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Publisher

December 9, 1983

Mr. Ken Follett  
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Dear Ken:

Here is a quick note about RUN ON ICE. We are just off to Key Biscayne, Florida for a week-long sales conference, and things as you might expect, are a bit hectic.

I love the idea of your using a woman protagonist, and Jane looks like she could be sensational. The idea of Chantal is good, and a lot can be done with her. However, I am a bit worried about her during the escape at the end. The escape itself is tough enough, and having relatively recently been acquainted with what living with a baby entails (Elizabeth is 4½ years old) I cannot imagine Ellis and Jane escaping with a baby in tow. Maybe I am being too pragmatic.

I have to admit I was disappointed at the Afghanistan setting. (Although, some others at NAL strongly disagree with me.) I guess I feel it is almost too exotic, and perhaps is not a country whose dilemma is that much of a focus for the American people. Also Ellis being with the CIA is a problem for me, too. Most educated Americans (those who are book buyers) view the CIA in a very negative light. The image the CIA has is that of a rabid right wing arm of the government dedicated to repression, and stirring up countries to create unnecessary bloodshed and war. Could Ellis be a special envoy of the President's, or part of a special presidential taskforce, or something like that?

There are two things I miss in this proposal that have become Ken Follett trademarks. One, is a plot that centers around a turning point in history, or at least where the stakes are much larger than just the individual fates of the central characters. The other, is historical characters in the story, which is really an offshoot of my first problem.

Knowing you and how you work, I am sure you will make RUN ON ICE an exciting book. I question whether this plot is really worthy of what you can do.

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PUBLISHERS OF SIGNET, SIGNET CLASSICS, MENTOR, PLUME, MERIDIAN AND NAL BOOKS

Mr. Ken Follett

- 2 -

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What is the banking novel Al mentioned to me? Can I see it? Is it a thriller? It sounds intriguing.

Here's a thought for you to consider at some point or other. Are you at all interested in doing a novel with a Vietnam War background? Americans are finally willing to face this war and deal with all that it entailed, which as you know was a long time coming, and books on the subject of Viet Nam (fiction and nonfiction) have become the hottest things around.

Let me know your response to all this. If you are really into this novel to the extent that you must do it, I know you will do a terrific job. I have never known any author who is such a master at his craft as you. I love working with you. You are a magician with words, plots and characters. You make things work brilliantly in your books.

My best to you and your family.

As ever,

*Elaine /ak.*

Elaine Koster

EK:ar

cc: Al Zuckerman

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