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Ken Follett

Dear Ken,

What I'd really like to do is have a long discussion with you -- hindsight says I should have stayed another day, because the missing stuff in the story is probably now in Ross's comments on the manuscript and the comments of the others too. At one point at dinner I'd whipped out a match cover to note something Ross had said, and he stopped me with, "Don't bother, I wrote it in the margin." They probably needed a first draft to call to mind what they didn't tell you. I'd love to know what some of those things are, but even not knowing, I have a feeling that the new material will make the story a lot richer.

I had a wonderful time in Texas -- more fun than I could have imagined! It is indeed a very good thing I read the first draft, because Ross has that bowling-over charm nobody could resist. And then to meet Margot and the girls -- too much! I fell in love with them all! Riches and success beyond dreams really haven't spoiled them. Can that be true?

I think it is true. Nevertheless I was watching for that other side of Ross that I know must be there, as I said when we were driving to their place for breakfast. Then in the office that day I think I saw a glimpse of it a couple of times -- probably because I was looking for it. In fact I said something about Ross and Rashid in my editorial comments which Ross proved prophetic by what he said about Rashid that day! So

it's one thing to be charmed by the man and another to be riveted by a character created on a page. I think you have to get some of the hard steel that I kept calling for in the manuscript before I met Ross.

I feel more than ever that Ross Perot is the real hero of this adventure. Ross would like that hero to be Col. Simons, when in truth Rashid did as much or more than the Col. to bring the men to safety. I've had other thoughts about using the color photo of Col. Simons as a frontispiece. I think it gives a wrong weight to the Col.'s role, and as the only color photo, and in the front, implies to the reader it's a biography of Simons. It can be the lead, full-page photo in the first black and white insert, which still gives him a star position and is more appropriate to his role. What do you think?

I'll be expecting the copies of the photos from EDS soon, with Rashid cut out. Ross was most definite that Skeeter couldn't have those shots in his possession. I couldn't help wondering if that had anything to do with the way Skeeter was dressed. That dress-code thing really gets to me.

When you were chatting with Margot and I with Ross at dinner, Ross asked me what I thought the most important thing was about the book. I said the most important thing was that: it be a Ken Follett suspense story. First and foremost.

One thing that you might keep in mind as you rewrite is the very genuine love Ross Perot has for his country. I suspect I would not agree with his politics but I am impressed by his patriotism. True, it's "the last refuge of scoundrels" but Ross's is real I believe. Americans respond to that when it's a true story. It's fairly easy for someone of Ross's wealth and power to be patriotic, but Ross carries it beyond the easy stage, which is how this story could happen. Of course Iran wasn't a patriotic caper, he just wanted to get the EDS men out, but there's a connection be-

tween this and the Vietnam POWs, as I mentioned in my notes. You'd have to be careful here, because just a little too much will make the patriotism thing sound phoney.

The fact that he was risking a lot of lives for the sake of two did bother Ross, I think more than he is willing to admit, and perhaps that could be made more apparent in the book. It's a dilemma that could provide good dramatic conflict, and give us insight into Ross's character.

As far as the wives go, I don't think you're going to get anywhere. Whenever I brought the subject up with Ross, his answer was, "They were thrilled and proud." Period. I think the wives are taboo. I also think they don't matter a hell of a lot in the EDS pantheon. They are there to be wives, not to ask questions. You'll have to be adroit here, because if EDS won't answer, the readers are still going to ask.

What you'll have to unravel for the reader are the complexities of the plot and that probably means throwing some things out, as we discussed on the plane. It means some restructuring and putting more emphasis on the characters which will be easier now that you have more info from them.

I still think centering the action as it occurs around the three main characters would give the plot clarity and help thread it all together. It would also help you to create the kind of people one finds in your novels, and that's always where the interest is for the reader.

I loved traveling first-class with my first-class writer. Texas was a hoot!

Love,
Pat