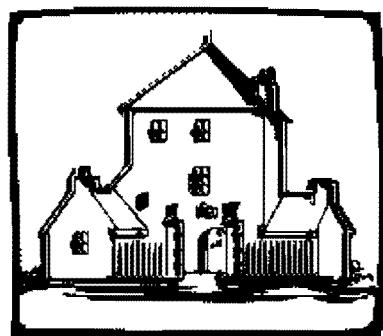


random house, inc.



**To:** Ken Follett  
**Subject:** OUT OF THE MOUTH OF THE DRAGON  
**Date:** 06/09/97 06:43 PM  
**Pages:** 3 , including cover page

**From:** Ann Patty  
**Company:** Random House, Inc.

**Recipients:** Ken Follett @ 011441713525168 @ FAX

This is really starting to rock & roll -- much more drama, sooner, and I'm starting to get a creepy feeling that such a thing should really happen. Moving up the seismic vibrator heist seems an excellent idea to me but raises questions as to the time frame: Why would Jess steal the vibrator before he knew he had the data which would allow him to quake? Elsewhere it's stated that Melanie had been on the scene for about 4 weeks -- can you get around this?

page 7 - the murder certainly ups the ante quickly but leaves me with two questions: wouldn't this make Jess more desperate sooner? Make him more crazed from the get go? His quick rage and violence seem somewhat out of character with the other aspects of his portrayal. Could he perhaps run over the guy by mistake? Also, later when the theft is linked with Jess, the murder never comes up; should it?

Why is he illiterate? I like his background but the illiteracy seems too much -- especially given what he's been doing for 20 years, and the research he would have to do to pull this all off. How about self-educated -- no formal training but an idiot savant streak -- which also links in with his charisma. No.

page 11: being an allergic person, I keep wondering why Dusty isn't allergic to animals -- most allergic types are.

Also, here Jess seems to be having daredevil thrills -- yet he's already killed someone, and it would seem to me that his power drive would be controlling him -- ie. a bit of a sociopathological psychotic edge, eh? Also, at this point we still don't know why he's doing this, the background of the powerplant dispute. Shouldn't he have a more desperate edge?

page 14: Here's mention that Melanie's been gone for 4 weeks -- given all that's been planned, shouldn't it be longer? How long was Jess on the crew in Texas?

page 17: It's unclear to me why Michael is being such a jerk in this first scene with Judy. And on page 18, it seems to me she moves too quickly to ask him if he's been burgled. Surely she'd check the universities first, to see who all has access to their data.

page 19: I'm interested to know more about his commune -- how big, how much transience, . I love the "five paradoxes of Baghram" but I wonder if he pretends to himself some spiritual motivation, or if he simply decided to climb on top of the heap by creating his own world, since the one around him kept shooting him down. Would seem to me that there would have to be some modern conveniences to keep this going -- like maybe weekly or monthly shopping trips? Do people give all their money when they arrive, change their names, etc>? How cultish has it become?

page 24: Shouldn't Michael call Judy, or vice versa, after one of them hears the report? Otherwise this date comes out of nowhere

page 25: 9. "Jess realises he never truly believed he could trigger an earthquake until it actually happened>" Yet he killed someone to do it! I like his battle of the giants feeling, but the desire for this should have been motivating him all along -- to play with the Big Boys.

page 30: Michael's mother recognizing Star's voice feels just too coincidental. Better, perhaps if John Truth plays a bigger role getting everyone riled up about this and starts a hot line for listeners to call in tips and more than one person calls with the same one. I really like the John Truth character -- see him as the dionysian chorus and think he might play a bigger role -- a man with a foot in both camps.

page 31: The allergy motivation feels to weak here; can't Melanie be totally under Jess' spell? The queen of the king with mad visions of power?

Wouldn't the police expect to see a permit before they can set up the ride? Perhaps they got one under a phoney name?

Page 32: Not many trains in California. Check location

page 33: I don't understand why Jess agrees to this meeting so readily. Wouldn't he use John Truth as go between? Otherwise what protection does he really have against arrest/death?

page 34: why hasn't Judy run a computer check on the name Stella Higgins before this?

You may well have already taken many of these points under consideration and have worked them out. I can't wait to see some pages, but in the meantime, call if you want to discuss anything.

1. Why does Jess work so hard to befriend the driver Ethan kills him.  
Is this the first person he has killed?  
How does murder work with his green philosophy?
2. Being illiterate must be very difficult for someone like hemi-agami  
is this part of a non-conformist philosophy - how did he  
become a millionaire without being able to read?
3. When it comes to raiding the cult maybe the F.B.I.  
are scared of another Waco - do they have special plans  
to prevent this, could it be a further tension in the  
plot? - perhaps the F.B.I. & Governor are not only scared  
by the earthquake but also the political implications  
of a Waco style seige.
4. Cult members can behave foolishly, why is it so  
easy to ruin them and yet star to confess?
5. At the end the stakes don't seem very  
high, ~~the idea of a time limit~~ I am not sure why but  
the tension eases off slightly - maybe there should be  
something more personal for one of the investigators, perhaps  
a family member in the cult - something to up the stakes  
a bit. - I am not sure what?