

These are very big-picture notes, which would require a fair amount of revision – I think they would make for a much more dynamic book, though.

The first half suffers from the fact that we simply know too much. There is an enormous quantity of flashback material, and it's clearly delineated from the beginning just who the good guys are and who the bad guys are. This removes most of the tension, and certainly most of the intrigue: there are no twists.

We've been given a good setup: guy wakes up, has no memory, but finds he knows things and can do things that seem out of the ordinary – his mission is to find out who he is, while at the same time trying to figure out who means him well and who means him harm. But the setup is vitiated by the fact that we know all the answers already. We *shouldn't*. The book should be constructed so we find out things as Luke finds them out. We shouldn't know who Luke is any more than he does. We get little clues, as he does; we know he's important, as he discovers; we find out with him what his mysterious trip was all about. We wonder with him: am I a Soviet spy? Am I a bad guy? Who do I trust and not trust? Do I trust this Anthony? What about Billie? Elspeth? Bern? What do I take at face value, given that I can't even remember who I am.

We should wonder all those things along with him, which means that we should not know that Anthony and Elspeth are the bad guys, and Billie and Bern are the good guys. These all become part of the twists and turns of the book, as, at strategic points of the narrative, the revelations explode upon us. This also means that we shouldn't have most of the flashback material. Whatever elements of it we need can come in exposition of some kind – seeing it all not only slows down the book too much, but tells us too much.

Then, when he finally figures out his situation, the rest of the book should be pure suspense – just adrenaline-pumped action, chases, near-escapes. There are some good sequences in the second half, but overall, it still feels too sluggish. I know we have to follow the historical model of the aborts – but what if the first aborts have little or nothing to do with him? The problem with the three potential launches is that the narrative becomes too stop-and-start, whereas it should be one sustained drive: Luke has to make it to Cape Canaveral to stop the launch, and the bad guys have to stop him. If the first aborts are just standard Cape glitches, it can help in two ways: Luke's attempt to stop the rocket can be one continuous effort, and the aborts come as plot twists: just as he thinks he can't make it in time, they have to delay another twenty-four hours, giving him another lease on life; it ratchets up the suspense with the unexpected.

In many ways, the model for this book could be Hitchcock, a movie such as *North By Northwest* or *The Man Who Knew Too Much*: Cary Grant or Jimmy Stewart spend the first half of the movie trying to figure out just what the hell is happening to them, and then once they've figured it out, the second half is pure suspense as they desperately try to stop the villains' plans even while the villains are trying to kill them.