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For the attention of Ken Follett

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From

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Macmillan

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0171 881 8291 Total pages ³~~2~~ incl

Fax

Message

Dear Ken,

A DEADLY REMEMBRANCE

I am very excited by this outline. I like the '40s/'50s setting a great deal. It makes a good refreshing change from the hi-tech late nineties/millennium fever that is so evident now. The action set against a true life space mission has that great kind of nostalgic yet up to the minute feel about it and, though it revolves around a focussed handful of people in a snapshot of time, you feel as the reader that you are part of a much wider and bigger stage and it's easy and exciting to get caught up in the momentum.

One of my main observations is really a structural one. Because the story moves between the present and the past *and* our protagonist has lost his memory, we have to be careful not to weigh the reader down with too much scene-setting, or repetition of elements of the story that have to be explained again for Luke's sake. There needs to be a fine balance between a) the present narrative which moves intricately but with ever-increasing speed towards the denouement, and b) the more explanatory and extended flashbacks. We need to preserve the tension and keep taking the reader as well as Luke by surprise as he begins to put the pieces of his life back together. (Lots of romantic tension too, please, between Luke and Tara!)

I'm sure that as the story takes shape outside the constraints of the outline, this will resolve itself well.

Some comments:

P 7, line 12: 'he uncovered evidence of a Soviet spy...' It isn't until later (p 16 of the synopsis) that we learn what this evidence is and how Luke stumbled upon it. I'm not sure you can get away with mentioning it here en passant and waiting a while to satisfy the reader's immediate curiosity.

P 9, line 24-27: presumably Tara is not part of this elite, as far as material wealth is concerned...

P 12, line 3: Does a children's series called *The Terrible Twins* exist? It just sounds familiar or maybe a bit cliched

P 12, line 14: when will we find out who Tara's ex-husband is (see p 20 and p21 of outline)? Again, I think the reader will want to know the set-up straight away.

P 12, 20: wouldn't Tara and Anthony's conversation also stray into the subject of their work?

P 15, line 8: careful about ending this section on a repetitive note: Anthony has already invoked Tara's trust (on p 13) and so the lead-in here to this flashback is a bit clumsy

P 17, line 10ff: here – Luke learning of his real identity – we need to take care not to tread too much old ground. Where it works well is springing new info on the reader, eg that Luke has ended up marrying Elspeth after all

P 18, line 27: leaving such a dramatic message with a hotel receptionist – wouldn't he/she immediately alert the hotel security to investigate Luke's room?

P 23, last line: isn't it odd that Tara didn't know sooner than the premiere the content of the film written by her own husband?

P 24, line 3: we know much earlier that Tara is divorced (p 12). How to maintain the surprise here in flashback?

P 27, line 3-4: how do Anthony and Pete find out that Luke has gone to Nashville? Checking flights – how easy would that be in pre-computer days?

P 29, lines 2-8: will this emotional, domestic scene work here? Partly because this is a moment of high tension: the drama of the countdown, Elspeth's desperate race against time, the climax are interrupted. Also, I'm not wholly convinced by this scene or by Elspeth's motives. I realise it ties up with Elspeth's decision not to have children for the sake of her career (p 21) but what rewards has she been promised that will overcome her natural maternal urges? Her regrets at the moment (p 25, line 17) ring hollow. Perhaps we need to see earlier glimpses of her ambition fighting with her now futile desire for children and reconciliation with Luke (?). At the moment, it seems that this vital character is fuelled only by ambition and greed and as such, is rather one-dimensional. Eg, how/why did she become a spy?

I hope these slightly random notes will make sense. Please do check with me if they don't. I'm in the office until this Wednesday, then we're all back on 4th January.

Congratulations! And all best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Suzanne', written in a cursive style.

Suzanne