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Ken Follett
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Dear Ken:

Happy New Year! Since I know you wanted to get started on the ninth on the final revision of *A Place Called Freedom*, I thought I would get the first part of my notes to you. The second part will follow within the next week, so I shouldn't be holding you up at all.

As I told you on the phone, I'm extremely pleased with the work you did between draft #1 and draft #2. The book is infinitely stronger, more interesting, and all the characters both more complex and believable. The only character I think needs some additional work, not on reconceptualizing but just beefing up the characterization that's already there, is Lizzie. As far as the plot goes, I think you have it more than well under control, and all the decisions you made in the rewrite are wise and meaningful ones.

The only very slight changes I'll be suggesting come in Part 2 and Part 3, the first of which is Lizzie's first attempt to save Mack, when she foils the watch stealing scheme. Upon reading it in this version, I wonder if it doesn't take too much of the thunder away from the final saving of Mack, and I also wonder if she doesn't just save him too many times, and if this particular plot movement isn't perhaps unnecessary and that chapter better spent letting us see Lizzie and Jay actually together. I do feel we still lack a real sense of Lizzie and Jay's marriage in the beginning. We see very little of their actual relationship, outside the times of conflict, and I think their times of conflict will be even more telling if we see a bit more of them together. You have

achieved this very successfully in Part I; there are a couple of places in Part II where you can beef it up.

I love the way you have Jamisson include in the will any offspring of Jay's union with Lizzie and I wonder if perhaps that news doesn't come too late. Wouldn't it be more meaningful if it came before the child was stillborn so the disappointment of that stillborn would be even greater and add even more to the breakdown of Jay's and Lizzie's relationship. And wouldn't that perhaps also set Lizzie up in knowing it's up to her to save Jay even more, so that when she finds out that he's imported slave girls to do his sexual bidding, the betrayal becomes that much more bitter and her departure that much more inevitable. I'll go into these in more depth when I get there.

No .

Other than that, all my comments are small details. I did find that the first third of the book is by far the strongest, and if you can do that same kind of work on the next two sections in this final draft, the book will be stupendous.

You'll see I marked notes on the pages, which I'm sending you herewith. Let me elucidate some of them.

On page 14, Lizzie says 'I can get a husband whenever I like,' and the narrator tells us that men fall in love with her all the time, and yet we don't really have a sense of what Lizzie's life is like. What men are there around the Hallim estate? Does she indeed spend time in London? How is she schooled? Are there other neighboring estates aside from the Jamisson's? I don't think this background needs to be gone into at length, just a few paragraphs about how Lizzie got to be Lizzie with her independent spirit. This part of her character is made much of, but we don't really see her acting on it, except in regards to Mack, until quite late in the book. You tell us her mother had taken her to London and launched her the previous spring, but has she been there since then? Do young gentlemen come from London to visit Scotland? Some elucidation here would be nice, also some words about Lizzie's education and about Lizzie's relationship with her mother. Her mother is obviously a frightened woman and a somewhat embittered one. Has Lizzie rather taken over the male role in the family, or who is it from whom she derives her

spirit? I feel I now know all about the Jamissons I need to know, but I'm longing for a little more on Lizzie.

You'll also notice throughout the abbreviation "anac" for anachronisms. I may be wrong on some of these, but I've questioned a lot of words or expressions that I think would not have been current during the eighteenth century. I may be over questioning, but I think it's better to be overly conscious of these, so I ask you to consider each as you run into it. I don't think the book should be written in archaic prose, but modern colloquialisms should be done away with.

I wish you'd carry your thinking on page 31 a little farther. Does Mack realize he's a leader or does he vow to do something for himself? How much does he want to help others and how much does he want to free himself, for throughout the book he always thinks of others as well as himself. Perhaps a sentence or two here would be useful. ✓

Page 35

The altercation between Robert and Jay here seems a bit out of place, and I wonder if Jay could go in pursuit of Lizzie for a sentence or two before Robert stops him. ✓

Page 37

I also would like a better picture of Castle Jamisson. Do the Hallims move into Castle Jamisson for the period while the Jamissons are in residence? Do they bring along their servants and helpers? Do the Jamissons maintain a staff there, or lease off the property in their absence? And just how far away are the two estates, and are there other neighboring estates? Throughout the manuscript, I think you could give us a bit more of the feel, taste, smell, and look of places. When you do it, it pulls us further into the story. Not long descriptions, but sentences here and there. Right now I have a better sense of the miners' abodes than those of the Jamisson's or the Hallim's. ✓

Page 39

Here, too, I'd like to see a more drawn out description of Lady Hallim. ✓

Page 44

Here is another place where I'd like to see a bit more of a picture of Lizzie and Lady Hallim's life. Is Lady Hallim a spendthrift? Does she dote on Lizzie and try to buy her fancy clothes? Does she take her on trips or do they stay close to home? Do they entertain?

Page 60

Here, too, I'm wondering what the dress is like. Throughout we know that Lizzie wears corsets and petticoats, but I would like to see a more full description of what the clothing style is during that period in England.

Page 72

Here is another, or alternate, place where we could learn more about Lizzie's romantic history, her education, her way of life, and why she knows as little about mining as she does. Also, what is the Hallim land used for? Do they raise animals? Is it in crop land? And how vast indeed is the estate?

Page 74-75

Here, too, I'd like to understand a little bit more about what Lizzie thinks of her mother and her mother's plans for her. Does she feel sorry for her mother? Does she feel protective of her mother, obliged to do her mother's bidding, or what? Just what is the alliance between the Jamissons and the Hallims?

Part 2

I really like the opening of this part and feel it's much stronger, but I would like to have more of a picture of what London was like then. As the chapters progress, we learn about Wilkes and the 45, and it's clear that there's an air of change and rebellion and immigration in London. Especially as this will contrast with the situation in America and is a time in England that Americans seldom if ever read about, I wonder if you could give us more of an overview, just a couple of paragraphs about the London Mack enters: what the place physically looks like, smells like. Are people begging and sleeping in the streets? Is there a lot of activism? Are there a lot of strikes? How long has this been going on? How much is Wilkes' influence felt, etc, etc.

On page 157, I'd like much more about where they're staying, the look, the feel, the smell, so we have a very vivid contrast of chapter 13 and 14 with the wealthy part of London and the working class poor part of London. ✓

I also find the passage of time in Part 2 somewhat confusing. It seems to take place over about four months. There are mentions of time passage here and there, but altogether it seems that much more time must have past. Can you look at this as you're going through it again?

Page 162

I'm wondering when and where Lizzie picked up this handbill. ✓

Page 176

Wouldn't Mack wonder here why Lizzie is in London? ✓

Page 180

I find it too coincidental that Peg mentions Barbados. How would she know this, especially since it's on Lizzie and Jay's mind? I think it better that she mention some other location. ✓

I find Mack taking a walk in Lizzie's neighborhood and running into her on her wedding day just too coincidental. It stretches credibility, so why don't you play out his sex scene with Cora? Since the neck ring symbol plays throughout the book, and we don't hear about it again until Mack takes it along with him to America, that it might be interesting here if the first time Cora spends the night with him she finds it and questions him about it. It could be a poignant moment. x

Chapter 18

I'm wondering if this chapter should be included, where Lizzie thwarts Lennox and Jay's plan to set up Mack in the thieving. Wouldn't it be better here if we see Lizzie and Jay spending some time together, see them doing some domestic things around their house together? How many servants do they have? What responsibilities does Lizzie have? Cut Lizzie going to the hanging, to Casper Gordonson and to McAsh's quarters, and have this chapter be Jay and Lizzie together. If you want Lizzie to witness a hanging, x

perhaps Jay could take her to one, and we could see the quite different reactions the two have to the grim spectacle. Also, if we had more of a sense of Jay and Lizzie's relationship, it would make the turning that much more meaningful.

Page 250

The Wilkes information here confused me a bit. In a previous chapter he was running for election. In Chapter 18, we learn that all the action is taking place over two months, and now they're trying to prevent Wilkes from taking his seat. Can this all perhaps be clarified in the opening of Part 2? Then it would be easy enough for Lennox to make his first approach to Jay, asking Jay to go to his father to ask the ship owners not to deal with McAsh's gangs. ✓

Page 302

Here again, it seems that two months have passed since the wedding, but I don't have much of a sense of what Lizzie's life in London has been or what her relationship with Jay, Sir George, her mother, Robert or any of them is like at all. Also, since this is the day after the riot, this transition seems awkward. Wouldn't Jay come home and play the hero, reporting his role in setting up Mack, and then the next morning Lizzie would learn the truth when Casper Gordonson approaches her? If you cut 18, I think it would still be perfectly logical that Casper Gordonson approaches her. It would be a nice way of pleading to Lizzie on the relationship to help him. ✓

When Gordonson comes here on page 303, indeed, it is as if she's never seen him before. But I wonder if she's been following the strikes and the family business and I wonder what her relationship to all these things is, if she misses Scotland and what she thinks about the social ferment. I think all this can be handled earlier than this chapter, both in Chapter 18, if you agree with my suggestions there and in Chapter 23. ✓

Page 315

I find it a little hard to believe here that Lizzie wouldn't know she's pregnant. The way her mother talks to her about her plumpness, the way she talks about her morning sickness and the way her mother tells her later in the court that she's pregnant all seems hard to believe. Wouldn't it be more

effective if Lizzie knows she's pregnant and talks to her mother about it in the morning. Then when she decides to go and stand up for McAsh, her mother is aghast given the fact that she is pregnant, but perhaps when she goes and stands up for Mack, she does so deciding that she will no longer be cowed by the Jamissons. Now that she has a child, she will live for her child and bring her child up right in the new world. Wouldn't the pregnancy in fact perhaps strengthen Lizzie rather than weaken her resolve?

x

Page 333

This scene is too short. Rather than Lizzie backing down fully, I think she should agree to be Jay's wife but in her heart know that she will never fully be a Jamisson, that she will raise her child with her values in a new land. Perhaps it would even be possible here that she demand that Jamisson bequeathe a portion of his estate to her unborn child so that she and Jay both have something to gain by the birth of this child and in trying to keep the family together.

x

Also, if you decide it would be okay for Lizzie to know she's pregnant, perhaps we could have a sweet and touching scene between her and Jay about the pregnancy before all of this hits the fan (perhaps around page 302), so that once again we have an emotional high before it's brought low again.

x

Page 340

I'd like to see a bit more of a transition here, expanding a bit on Lizzie's feelings on page 341, about her pregnancy, about her mother's betrayal, about Jay's betrayal, and about the promises she's elicited from Sir George. Isn't she pretty much in her own bondage to the Jamissons with hopes for her child to be free? Wouldn't this echo nicely Mack's situation in Scotland?

x

Page 346

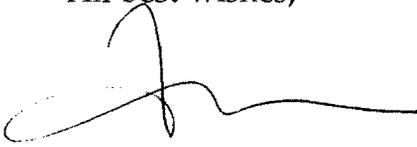
Since Lizzie knows that Lennox was behind setting up Mack and in some ways behind so much of her misery, wouldn't she protest here and begin the tension with Jay over Lennox that will continue in America?

✓

That's all for Parts 1 and 2, and I will get my notes on Part 3, which will be certainly no more than these, to you in the next week. If you want to discuss

any of these points, please feel free to call at any time. I'll also send on a copy to Al so he can compare these to his own notes. I can't wait to see the final draft.

All best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'J' followed by a horizontal line that tapers to the right.

AP:rw

enc.

cc: Al Zuckerman

1. Politics / political / fronty
2. Alter hygiene - Gordonson scene ✓
3. Alter Jay - heaven scene ✓
4. Mrs Grant ✓