize she has to talk to Lisa right away. I think we really need to see Jeannie talking to Lisa, either before or after the lineup. And Jeannie, because of her friendship with Lisa, has to have a much more personal response to Steve's arrest. This will heighten the emotion, I think; right now her instant hostility to Mish seems off. It seems to me she would react with severe confusion and alarm, and need time to think about it and talk about it with Lisa before she immediately assumes that Mish is wrong.

Chapter 10

Here's a nice opportunity, I think, for us to see more shades of gray in Berisford's character, and to see that he really has paternal, caring feelings for Jeannie at that he is torn up about the conflict of interests in which he finds himself. I think he should also think about how attracted he is to her, how she is the kind of woman he likes, but she has made it clear in the past that she is not interested. I also wonder here if we are to believe that it was Berisford who tipped off the police to arrest Steve. If so, we need to see him thinking that.

p. 148: This makes a great ending to the chapter, but I do find it unbelievable that this all goes on with Berisford standing there watching; and if it does, I think there have to be some kind of repercussions from it, otherwise I think he should drop her off to go in and find her father alone.

p. 156: Here especially, it doesn't make sense to me that Berisford is listening to all this, and if he is, he has to bring it up with her later and it has to affect his feelings for her somehow. Otherwise, let's just have him drop her off.

This chapter, especially during the discussion of her mother in a rest home, is a good place for you to pump up the emotion even more.

p. 159: A lot more has to be done with this, I think. Jeannie has to start telling Lisa about how she can't believe it's Steve, about how she spent the day testing him. This is a real emotional flash point between them and a lot more should be made of it. And Lisa, I would think, would initially be angry at Jeannie for telling her she doesn't believe it could be Steven, and accuse her of acting like the police: let's have a real friend blowout here. Or perhaps Jeannie saves the discussion until the next day when they go to Richmond to see Dennis Pinker or whatever; this issue definitely has to be resolved between the two friends.

p. 177-78: Here I think it's really important that Jeannie and Lisa take up the issue of Steve and Dennis. Lisa should have a very strong reaction to seeing Dennis, who looks just like Steve; they should have it out in extremely emotional fashion about Jeannie not believing Steve is the rapist and Lisa believing he is.

p. 181: It seems to me that it should be clear that Lisa isn't in the room when Jeannie interviews Dennis, as it is not clear now. It seems that Lisa goes in with her but then isn't there. I think it's important that that be made clear.

p. 185: Here we get the whole backstory of Genetico, and it doesn't feel quite real to me, since you have the three men involved telling each other about what went on. Whereas when Berisford rethinks some things on page 215, the explanation seems like what would happen in real life. Is it possible to have the actual conversation be more mysterious, and then have Berisford in his thinking fill us in on what went

on? And perhaps let Berisford have a few more compunctions about breaking the law than the other men did? Let's discuss this.

p. 199: Wouldn't Steve also be charged with arson and breaking and entering?

p. 203: Once again, Lisa's here, but it seems later, with the panties situation, that she wouldn't be. Can we have her waiting elsewhere? Otherwise Lisa could do something when Dennis is holding the knife at Jeannie's throat, and certainly would cry out since it would remind her so vividly of what had happened to her. I really think she should be out of this room.

p. 216: Here is an example of Berisford's fantasies, which I think maybe could be turned into more loving fantasies, rather than just conquest fantasies, and perhaps he could feel more paternal toward Jeannie. Perhaps rather than such resentment and fear, he could just feel torn and hurt and trapped.

p. 223: I imagine the subject of Steve and Dennis would come up again here, since Jeannie just went through a preview of what Lisa went through, supposedly at the hands of Steve, and Jeannie could work out her doubts about Steve, or her belief in Steve, with Lisa.

p. 238: The New York Times calls her at 9 p.m.? Also, she seem too hostile at the beginning and it also seems to me here, in this conversation, that she would have to think about the ethical dilemma of telling subjects they're adopted. Both Jeannie and the reporter have to make the charges more specific. And surely there are set guidelines for this—twin studies have been going on for years.

p. 243: Here again, perhaps Berisford, rather than being a womanizer and a power monger, can really love women and have them be his real weakness, so that it's more attractive, and not quite so disgusting. I know it will be hard to do, but if Berisford can play a double game here, trying to rescue Jeannie while at the same time trying to stop her, and then realize by the time the hearing comes around that he has no choice but to sacrifice her, I think it will be more emotional and poignant.

p. 279: Shouldn't Jeannie still have a hint of suspicion here and not completely surrender to Steve's charms?

p. 285: How can Berisford get Jeannie's mail from AOL without her password?

p. 289: Jeannie hasn't yet told him how everyone has let her down. I also think before they start on anything else, that Steve and Jeannie need to have another discussion about Steve's innocence and Lisa's certainty that it is him, and how she dealt with it. Also, Jeannie has to bring it up to Steve that Lisa is her best friend. ✓ Anyway, sometime before page 294, when they eat pizza together, they've got to talk about the rape indictment.

Chapter 26

From here on out, a lot of times when Berisford is snooping he goes to a pay phone, and he seems to me like the kind of guy that would have a cell phone. It's a very easy change to make, which I've basically done here.

p. 310: Here Jeannie says she has releases from the two women, but she doesn't. A little plot hole.

p. 331: Here also she has to realize that she just can't imagine that Steve is the rapist.

p. 343: Here when Jeannie tells Lisa that it all started with Steve Logan we have to know how Lisa feels about whether or not he's a rapist, and she has to have a reaction to it.

Chapter 32

Here would also be a good place to work some more subtlety into Berisford's character.

p. 352: When Jeannie wonders why she is prejudiced against Steve, his being indicted for rape might occur to her as well.

Jeannie's torn feelings about Steve, mixed up with her worries about her mother and her future, really pump up the emotional stakes here.

p. 416 is missing from the manuscript.

p. 447: I wonder if this threatening phone call is really necessary. It doesn't really lead anywhere, and it feels a bit like overkill to me. I would suggest cutting it.

p. 497: Perhaps he could have thought of Jeannie and her mother here; perhaps he could see Jeannie as one of the "rescuable poor" who raise themselves up without relying on welfare, etc. etc. etc., and show that moral fiber gets you there. Maybe she could be one of those who confirms his political beliefs.

p. 500: From here on out, I've often suggested a different use for the word "clone." Just because it's used so often, I felt like we've entered Science Fictionland, and it's a charged word, so I've tried to change it here and there to doubles, lookalike, doppelganger, things like that, just so we don't get the word "clone" so often.

p. 571: They'd also have to know that Lorraine wouldn't take it, because Steve needs the information to get himself cleared of the rape charge.

p. 581: Here Jeannie pulls out the phone, and yet later, on p. 588, she is wondering why Mish hasn't called her yet. A slight inconsistency that needs to be fixed.

Send dink.

I think you've pulled the ending together well; it's particularly effective how she is pulled from the jaws of humiliation at the last moment. Anyway, I'm at home most of the time and free to discuss any of this when you wish. You've done a great job—this is going to be a bang-up bestseller.

All best wishes,

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

AP:ps