

Phyllis. Did Michael
steal the virus or the
antidote? See pps
9, 18, 24, 28.



NW: —

1. Doesn't like theatre opening. Also L4.
2. Doesn't like more explicit Stanley-Toni romance. L4 ✓
3. Doesn't like sex scene.

Ken Follett Private

From: Ken Follett_Private
Sent: 01 April 2004 17:32
To: 'Nyren, Neil'
Subject: RE: Whiteout 2

Thanks for this. I'll mull it over while I'm waiting for reactions from the others.

I put in the theatre scenes because Phyllis felt that the ending of the first draft was too domestic. By focussing on the family, I diminished the national and international danger from the virus, she felt. But I see your point: the reader knows all from the start now. I could probably drop the opening theatre scene and keep the closing one; or I could drop both, and hope that Phyllis's wish might be satisfied by the new closing scene at the airfield.

I'm interested that you preferred the first version of the Stanley-Toni romance. I felt it sort of didn't happen at all in the first draft. I'll look again at the two scenes you mention. It may be that I can establish the romance more strongly without straying into Barbara Cartland territory.

Anyway, many thanks indeed for your comments, which are highly suggestive as always.

-----Original Message-----

From: Nyren, Neil [mailto:Neil.Nyren@us.penguingroup.com]
Sent: 31 March 2004 15:31
To: Ken Follett_Private
Subject: RE: Whiteout 2

Hi, Ken!

I read the new draft last night, and enjoyed it quite a bit. I just have two comments, concerning two new additions:

1) The new opening. Now, you know me, Ken, I'm the first to say we need something that starts us off fast. But I have to say I liked the way the first draft opened: Toni urgently trying to find out what happened to the missing drug, her narrowing it down to the tech, then running out to his house to find him on the floor bleeding from the eyes. Pretty dramatic stuff, I thought. Plus, and I think this is important, you give away some crucial information right off the bat. In the first draft, we didn't learn until partway through that it wasn't really the drug, that it was the virus itself that was the target of the robbery. It became a strong plot twist that amped the stakes up much higher. I think it makes the book a little less interesting to lead it off this way. Not that it's at all terrible, mind you -- if lots of votes came in for using it, we'd still be okay. But...I think it's a better book without it. (If you wanted still to use a version of the theatre arrest scene at the end, you could still do that; I don't think one depends on the other).

2) I guess someone felt before that the relationship between Toni and Stanley needed a more overt declaration. But if so, I'm really not of that camp. The love talk during the phone call on pp. 198-200 (plus 212), and the p. 61 thought from Toni, "I love you with all my heart and you have no idea at all" -- these just don't sound like these characters. These are two reserved people, who have been battered in their personal life and are starting to feel their way to new love; neither is the gushy, squishy type, and the understated awakening and development that was in the first draft suited them perfectly. It was very honest, clean, modern, and true to their natures. The new lines -- I'm just telling it like I see it, Ken -- are like something in a romance novel. And when they appear, they have the effect of puncturing the suspense like a pin in a balloon. So I would beg of you: Please, let's not have it.

And a sort of addendum to #2: The new sex stuff on p. 456 just isn't right for them either.

So that's my two cents' worth! I noticed, by the way, that the new draft is about 60 pages longer than the last one. One of the great virtues of that draft was that it raced along like an express train. Some of the added length is just technical manuscript stuff or necessary added exposition, but then there are elements like the above which slow it down. I'd hate to see that happen! It's too good a story!

Otherwise, I think we've got a dandy novel here, one of your finest.

Neil

-----Original Message-----

From: Ken Follett_Private [mailto:kenprivate@ken-follett.com]
Sent: Tuesday, March 30, 2004 1:23 PM
To: Phyllis E. Grann (E-mail); Leslie Gelbman (E-mail); Neil Nyren (E-mail); Imogen Taylor (E-mail); Al Zuckerman (E-mail); Amy Berkower (E-mail); Emanuele Follett (E-mail); Erica Jong (E-mail)
Subject: Whiteout 2

<<C Whiteout Full.pdf>>
Here it is again. Please let me know if there are any problems. This is an Acrobat file.

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