

# Writers House Inc.

A LITERARY AGENCY

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September 29, 1989

Mr. Ken Follett  
BY FAX

Dear Ken,

I read Pat Goldbitz' letter last night; and on the whole, I approve.

For one thing, restricting the action to one day is an interesting notion, but in terms of story telling power, I think you are limiting yourself and the book's potential impact in return for what seems to me to be purely an intellectual conceit.

I think the idea of using Jonathan for many of the purposes which Phillip now fulfills is quite an ingenious suggestion, and this could be a real improvement. Jonathan as a young man is much more likely, it seems to me, to have a crisis about his celibacy and to feel strongly the attractions of a woman. And this also would create an interesting opportunity for a drama between Jonathan and Phillip on this very subject -- a father-son confrontation of sorts. And since we'd be dealing with Jonathan, not Phillip, it's conceivable he might just abandon his Order for a good woman. And if he doesn't, you'd have more lust and suspense.

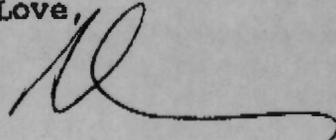
In lieu of having as your stake the position of Archbishop of Canterbury, I think you might accomplish pretty much the same amount of excitement with some lesser prize, possibly no more than the Bishopric of Wiltshire. The character replacing Waleran could be a local cleric who is conniving by hook or crook to obtain the vacant post of Bishop. He could be a cleric whom people think of as a man of enormous piety, good works, deeply felt religious fervor, but it's all a front. Underneath, he's a character much like Waleran, except that he doesn't appear to be. The post of Bishop must be filled, I'm not sure how -- either by election or appointment; but either way, this guy needs to score points since he knows that the election or appointment is going to take place within the next week or two. It seems to me that you could possibly use Dean Baldwin, or you could create someone new. He might also have a secret vice, possibly some sort of sadism.

If all this makes sense, you also would need to replace William. He could have died (as could Waleran); and it could be that William's lands and office were awarded by the King to some retainer, a muscle man of sorts, a warrior who has conducted some very successful rampages against the King. It would be interesting if this character were physically imposing, enormous in size, someone intimidating by his very bulk. And he would be fearsome, too, because not so long ago he has been awarded these lands and this office of Sheriff, in return for services rendered to the Crown. That might make Michael think twice about bringing him before the King's justice. The only thing you might lose by using such a character, it seems to me, is the past history of tension between William and Aliena, and between William and Phillip. But in the story, as you have it now, those elements don't seem to play too much of a role. And you could make this guy interesting in fresh ways. Maybe he has half a dozen unruly kids that he can't control. And he could be a gambler, which could explain why he's always hard-up.

So, if you go along with this, you gain the opportunity to create two characters who, in their own ways, could be even more interesting than William and Waleran. You keep the story line more less as you have it; you add the possibility of a real romance for a monk and an abbess. It amounts to more of a gain, I think, than a loss.

So, mull all this over, and let me know what you think.

Love,



P.S. The Gordon-Walkers  
will be joining us  
Sept 16.