

December 15, 1998

*By Fax and Federal Express*

Mr. Ken Follett  
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Dear Ken,

You've done some excellent work; and I really do like *A DEADLY REMEMBRANCE* as a title. Many of the structural problems have been neatly addressed; and although I think there's still more to do on the story both in the present and in the past, I think that the flashbacks now are working better.

As has been our practice, my detailed notes are on your text itself which is coming to you by courier tomorrow. Some of my notes may seem a little contradictory, because I made some of them the first time I read the manuscript and others the second and third time; and on the later go-arounds I sometimes came up with fresh ideas which I thought were better, and I think those will be apparent to you. In this letter, I'll hit on what I think are the main points, and you'll find the smaller ones between your lines and in the margins.

This story for me should break into three acts:

1. Luke struggles to recover his memory.
2. While battling to outmaneuver Anthony, he seeks the identity of the spy.
3. He must somehow stop the sabotage.

As important subplots, I see the following:

1. Luke and Tara attempting to reunite.
2. Bernie also wanting to reunite with Tara.
3. Luke and Anthony playing a deadly game with each other, but also hoping to come to terms with each other.
4. Anthony and Elspeth desperate to succeed in this mission, after which they've been promised a secure retirement.

Luke is wonderfully proactive during the first third or so of the outline while he is doing all kinds of amazing things to uncover his identity; but once we get past the meeting with the geophysicists, he becomes, I think, less interesting. My suggestion is that at this colloquium, he finds an old friend, maybe a former classmate from MIT or someone with whom he has worked in Huntsville, and everything that has been erased from his memory comes rushing back. But at the same time, he is introduced to some

CIA scientists who are also at this meeting; and it now dawns on him that he is being manipulated by the CIA (he remembers having met with Anthony and Tara), and so he lets on that he is suffering from severe memory loss, hoping that this information will get back to Anthony. If you take this suggestion, then from here on, he can concentrate on the main thrust of the story, i.e., outmaneuvering Anthony and identifying the spy as opposed to also still going on with the struggle to recapture his memory which we've already devoted many, many chapters to his doing. The other virtue of this approach, it seems to me, is that it will let him take more of the lead. Things that Bernie, for example, are doing could be taken over by Luke. Also, how much more interesting he'll be, if we see him operating on two levels, one feigning amnesia while beneath that he has a desperate purpose.

To deepen Tara, I suggest that she be on the verge of a breakthrough in her scientific research, but to bring her efforts to a conclusion, she's desperate for additional funding, and she feels a need to stay on Anthony's good side. As to her love for Luke, its basis now seems to be largely and almost purely physical attraction. A good addition might be for Luke to have done something wonderful for her just as he did for Anthony. Maybe what he did for her was more impressive than anything else that any other young man she'd ever met had done. And as a complication in her life in the present, I think it would help for her to have a relationship with a tepid male friend.

Bernie would benefit from some thrust of his own. How about his wanting Tara back? And yes, he's eager to help Luke in every way possible, but he also has a publishing deadline to meet. He'll lose out heavy if he doesn't get a manuscript in immediately, by tomorrow or the next day, especially as he's been habitually late with this publisher. And he probably also should have money problems.

It would make sense, I think, to restore the Anthony-Elspeth link. Yes, they want and need to sabotage the launch, but they also would be thinking beyond that. One possibility might be that the Russians have promised them the retirement of their choice, possibly a Black Sea resort, possibly new identities in New Zealand or wherever.

I think that you can successfully keep the flashbacks with the possible exception of the last two. To integrate the earlier flashbacks more powerfully into the present action, I suggest they be introduced when one or another of the principal characters is at the point of making a major difficult decision. Then he or she thinks back into the past; and this point of view character's memory of the past episode then triggers a decisive step in the present action. I know that may sound terribly formulaic, but on the other hand, it works.

I had expected that today as I write this letter I would have been on a plane to Florida, but Katie still hasn't given birth, and we're all anxiously waiting. Probably by the time you get this, I'll be a grandfather.

Warm Wishes,

Al