

Ken Follett

From: Emily Kischell [EKischell@WritersHouse.com]
Sent: 29 May 2003 22:21
To: kenprivate@ken-follett.com
Cc: Amy Berkower
Subject: WHITEOUT

Dear Ken,

I like the improvements and additions you've made to your latest outline of WHITEOUT; and I think that except for the finale about which I'll comment on later in this note, I feel that your plot now is solid. I am less confident that you have your ducks all in a row as far as character is concerned.

On the villainous side, you now have solidly established Kit; but your other three appear more or less co-equal. The possibilities for the major secondary villain role go either to Nigel or to Daisy; and I think I would vote for Daisy. It's not at all clear to me what lies within a woman who behaves the way she does, but I think you could do fascinating stuff with her.

On the hero side we have Toni in the lead, but the problem we still face, I believe, is how do we make her as compelling as Flick? The two high-powered scenes you give her overcoming Nigel and rescuing Kit, are both near the end of the story. Flick shows her mettle in the opening chapter; and we need to find some way for Toni too to show off her extraordinary capabilities soon after we meet her. And then I think we need more of this as the story proceeds.

The novel must also be about her as a woman and not just as an action character, so we need also to develop that side of her. The most obvious possibility, I think, would be in her relationship with Stanley. Because of his complicated family situation, she might have reservations about marrying him, but she could nonetheless feel great passion for him. And he for her, even though in public they make a pretense that there is nothing between them. The security and success of his company as well as his personal welfare could mean the world to her. This to some extent is implied in your outline, but it's more in the background than in the foreground; and for her to become the compelling heroine you intend for your readers all around the world to love, I urge you to try and get us emotionally involved with her.

Then among the remaining protagonists, on which ones do we primarily wish to focus? You give Miranda more space in the story than all the others, and as the chief liaison with Kit, she now plays a major role in the plot; but is she as intrinsically interesting or more interesting than Stanley (who does little to advance the action) or Craig (who plays a vital role in the denouement). What I am coming to I guess, is that since Toni is your protagonist; and the character closest to her is Stanley, shouldn't we try and find ways to make him more central to the plot?

The ending, I feel, should be either between Kit and Miranda or between Kit and Stanley. Stanley and Miranda are the two who have been personally betrayed, Stanley by his son and Miranda by her beloved brother. One or the other could push him over the cliff or could rescue him; but since they are the ones most intimately involved with him, the ending should, I believe, devolve upon them.

Ken, I've made a few more notes on the manuscript itself, which I'll be sending back to you by FedEx.

Good luck with the writing!

Warmest,

Al

P.S. One thought I had while running on the treadmill this morning. What if you were to make Maggie Toni's niece? It was Toni who got this young woman her job, Toni who loves her and is devastated by her death and also of course by the troubles she's now causing the company, not to mention the horror she feels about having to tell her sister about the horrible death of her daughter.

P.P.S. Your theme of a family beset by bad guys would suggest, I imagine, that Toni be tightly linked with that family.