



Dear Ken

It worries me that I enjoy TT so much and your agent did not; I think you should begin to make preparations for bankruptcy. Most of your additions seem good to me, although one worry is that they have slowed down the narrative. The first draft I read almost at one sitting. This obviously cannot happen with the second draft simply because it is longer and it has no mystery to compel for me. But I think it is probably too long, and when in doubt, strike it out. I like all the social detail, police procedure and popular science, which seem welded in, and I would throw out reminiscences about formative years etc.

I would throw out lots of things of course, but I have a sense of the possible. Sometimes your writing seems to me as good as it gets, right up there with Stark and Ambler and Thompson and Woolrich and Goodis. Then the Barry Manilow element intervenes. Never mind. This may be your best book. It does not have a great sympathetic villain like Storm Island but it has (if it has not lost it) terrific narrative traction and interesting background ideas. But perhaps I go for the college setting more than your average reader.

The typescript has markings, ranging from faintly pencilled to strongly red-inked, roughly in line with my certainty. All these minuscule changes could be ignored and nobody would notice, with the exception of "miniscule" and other typing errors. It is always good to deliver an immaculately typed version to the editor so he does not get smug on pedantry.

Sometimes my pencil followed no reason that I can remember, but most of these little changes have some kind of rationale. For instance describing a newly raped woman as looking miserable does not seem adequate, especially if you have just used that word. Having her stare into space, and go on staring into space when Jeannie first talks to her, lets the reader supply the horror

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I am glad that leaping and sinking hearts seem [just] within quota

Under my present curse for overuse:

*brilliant*

*Oh my God.* [ This phrase should be banned from all thrillers *11 uses*

*triumphantly* - usually the way someone thought *seven*

*beautiful* - I too often described thus

*electrified*

*x said angrily*

Two jaws drop in your novel. Does this ever happen in life ?

I think <sup>you</sup> people swear more than even go-getters ~~would~~ in real academia would. I don't think Jeannie, however feisty-raunchy-anarchic-impulsive would use "bullshit" when pleading with a University president

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p105 I don't think any educated racist would hold these views of the Japanese  
There would simply be a persisting distaste

page 231 would her heart go out to Steve so readily when she has strong reason to suspect that he has raped her friend? She would surely approach him with mixed feelings in which negative ones would dominate. However the ensuing conversation is itself persuasive that he is good old Steve and she could credibly end it with her heart going out to him, though I would prefer not that phrase

See attached notes re: Scene where people tell each other at length what they already know; scene where people tell each other things we already know. Improbability of escaping rat scene; pointlessness of scene with Will;

p5

vision because you want to suggest something more compelling and external than mere fantasy. x

p41 ralph lauren jckt ; one possible way to tie up loose end at the finish. Lisa will have to get back on track with men again. End of novel, Lisa departing from scene, Jeanne can remind her that there is a certain Michel W in math department to whom she owes a ralph lauren jacket.

p60 Dont believe for second any professional black hustler would say dare this directly to a cop. ✓

p76 I cant remember if Lisa made a complaint or withdrew it?. If she withdrew it would not the cops have only an arson investigationn? Mish might then want L to instigate, rather than help with, investigatiron? x

p 91

Nature and Nurture in philosphy? N v N debate is distinct from determinism v free will debate, although latter always leads to former. x

105 No highclass racist would believe this. ✓

168 Shut the fuck up is fine. Steve could hardly resist saying it But the later insulting bravado is just silly. This would simply invite a real life Allison to return with a posse. Better: "Lets cut the crap dtctve, I know your a tough son of a bitch. But I also know that in a minute another cop is going to come in here with coffee [etcl].

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In this chapter we still have threee people telling each other things they already know to fill out the plot. I dont see many ways round this except by heightening the element of reminiscnCs You might emphsise a bit more that Jim had been effectively out of the business for years. There is no reason why they should have met fac to face for years until the big offer caused them to deal on phone. "It was x years since B had been face to face with J but the old animosity returned at once. ✓

circa page 208 The rat scene tests credibility somewhat. Its components are good but as a whole it does not convince. Its good that Dennis ~~he~~ can challenge fate anouncing he will get the panties. But to live up to this he would have to surprse us wth a fool prooof plan. We have to believe that he can distract the guard long enought to frCe the rat and

(2)

that the rat will distract the guard long enough for him to do his knife act. We also have to believe that he could be confident that it would work in advance. This is a lot to buy. Too much for me.

*even* You might sacrifice the bravado by having him greet Jeannie along the lines "what a belle lady; I am sure when you leave here you will leave me with an intimate keepsake...." The approach would be mock gallant and almost charming. J and guard lower their guard and Jeannie might even wonder why this young man who seems just as charming as Steve should be in here. That type of thing. Then the rat and the kife and the panties could hit the reader as well as her as a total surprise.

Dennis' gamble that she won't talk about her nickers is convincing and good.

p231 see note earlier <sup>R</sup> on this page

p235. I think when parting she would let him know that she believes in him, not just her theory.

p444 to 447 Is this entire scene with Will necessary?

448 Is this phone threat necessary?

p542 Father has improved but I still don't think he would "steal" his daughter's TV to restore his sense of worth as a thief, if that is the suggestion. The "old feeling" would be petty larceny, not the adrenaling of a serious thief. He might do it to get into the poker game to escape the blues, telling himself he would buy her an even better set. ~~p547~~

p476 I think Wayne is almost charming in a sleazy way and this is good. You don't want seven rapists and one Nader; you want some variation on the genetic theme, as well as much duplication. I think Wayne should be an S&M freak but not an actual sadist. Someone who has contained and sublimated his impulses entirely within fantasy. He would never have any real desire to torture an unwilling or unpaid victim. This is as you have written it but the word "sadist" belongs to another type. Maybe cable TV would be the appropriate place for him to become known.

p482 I am not happy with what I have struck out but I can't do better.....

485 I have gone thru life saying "<sup>improbable</sup> impossible" but I imagine you have done your research.

566 It's too easy that gayman has key <sup>reality</sup> and will let her in. Let him have the key but give him a motive of nosiness. He can satisfy his curiosity about this young bucks room now he has some sort of pretext. I am not sure ~~he~~ would reveal so gladly a name he had been at pains to conceal. Perhaps make him lonely rather than elegant. *Let (cost)*

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568 She actually does a dance?? Most unlikely.

p569 This is good. I had forgotten or never absorbed the fact that Berisford is called Jones. So has Jeannie So all you need is: Jones

These twins are supposed to be razor sharp. Even I would not be dumb enough to ask what kind of wine we might lovingly ~~drink~~ have half-drunk. Berisford could have given Harvey a quick briefing on the Jeannies at <sup>and</sup> flat

on ~~on her~~ burglar father.

p596 An old-fashioned <sup>character</sup> gentleman like Oliver wd not use this kind of language in front of a white tenant

I think the transposition of Harvey is another test of credibility. Oliver has to be quite strong and quite violent. Perhaps if Oliver were introduced as an enormous black man it might help. I like the social <sup>historical</sup> detail about blacks and guns. Otherwise one could make him a sixty year-old who was in the Korean war.

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Another impersonation, and the most difficult for both agent and reader. When Steve is playing Harvey in B's flat there are about five or six occasions when he risks detection. Now he must be in severe danger, or there is no suspense; and yet he must not get away with things too easily. Now my feeling is that once anyone actually suspects to the point of testing Steve the game would be up. These are guys who know that there are a lot of clones about.

I don't remember if Steve is properly cued for the presence of Paul and Jim or if he would distinguish them or know that they were "uncle". You could have B tell Steven/Harvey on the phone that uncle Jim and Uncle Paul will be [still] there.

As I type I don't remember the details or the order of events. Here are some notions if you re-write. Berisford takes his leak. That is one thing Steve could do. When B returns He could go take a leak, guided by the flushing toilet identify the little room. He checks that out. Then he can look quickly at the other rooms. One of them is obviously his father's. Another turns out to be the maid. Maybe she is still in there. He improvises. "You should know I shall be stopping over tonight" She mistakes this, as he later realises for a signal; be in my bed. But he does not have time to check out two rooms. So at the end father is fondly (but Steve thinks maybe suspiciously) watching and he takes a fifty/fifty chance.

Of course on these lines he must have made the decision to stay overnight before the reconnoitre. Getting him into the Den ~~would be~~ at the beginning would be the problem, but I think that was fairly credible.

Or he could have a stroke of luck. He is somehow pointed into the Den by B. When he makes his decision to stay overnight B sez: you better tell

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Marianne ~~to~~ that you will be staying over. He can rekky the rooms and tell Marianne, who takes it for a bidding etc.

Time when the four are in the Den this is the most testing. [ Knowing where the whisky is is good. Thats using his head.]

But you have Paul and Berisford with suspicious looks and what seems like a definite test. He would never pass.

One way you can increase both plausibility and suspense is to do it as Simenon would. Steve sees an odd look on Pauls face. Is this suspicion?. Has he been too ~~light~~ polite to the maid? Now he is asked a question about his childhood. Is this a test? There is in any case onely one answer: I dont remember. Is it something he would forget? Paul seems satisfied. But is he exchanging a look with Berry?. It will ~~become plain~~ *emerge* at the end of the scene that they have not suspected a thing: pure paranoia on Steve's part.

That type of thing. Of course in all your novels good guys are fantastically perceptive about revealing looks on the faces of bad guys. Here you could make a concession to realism and see things thru the eyes of someone less than omniscient. There would be a lot of suspense but it would all turn out to be inside Steves head