

# MACMILLAN LONDON

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21st October 1992

Ken Follett  
92 Cheyne Walk  
LONDON  
SW10 0PQ

Dear Ken

**RE: ALL THE PROUD AND MIGHTY**

A marvellous first draft. Really terrific! I've just been talking to Ian about it and he too thinks it's an absolute winner. Congratulations again.

This letter will set out general queries, with more specific ones on longer notes attached. I'm sending two copies of both, for you to share with Al Zuckerman when you see him. Please give him my best regards.

What the novel needs now, to my mind, is some building up without slowing down. It's on the short side, perhaps, for a big historical saga. It needs fleshing out a bit; parts of the novel seem a little hurried.

- 1) Hugh's character. I think we need to make him more of a hero from the outset. Even as a child he should be strong, authoritative, a leader. In the novel's second half he's involved in more action and decision making which build his stature. Do you think he needs more of this in the first half? His response to the ratting scene could be stronger? Is he too obedient to Augusta? Suppose the fight in Cremone Gardens were made more of, and Hugh became involved defending someone who's being beaten up? There are numerous references to Hugh in the notes, and suggestions.
- 2) Should there be more of an erotic connection between Micky/Augusta - a sexual pull always there under the surface, coming mainly from Augusta, that Micky uses to manipulate her?
- 3) Could we possibly have more description and feel of the seasons, changing weather, London streets and smells?
- 4) Upstairs/Downstairs. Don't you think we need to build in a servant or two? Perhaps a really nice servant for Maisie who is her confidant(e), and a swinish one who aids and abets Augusta?

M

- 5) Dan Robinson is an interesting character who remains rather shadowy. Maybe you should pair him off with Rachel Bodwin? Seems like a marriage made in heaven! ✓
- 6) I wonder whether the epilogue should be fuller? What happens to Edward, for instance, who drops out of the novel towards the end? ✓
- 7) I have queried a number of words and expressions that seem either anachronistic or too American. You tell the tale in a modern idiom and I don't think we need to be sticklers for accuracy, but I have queried the ones that leapt out at me. Likewise, I've queried accuracy on certain period details which I'm sure you've researched. Forgive me if some of the queries seem idiotic and/or pedantic.
- 8) Now I'm going to be extremely irritating and remind you of comments I made on the outlines that still hold good for me. I shall expect you to ignore them, but here goes:
  - a) If you remember, I really liked Sidney Miller and regretted his demise. I still like the idea of a father figure for Hugh, an American mentor who turns him from a fledgling banker to an outstanding one. Don't you think your American readers might like this? Suppose we end Part I by following (briefly) Hugh to Boston, and show him meeting and instantly liking this 'Sidney' character? Then, in Part II, we could learn more about Hugh's time in Boston, when Hugh remembers, or speaks of, what he learned from 'Sidney'? Perhaps 'Sidney' could show up once in London to give valuable advice/support to Hugh at a crisis point? Just a thought. ✓
  - b) Hugh/Nora - I refer back to point 6 of my 16 January letter (attached). I still think it would work better to have Nora a good woman who adores Hugh, who marries her on the rebound from Maisie, but can't return her love. Women readers (poor romantic fools we are!) will like the notion of brave Hugh as a one-woman man, but he can't leave Nora because she's done him no real wrong (apart from being uncouth). I can envisage a poignant triangle here after Solly's death: Hugh loves Maisie who's now free, but he can't leave Nora because she's a good woman, and has mothered his sons, and loves him, and is in frail health (from which she dies?). Maisie has taught Nora how to behave in society and has become her friend and cannot take Hugh away from her. As the novel stands I still find it hard to understand why Hugh/Maisie stay apart for so long after Solly's death.

I think that's all. Everything else is contained in the notes, and the queries are correspondingly marked on the typescript pages. I hope you have a useful and enjoyable trip to the States. Perhaps we could meet up to talk this through when you get back?

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jane".

Jane Wood  
Editorial Director

- 6) Dolly/Nora. Dolly takes on Nora's role as well as her 'uncouth' role from draft one. I suggested that you recast Nora in my comments on the first draft, and I still think Hugh's wife should be a good woman and a bit of a tragic figure. Suppose Dolly desperately loves Hugh and he can't return her love (because of Maisie)? Maisie takes the uncouth Dolly under her wing and turns her into a lady. They become friends. This gives Hugh/Maisie a terrible dilemma after Solly dies. What keeps them apart is the fact that they both feel shits two-timing Dolly. Nobody dies of natural causes in the novel. Instead of Dolly turning into a bit of a monster, and disappearing into thin air after the bank's collapse, why not have her die in childbirth or of consumption? If her health is weak, Hugh's guilt about her is all the greater and provides a nice conflict in the Hugh/Maisie relationship, keeping them frustrated and out of each other's arms until the end.

Apart from the above, I'm attaching a list of queries raised by the outline. Some of them are small and hardly worth raising at this point, but others are pretty fundamental. I'm sure that many of my questions about characters' behaviour will be answered as you build them in the novel's first draft, but I do think we need a more resonant ending, that justice must be seen to be done regarding the murderous Micky, and that there should be more passion and conflict bubbling under the surface of Maisie/Hugh's relationship.

When do you think you'll finish the first draft?

That was an excellent piece in the Independent on Sunday I thought. Congratulations to you both, and all the best,

Yours



Jane Wood  
Editorial Director

PS Written before we spoke yesterday.  
Do call if you want to talk it through.

ALL THE PROUD AND MIGHTY - Ken Follett

Editorial Notes

PAGE	COMMENT
8	Differentiate Hugh physically from other two - he's our hero?
9	Is Hugh naked? Should you make this clear?
10	'Dick' Turpin? Brief explanation for Americans?
13	See repetition P10 Perhaps Hugh shouldn't cry?
14	Why do so many characters' names end in <u>ie</u> or <u>y</u> ? Micky, Maisie, Danny, Solly? One, they're rather similar. Two, they sound too modern and unVictorian?
14	Scene introducing Maisie needs building? Establish the Glasgow setting (on first reading I thought it was London)? The whole business of the Robinson's Polish background doesn't ring quite true. When and why did the family come over? What was their name before Robinson? What language do they all speak at home? This doesn't <u>feel</u> like a Polish family to me. (See note to PA12)
19	<u>I dinna ken</u> ? I would suggest dropping these snatches of dialect?
20	When Maisie/Danny part, doesn't it need a touch more emotion? They're leaving home, parents whom they love, and each other. Some tears and clinging together perhaps in order?
23	See amendment. We know Pilasters are Methodists?
27	What happened to the erotic attraction between Micky/Augusta? What does Augusta look like? Presumably she's in her mid-thirties? An attractive, sexy woman still?
29	Repetition - nervous.
29	Ambition - make link that Micky is his father's son?
32	Say what time of year it is? Summer presumably, if French windows are open? Should you explain 'crush'? Is this a lunchtime, afternoon or evening event? What kind of drink and food served? (You do allude briefly P50). Has Augusta aged at all in the seven intervening years? How has the Augusta/Micky liaison fared?

- 34 Would'n't Micky address Joel as 'Sir'?
- 35 Love to know what the garden looks like?
- 35 Contradiction? If E. now looks bloated, then he has changed?
- 36 Would'n't Micky say 'My father'?
- 38 Describe 'ascot' tie? How was it tied?
- 39 What's Florence's title?
- 40 This reintroduction to Hugh seven years on needs strengthening. Did he do well at school? On P10 you imply he's a natural rebel, a hater of authority. How he must rail against his current situation! When Augusta comments on his tie (P41) shouldn't he respond with more dignity and authority? Isn't it rather craven of him to consider 'a reward for obedience'? Obedience goes against the grain with him?
- 45 Excuse me?
- 48 Bit of telephone detail here? *New-fangled invention?*
- 55 Miranda wealth: On P37 you mention a 'private army'. Yet here they appear to be not that rich?
- 63 Hugh's musings about love seem a trifle shallow here. Needs more depth of character?
- 66 Freckled bosom? I thought white skin was all the rage in Victorian England? Wouldn't a freckled bosom be considered rather unattractive?
- 66 Perhaps Hugh's analysis of Micky should go a little deeper and be more sinister in its implications here? A sense of violence under the surface, carefully held in check?
- 68 Again, I query Maisie's appearance. 'Almost white' eyelashes are a turn off?
- 68 'Go all the way' seems far too modern an expression here? I do find the picture of Hugh, only interested in getting his end away, rather unappealing here.
- 69 Surely Maisie's father was cheated out of more than a week's wages?
- 74 Hugh no sportsman? We know this from earlier exchanges with Florence. Mightn't Hugh think ruefully of Florence here, and indeed of Maisie? Would he be rather subdued after his altercation with her? Might Hugh be truly sickened by the

ratting, disgusted by its cruelty? I'm not suggesting you make him a prig, but I do think a strength of character should be emerging.

79 Didn't Tonio lose ten guineas (P77)? Also P90.

80 The sense of loathing Hugh feels in the brothel echoes the disgust he felt at the ratting? No

80 Perhaps a darker hint here of curious sexual double act between Micky/Edward that emerges later on?

90 luncheon?

91 Frigged him off? When was expression first used?

91 I didna ken? Sounds even odder here than earlier, Maisie having left Scotland a while back?

91 Fucking and frigging? They use very ripe language for this time, even though they're worldly, these girls. It is the Victorian age after all? No

92 Hugh was thirteen: not a 'little lad'? No

93 This conversation about sucking cocks also seems odd for a Victorian novel?

93 Cannae? Dialect, as above. I dinna ken, P94? Shouldnae, P95

98 I think it is important that Augusta be attractive, though she's aging now, particularly if you decide to make more of her attraction to Micky - an unholy alliance with sex at its root? NB on P32 you said she looked magnificent.

100 Is doodle the right word for the period?

101 Why does Hugh go out with his aunt? Why wouldn't he stride out independently into the park? He could be spotted by his aunt in conversation with Maisie, and you could show a conversation with Hugh getting a bit more of the upper hand, before Augusta appears?

104 Shouldn't Maisie dismiss Augusta with more dignity? This 'shut your gob' sounds too street urchin?

105 Yes, he's very feeble here. More stature needed?

106 See repetitions.

106 Should you let us into Maisie's thoughts as she turns Hugh's invitation down? Does she find herself attracted to him?

107 Would Hugh really have said of Edward 'more rotten than a dead cat'? Does he even know how rotten

Edward is at this stage of the novel? He's suspicious about what happened at the swimming hole, but that's all? Better to have Albert say it than Hugh, since Albert saw more than Hugh did?

110 Again, Hugh can't be sure <sup>Peter</sup> Edward was murdered, only deeply suspicious?

110 Repetition.

113 Boss sounds wrong here?

114 Augusta's secrets? If you decide to make more of the liaison between Augusta/Micky, this would be the secret she thinks Samuel is referring to, at first?

115 How come it has taken David Middleton seven years to come forward?

120 land, rather than world?

124 Hugh a bit petulant, lacking in humour here?

126 I do wish Hugh could be more independent from Augusta. What about the schoolboy we meet in Prologue, who hated abiding by rules? The child is father of the man - we should be more aware of Hugh's spirit?

Perhaps, in this early part of the novel, he needs to be given an extra piece of action, to do something, to show courage, independence, grit. What do you think? (Please see Point ① of my letter)

127 If you decide to drop Scots dialect, yes, not aye?

132 go all the way continues to worry me. Out of period? Why not make love?

133 See repetitions.

134 Freckled breasts queried earlier?

134 Would kissing her breasts really make Hugh feel like a pervert? Also, pervert seems too modern?

135 Even here I'd like Hugh to be stronger, more confident, as in 'I know I'm good at what I do, but I have to work harder to prove it...'. Regarding 'top of the class' - P10 you say Hugh was 'effortlessly top'. Here it seems that he worked hard to be top. Inconsistent?

136 Gone all the way? Made love?

137 The notion that dancing was the only subject well taught at an English public school seems a bit odd?

138 Hugh obeying rules again. OK if Hugh and the reader

are aware that he obeys only for his own ends.

142 See repetition. Also, is figured too American? (If you wanted to involve Hugh in a bit of action that showed him in a good light, perhaps the fight in Cremona Gardens could be the place, where he has to protect Maisie, say, or see justice done in some way?)

148 Figured?

152 Micky is really pushing his luck here, searching through the packs while the others watch him. Are you sure you're not overstretching credibility?

156 Surely she would have been wearing stockings, giving the opportunity for the slow and sexy removal of same?

157 See repetitions

157 I want to make love to you? Sexier, isn't it, and more romantic? N.

160 Presumably a door opens at this point, though neither of them hears it?

163 Unfortunately the rest of this scene does not show Hugh in a good light, once more obeying Augusta's instructions. I think he should strongly resist Augusta, but perhaps Maisie should intervene, encourage him to go, but say she'll see him later? Then, when she disappears without a word following her scene with Augusta, Hugh will be even more hurt and surprised?

176 No mention of Edward's bruises?

185 The curse? Was the expression current? Your monthly, better?

186 If Maisie hasn't had a period for three months, surely she won't need April to tell her she's pregnant? She'll know?

186 I don't think Victorian women, even worldly ones, would say one fuck? I'm no prude, Ken, you know that. It just seems wrong in this Victorian context.

186 See near repetition.

187 I felt, at the beginning, you should have made more of the pain Maisie must have felt when she ran away. At some other point in the novel between the Prologue and now, perhaps in conversation with Solly or April, Maisie's hurt should be voiced. She tore herself away from her parents and an elder brother

she loved. She will think of him from time to time, wonder where he is and what he's doing?

189 You, rather than ye?

195 More of a sexual frisson between these two here? I want to get the sense that the balance of power between them is delicate, swinging sometimes Augusta's way, sometimes Micky's, and that Augusta's desire for Micky is her one weak spot?

200 an inquiry, or in inquiry?

207 Augusta, statuesque etc, and still handsome at 46?

209 Minnie was mentioned somewhere in Part I, ie five years before, but I can't find reference. Here you say married two years ago. OK?

211 Stuffy people to modern? Snobbish?

212 Can't help feeling that more could be made of the Hugh/Maisie meeting. Drag it out longer to prolong anticipation on part of reader? Or have Hugh glimpse her from the back at first, and the shocked recognition hits him, of something achingly familiar, and then she turns round?

213 Repetition statuesque P207

213 See repetition

218 Edward was 15 when novel began, 1866. Shouldn't he be 27 now, in 1878? He could be 28, however, if his birthday falls between May - Oct - ie he was nearly 16 in Prologue.

218 You are beginning a good number of sentences with However, Nevertheless, etc. Looks bad when they fall side by side, as here?

225 Might Hugh not also have felt hurt? After all, Maisie left abruptly and then refused to contact him?

230 This visit of Danny's to Kingsbridge just to say hello to his sister seems contrived? Couldn't it happen in London?

234 One sip of champagne? One small glass, surely? Nb

235 I feel there should be more sexual tension around the minute Hugh and Maisie are together. Their love for each other is the only real romance in the novel. Sparks should fly when they are together. When Solly and Maisie are in bed (P231) shouldn't Maisie be thinking of Hugh, guiltily?

256 Don't understand this Hugh/Nora meeting. Seems as though he took her in his arms the moment they met. I can believe that he bumped into her in the dark and she dropped the vase, and that's how it started, but I can't quite believe that a gust of wind blew her into his arms.

257 People always seem to eat mutton chops or lamb cutlets. OK?

261/2 Hugh's affections have switched very quickly from Maisie to Nora. Needs some explanation?

263 See repetition.

268 Isn't romantic rather polite for the Prince of Wales? Philandering?

274 Augusta/ Micky dancing. Is there an opportunity missed to show a sexual pull between them?

279 It is quite hard to understand why Hugh fell for Nora in the first place. (Please see my letter point 8 b)

283 Wonky table? Anachronism?

285 Ben, not Nathan?

285 Sneaky - anachronism?

290 figure out - anachronism?

296 figure his wife out - anachronism?

297 see repetition

**GENERAL POINT**

200/300 I feel that this part of the novel is less strong than the rest at present. Plot elements are set in train which involve Augusta in a number of 'setting up' operations which don't move the story on, but I can see that they are essential. We have three hasty marriages which we are told about in narrative without seeing the relationships at first hand. Perhaps we should be privy once or twice to Hugh's motivation, so that his marriage to Nora clearly springs from a rebound from Maisie? Perhaps Micky should fuck Augusta at some point in the novel - it would liven up this section? Should we see more of the Solly/Maisie marriage at first hand? How will Maisie react to Solly offering a job at Greenbournes to Hugh? There could be an interesting piece of dialogue between Maisie/Solly on this point, the truth of which only the reader will understand?

302 cute? Americanism and anachronism? No

- 305 Pocketbook in an English Victorian novel? *Yes*
- 308 I'm <sup>still</sup> not too sure about doodle? Is it the right word in the context? (No doubt you've researched this and will tell me it is!) *Yes*
- 317 discombobulated OK?
- 318 Jews not strictly a race, but a religion? *NO*
- 322 'I would suffer the infections of your whores if it made you happy.' That's pretty steep. If Rachel is really that passionately in love with Micky, perhaps the reader needs to be more aware of it. At present she is inconsistent to my mind. Sexual slave to Micky on the one hand; spirited independent woman on the other?
- 328 You know I've always found Emily's collusion in this threesome hard to believe of her. In the earlier scene, when the plot is hatched with April/Maisie, I think Emily's desperation to have a child needs more emphasis, as her prime motive for this humiliation?
- 335/6 As above, P318, Jewish race OK?
- 351/2 Even Micky, monster though he is, would be shaking fit to break after this, through a combination of fear and the sheer effort it took to kill Solly? Wind up the emotion here? Edward might notice that he looks a trifle pale?
- 353 Mean seems too modern here? Unkind or cruel?
- 353 See my general comment re: Hugh/Nora.
- 345 Those freckled breasts again? See comments above.
- 358 Could Hugh's emotional response to the realisation that Hubert is his child be stronger, more tender? It's a special moment that the reader has been waiting for?
- 364 Augusta's ornate home the height of fashion? Somewhere earlier Augusta muses that the house is suburban, but Joseph loves it so they'll stay. Seems inconsistent?
- 368 Pilaster?
- 382 Did Hugh ever confront Maisie with his knowledge of Hubert's real parentage? It seems impossible that he could resist, in spite of Nora being pregnant and his decision to stay with her?
- 392 Augusta and Micky - As I've said, should they be more than allies?

(9)

396 Word processor has gobbled a word here.

400 Push off - too modern?

401 I don't feel this revelation about who really killed Peter can be slipped in like this. Surely we need to witness Hugh telling Edward, Edward's reaction, and confrontation with Micky? Betrayed by his best friend, and he just slips it into the conversation, and seems not to mind all that much? It worries me.

408 Po-faced OK?

409 What is a 'princess' style gown?

412 If this is Maisie's Polish name, shouldn't we know it from the outset? (see note to P 14)

419 Perhaps you don't need to remind us who all these people are at this late stage? Certainly Nora doesn't need to be reintroduced as Hugh's wife?

421 Nora, Hugh's wife unnecessary?

424 Prussian courtesy OK? Wasn't it Ben's father, even a grandfather, who came over? Prussianness still a feature?

424 Severe as ever. (P427 sharp as ever). Repetition.

434 I find it very hard to believe that Rebecca could have hidden her pregnancy from her entire family. When did she run away? Has she been missing for several months? In which case, perhaps the reader should hear of this sooner?

435 See repetition.

442 Was Nice really only a village in 1890? Not a small town?

445 trashier too modern?

446 under garments more in keeping with period than underwear?

455 See repetitions.

459 Description of Augusta repetition of P 392.

459 If you do decide to crank up the relationship between Micky/Augusta, all their scenes will need looking at, this one particularly?

467 wouldn't the resourceful August<sup>a</sup> find out about illicit dealers if she wanted to?

468 If the snuff boxes belonged to the syndicate, why

wasn't this asset realised by Hugh earlier? And why  
wasn't Augusta forced to sell Whitehaven House?

469 Ploughed fields of Wimbledon OK? Plenty of houses  
in Wimbledon by 1890?

483 A bit more passion in this final embrace? The  
ending of this scene seems a little rushed.

485 How were the divorce laws in 1892? Did Hugh divorce  
her for desertion? Was two years the desertion  
period? No doubt you researched all this, but just  
asking!

*Jave*