

MACMILLAN LONDON

A Division of Pan Macmillan Ltd, Cavaye Place, London SW10 9PG: Telephone 071-373 6070
Fax 071-370 0746 Telex 917466

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Ken Follett
92 Cheyne Walk
LONDON
W10 0PQ

Dear Ken

Welcome back. I'm sure you'll be too tired to look at this fax for several days! We've been hearing reports about the progress of your trip and gather it has gone wonderfully well.

Many thanks for the outline for THE FIRE IN THE SOUL. It's going to be a truly marvellous novel, closer to PILLARS perhaps than either of the novels you've written since, with masses of scope for rich historical detail and colour, for drama and adventure. However, you don't just want compliments, so I've been searching my brain to find what might be missing from the outline, and I've come up with three S's - suspense, sex and set pieces.

Suspense

- 1) I'm assuming that your point of view characters are Mack, Jay, Lizzie and Peg Knapp, with George Jamisson, Lennox and Kobe as your main secondary characters.
- 2) In A DANGEROUS FORTUNE, much of the suspense came from that death in the opening scene and its repercussions for the plot and characters. I wonder whether you couldn't make more of the enmity between Mack and Jay, dating back to their childhoods?
- 3) Maybe it should stem from something George Jamisson did to Mack's father - or mother? Perhaps they could even share the same father, a fact not divulged to the reader until late in the story? Mack's mother could be a servant in the Jamisson household? The opening scene could be a rape with no names given?

Sex

- 4) The ongoing sexual tension is going to spring from the fact that Mack and Lizzie are kept apart for so long, which is fine. However, the outline is quite short on female characters.

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- 5) I wonder if you shouldn't introduce a new female character, either on the convict ship or when we get to America (a native American?), who gets in the way of Mack's relationship with Lizzie? Alternatively, you could make Peg Knapp a trifle older (14 at the beginning of the novel, 17 at the end) and have her adoration of Mack a real threat to Lizzie?

Set Pieces

- 6) The novel has 5 parts, 3 main movements (Scotland/London - the crossing - Virginia/Kentucky). Perhaps we need a dramatic set piece for each part, or is this overdoing it?
- 7) The outline is more detailed in the first two parts; we have the explosion in the mine and the Massacre of St George's Fields. Fine.
- 8) Mack's attempted takeover of the convict ship and resulting flogging could be worked up into a set piece?
- 9) In addition we could have a fire on board ship, or a gale, or a storm?
- 10) Whatever drama you might consider adding to spice up the crossing, it could lead to a scene in which Mack has to save Lizzie from something, thus posing a sexual threat to Jay and further antagonizing him?
- 11) No doubt you're planning to add a further adventure set piece to Part IV, section 9, the journey to Kentucky, or in Kentucky itself? Masses of scope here.

Real Characters

- 12) You allude to John Wilkes and Daniel Boone. Could you bring them into the action? I don't know much about Boone, but isn't Wilkes the chap who responded to the taunt 'Wilkes, you'll either die of the pox or on the gallows' with the remark, 'That, Sir, depends on whether I embrace your mistress or your principles.'? Heaven!

That's all I can think of at this point, except to say I can't wait to read the first draft.

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Oh, one final point. Wouldn't the title, which I love, be better without the definite article - FIRE IN THE SOUL?

I think we're meeting on Friday morning at 9.30. I look forward to that.

Kind regards to you and Barbara,

Jane

Jane Wood
Editorial Director