

March 19, 1987

Dear Ken,

I read it, and thought it was terrific. But, as someone you and I both know very well would say, it could be even more terrific. Hope my comments will be of some help...

Overall, I think, the problem is not so much with Jane's dialogue, but with the character of Jane herself. You know her so well (you ought to---you live with her!) that much is assumed on the part of the reader(moviegoer). Even having read the book, I was a bit confused. Jane's motives aren't always clear, and she herself risks appearing one-dimensional as a result. We see her as sort of a Superwoman, brave and noble, but we don't really understand why she's this way.

For instance, **why is she in Afghanistan?** Is she nursing a broken heart, has she fallen head over heels for Jean Pierre, or does she truly want to help the people of Five Lions Valley? You explain this in the novel, but it isn't clear here. In fact, the sudden transition to Afghanistan after the scene in Paris seems awfully abrupt and left me somewhat incredulous.

If she is truly motivated by a socialist conscience, **where does it come from?** There is no mention of her past. We know Ellis works for the CIA, but it's not clear what Jane does. Perhaps a flashback or two would round her out. A good example of what I'm talking about is the flashback scene in Officer And a Gentleman. We see Richard Gere as a young boy, going off to the Orient to live with his drunken sailor of a father after having lost his mother, then getting beat up by a gang of street toughs. As a result, we have far greater sympathy for the macho tough guy he appears to be later on.

In Jane's case, a flashback to her childhood in a British colonial outpost---she witnesses some cruelty toward a beloved black servant. She tries to stop it, but after all, she's only a child...

Or, in the opening scene, rather than have her kill time waiting for Ellis by reading a newspaper, she could be looking through a photograph album she brought along to show him. Pictures of her childhood, as well as pictures of the two of them, revealing the progression of their relationship. And maybe giving us a clue to her own activities.

What you also need are the **fine brushstrokes**. You can tell a lot about a woman by the way she dresses, what she carries in her purse, how she keeps her fingernails (bitten down, cut sensibly blunt, long and painted), etc. Her little tics and obsessions.

Does she pluck her eyebrows? Shave under her arms? (This could be the basis of an argument between she and Jean Pierre. He wants her to shave, but she's trying to fit in with the native women, be accepted when she goes down to the river to bathe with them---another thing J.P. disapproves of). What, if any, mementos from home did she choose to take with her to Afghanistan? What does she miss most about home (listening to Bach? Tea and scones? Arguing politics with her friends in some smoky cafe?) What does she like---if anything---about Afghanistan? The people? The simplicity of the lifestyle?

And finally, what does (or did) she love about Jean Pierre? We need one or two more little scenes besides the one in which she's crying over their wedding pictures. Maybe when she watches him minister to the wounded child, Mousa, she calms him (and herself) by telling Mousa what a wonderful doctor J.P. is, about the time in Paris when she saw J.P. save someone's life. Some kind of heroic rescue, perhaps. Or a line or two of dialogue that would hint at a side of Jean Pierre's character that would appeal to a woman's nurturing instincts---especially a woman like Jane, who's been burned by the strong and silent Ellis). For instance:

JANE

It's okay to cry, Mousa. Big men cry, too. (she glances up tenderly at Jean Pierre, who, obviously remembering a moment of weakness, looks embarrassed). Even when they're not hurt. Sometimes just because they feel like it.

Since Jane is the pivotal character in Lie Down With Lions, it's essential that we know and like her thoroughly. She has all the makings of a wonderful movie heroine. But it's the little peculiarities and vagaries of human nature, mixed in with all the action, that make the difference between an okay TV movie and a good feature film.

I can't wait to see it!

Best,

