

Writers House

21 W. 26 ST., NEW YORK, N.Y. 10010 • PHONE (212) 685-2400 • FAX (212) 685-1781

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By Fax Modem

Mr. Ken Follett

London, England

Dear Ken,

Once again, I'm happy to say that you have pulled the rabbit out of the hat. A novel which appeared to have serious problems now doesn't seem to have any. To me, it was both a relief and a pleasure reading it over the weekend.

By getting rid of Nik and introducing George Cooperman who has a soft spot for Anthony, you succeeded in making Anthony a viable and even an engaging villain. Getting rid of Nik also allowed you to get rid of Anthony's cowardice, his fear of Nik,

and allowed him to become much more the buccaneer that he imagines himself to be.

Good move.

I was most pleased too to see these wonderful emotional confrontations that you added between Luke and Anthony, and between Luke and Elspeth. They have much the feel of the ones you had at the end of *THE MAN FROM ST. PETERSBERG*, and these add lovely emotional resonance to a story which is essentially a chase.

So, you'll be glad to learn that there is not much work to be done. There are two words which I feel you overused, and you'll find that I've made markings about these. One is, dreadful, and the other is, insouciance. There was one instance where I thought insouciance was right on the mark, but most of the others didn't work for me. And, dreadful, too I felt is overused. Hardly serious. And then there are words like, skivvies, which don't mean anything over here.

✓ One substantive comment you might think about in Antigua is the first Anthony chapter. Rather than the "take charge" personality he exhibits through most of the novel, in this opening he's all at sixes and sevens and not at all the dynamic character we later discover that he is. One problem of course is that some of the scene is spent with Pete telling Anthony stuff we already know. Perhaps what's needed is for the reader to come in at the end of Pete's account and then see Anthony undertaking some daring or outrageous action?

I think you might also do a bit more with the atmosphere at Harvard. Youngsters there at the time probably had fathers, uncles, other relations who died in World War I or who were maimed; and we could use more of a sense, I think, of the horror that might soon be enveloping the world, radically changing their lives, perhaps ruining them. The feelings young people had against the Nazis and for the beleaguered Russians also were far more passionate than you're now expressing in those few scenes. So, nothing major, maybe a more furious or hysterical line or two here or there.

My marginal notes follow the pattern pretty much of what you'd expect from previous manuscripts. Here or there a key emotional reaction is missed or understated. Sometimes the tension which underlies a page or a scene gets lost in what appears to be rational conversation. Some redundancies. All in all, I doubt that you have more than two weeks of minor fixes; and then we'll be in excellent shape.

As to a title, I kind of liked THE EDGE OF MEMORY. I gather that Phyllis was not keen, but it could work I think. Or how about THE SLEEPER WAKES?

Have a great holiday!

And Bravo!

Warm Wishes,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'AL' followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line.