

This is really good! I have many ideas (surprise!) about characterizations, etc., to discuss with you and I know this is a preliminary stage and you've already filled in a lot that's not on paper, but here's what comes to me as I read through.

1. As you know, I grew up in Northern California so all my California stuff is twenty years old but probably still applies: Allergies get better only in the desert--in the countryside they're really bad (I know, I had them & had to have 2 shots a week) You can't grow grapes near Lake Tahoe. Near the redwood country you can -- on the south end -- north of that is prime marijuana territory & I'll tell you a story about a place I went on my honeymoon: abandoned housing project, 1 hotel, 1 airstrip, hills in back patrolled by gun-toting hippies. Further to that, I find it hard to believe one could squat on an acreable tract of land in California without being evicted these days. How about this: Jess bought land in the wine/marijuana area when he sold his business and started a commune, selling chardonnay as a front for the larger marijuana operation. The hippie commune has now metastasized into a full-blown cult, 90s style (decadent phase). Also given regulations it will be important where the powerplant is. I imagine you're researching this now. My guess is it's difficult to impossible to damn any river in Calif. without a significant environmentalist uprising and unofficial tenants would be found out.

2. Melanie: I think she needs much bigger motivation than the allergies, which may not work anyway. She needs some kind of background that would lead her to fall for a guy like Jess (maybe that's also why the marriage broke up) I have experience with cult leaders too! So we can discuss their appeal at lunch.

3. Can't wait to hear what a seismic vibrator looks like, as I have trouble imagining it on the freeways, on the winding drive to the back hills commune, being hidden, with a carnival ride disguise. Also find it hard to believe the ride would function enough to give cops a spin as decoy.

4. When I knew Bodega Bay there was nothing approaching a mall -- it's probably changed but the idea depresses me. Shopping action tends to be further inland.

5. I have questions about the whole "hippie" tone -- which feels dated & needs to be updated. Star's recording needs to be less obscure, I think, and the free love, pot, psychedelia has to be more weird and nutso after 20 years.

These are all details & I'm sure you're getting a good sense of the terrain out there: I suggest you visit Mendocino & points North -- it's not only beautiful, but a more likely setting than the Tahoe area.

Look forward to seeing you on Monday.
The main action looks really good to me --