

CROWN PUBLISHERS Inc.

ANN E. PATTY
EDITOR AT LARGE

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Ken Follett
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New York, NY 10019

Dear Ken:

I wanted to put some of my thoughts down for you to ponder after our meeting. Most of these are broad ideas, focusing on characterizations which I hope will increase the dramatic tension in the novel. As it is now, the central question that animates the novel is "will Mack ever get free?" with the subsidiary tension of his obvious attraction to Lizzie, although that doesn't really come to centerstage until Part III. And because the Jamissons are so villainous, it sometimes feels like Mack is the lower class victim, subjected to a series of tortures by the upper class. I'm hoping to relieve the relentlessness by punching up some of the other dramatic stress points, which exist now but are not really focused upon, the foremost one being the relationship and attraction between Lizzie and Mack, who seem to me to be the upper/lower class, male/female sides of the same coin.

You mention in the outline that Mack's mother worked in the Hallim's estate — perhaps that's how Mack was educated. Perhaps Mack learned to read from Lizzie's mother or some servant in Lizzie's house. And though I'm not clear at what age her father died, Lizzie grew up without a man in the house and had the unique situation of being more independent than other girls. Couldn't we turn up the heat on their attraction for each other from the beginning, ie. when she saves him from the river (already a greatly evocative scene). Have her realize with a shudder that even though she is heavily courting with Jay, this man fires her in some way she's never felt before, and have that proceed throughout. I find it inconsistent in her character that she grasps so hard to Mack keeping his station. Rather, it seems to me that she would be a person who, if she didn't have the courage or fortitude to fight alongside the working classes, would certainly be in their favor and not see them as a lower species of human. I'm hoping their love can be consummated, or very close to consummated, sometime in London so when it comes to the new world, the main tension within her is her fighting powerfully against her passion for Mack, as she realizes more and more just who Jay is. I think turning up the heat of that romance will also turn up the dramatic tension throughout the novel.

The other tension I'd love to see you increase is that between Jay, Robert and his father. As we're told in the beginning, the father favors Robert and won't give Jay anything. Yet it's only Jay we see acting and in fact, one-upping his father in ruthlessness at every turn. I wonder if it couldn't be Robert who is the ruthless one and Jay who's the passionate, impulsive, will o' the wisp younger son who is like a frivolous, impotent, upper class version of Mack. In other words, he's

passionate, he wants what he wants when he wants it, but his passions have no weight and no depth. I think it's important that, of the rich men who are on stage, we like one of them, and I'm hoping you might think of turning Jay into a tragic rather than an evil character, so that his trying to prove things to his dad will lead him into more and more perilous and perhaps stupid maneuvers. I think making Jay a passionate dandy and a flighty character will not only help relieve some of the overwhelming meanness that Sir George and his financial and political doings cast over the book, but it will also make Lizzie's choice harder and more resonant.

In this way there can be a real change in Jay's relationship with Lizzie, where at first she's carried away because she sees him as the same kind of daring, adventurous, fun-loving person that she is, but as the book progresses, she'll realize that he totally lacks substance. Even if he's a flake, he could be good-willed, always wanting to prove something, and always eager, so that it could be Robert who's doing the nasty things. That will then keep the tension between Robert and Jay going throughout the book and allow you to do the kind of deep exploration of character that you're so good at. It will also make Lizzie's wavering between the two men more interesting; it will be more of a choice between the new order and the old order.

My hopes are that Jay, who right now remains the same from page 1 to page 568, will be a more unusual character who will change as much as Lizzie and Mack do, becoming tragic while Mack and Lizzie are the heroic focus of the book and Robert the evil manipulator/villain. I don't think he should marry Lizzie right away with the idea of getting hold of the coal mines. He should just

want to get something Robert wants, which is Lizzie, so that in the beginning we see the competition between them being over a girl rather than over the father's desires. Then when Robert realizes that Jay has control of those leases after the marriage, he can come after them with dad's help. Perhaps Lizzie's testifying on Mack's behalf will speed the process of Jay giving the leases over, since his wife has betrayed and embarrassed him and he feels even more of a need to get to America. The trade-off would be that he gives the leases and he gets a second chance to prove himself worthy of a place in the family shipping business in America. Then as he desperately tries to prove himself, he loses Lizzie. In the beginning, I'd like to see Jay as a rather sympathetic dandy whose desire for Lizzie is love, lust and competition, not solely mercenary.

I also have another suggestion that really means a bit more shifting: have Jay's livelihood focus on shipping when they come to America, rather than on a plantation. The plantation story has been done so many times here that for about five years in the seventies it was a major American genre, with two plantation novels per month being published by various paperback companies. I think readers are extremely critical of how it's done, and it feels old to them. What I have never seen done is an urban colonial setting, and since the big money in Jay's family is in shipping, wouldn't it be fascinating to see that business rather than the plantation business, the trading of slaves and convicts and tobacco between England and the colonies? I can't believe Sidney Lenox would be made overseer of a plantation, but were they running a trade office and a shipping concern, Lenox could still be working his evil, Mack could still be indentured to them, and Lizzie could not only have a much more interesting life in town, but she could also still have plenty of opportunities for the heat between her and Mack to continue. And they'd be more in the center of colonial

politics. I realize this would require quite a bit of extra research and a bit of a left turn in Part III, but I feel the parallels and the urban life in the colonies and that which existed in London will give a lovely shape to the book and will give you the opportunity to cover fictional ground that hasn't been so overplowed and planted that the land is pretty much worn out at this point. I also feel that Jay should join the cause of the rebellious coloniala. After all, it's people like Jay who had reason to come to America, stunted as they were by older brothers in the Old World. But the pampered scion of wealth doesn't have the cunning and fortitude for real change, as the working class hero does. That is an American concept!

This of course would have an impact on Peg, who is my last and most hesitant suggestion. I found myself getting tired of Peg by the end, and I wonder if it wouldn't be a real emotional climax during the crossing to have Peg die, so that Mack is dealing with that loss during the time in America. Rather than having the aborted mutiny, have the dramatic incident on the ship that breaks Mack's behavior be an emotional one — the death of Peg. Part of the reason I suggest this is because so much of the dramatic action has to do with business and politics that I think we need to focus some of it on the emotions. This will certainly give you the opportunity to do a major tear-jerker scene and perhaps bring Lizzie and Mack closer together. This also echoes my previous suggestions about making Lizzie less of a "class-racist," Jay less of an evil pig, and Robert the real evil one, so conditions on the ship would not have to be quite so grim.

I also hope you'll be able to give us more contrasting scenes of the rich vs. the poor — drawing room scenes in London and in colonial America, so we get a bit more relief from the grimness of the working class life. Hopefully you'll be able to give us some of the happier, livelier moments of the working classes, perhaps a dance or something. I think Mack is a fabulous character and I think the more you let out his emotions in scenes with Lizzie and Peg, he will be become unforgettable.

I have lots of doubts about Peg's role in the new world, which is part of the reason I'm suggesting she gets killed off on the ship. I find it hard to imagine they'd spend so much energy tracking her, and somehow her competition with Lizzie for Mack just doesn't ring true. Her going off with the Indian at the end seems too much out of a storybook. I think it will be stronger if Mack, Lizzie and Kobe set off on their own. I just don't see what dramatic tension or real nuance Peg adds to the novel at this point. Part of the problem here is the way Peg's fate echoes Mack's: it's like watching a series of shooting galleries with the Jamissons shooting over and over again at what amounts to sitting ducks. Peg's death on the the ship could be the turning point that brings Lizzie and Mack together. In Max's grief, both Lizzie and the readers could see his deeply vulnerable part for the first time.

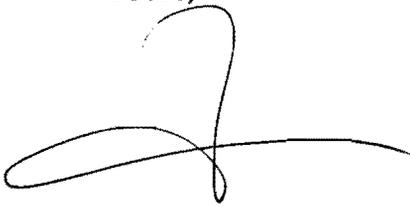
This way Jay could be the innocent when the test holes are bored on the Hallim estate. Lizzie freaks out, Jay goes to his dad, but it's actually Robert and his dad who have taken the liberty of going ahead and messing with Jay's property. He makes a feeble stand against them, goes back to Lizzie, they celebrate as though they're going to create their own little modest utopia, and then later find

out, after Lizzie testifies in Mack's behalf, that Jay has been bought off by the dad and is being sent to America, ostensibly because he's always wanted to, but indeed to get rid of him just as the others are gotten rid of.

In Part III, especially when they land in the new world, the story is too expository, lacking enough underlying dramatic tension. Here again, I think it should be Jay trying to prove himself to his father and his brother. Perhaps rather than remaining the most loyal, Jay, in fact, decides to band together with the rebels, as a younger son who has no patrimony might. Perhaps, in fact, Jay is just sent over as a tenant on his brother's land, running the shipping business, allowed to stay in the great house, but not owning it, so throws his lot in with the rebellious colonists. Lizzie would become more and more disenchanted with his flightiness and his lack of substance. Perhaps he becomes a heavy gambler, philandering and making a fool of himself. The dramatic tensions here should be Mack and Lizzie, perhaps having a clandestine affair and afraid of getting caught. At Lizzie's behest, Jay could try to go up against his brother but lose courage and once again capitulate at the last moment; Lizzie would no longer be able to resist choosing Mack. Perhaps Jay could catch Lizzie and Mack together and in an outburst of rage, do something that will finally make her leave. I'd like to see Lizzie interacting in colonial society and see her politics becoming more and more sophisticated and important to her while she watches her increasingly loutish and useless husband trying to prove he can succeed at something and failing at everything he attempts. Or perhaps it is he who turns Jay towards the colonists' cause.

Some sort of showdown should take place between Jay and his family while they're over in America. Perhaps his father coming over and seeing his activities, ordering him back to England and Lizzie lighting out two nights before or something, but I do think there does need to be some sort of dramatic plot or showdown involving Jay, Robert and Sir George. On page 415, it's suggested that Lenox does have some power over Jay and perhaps the plot could involve that.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized loop that crosses itself, followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

AP:rw

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