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TELEPHONE
CRESTVIEW 15222

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Mr. Kirk Douglas
Villa Gioia
230 Via Appia Antica
Rome, Italy

Dear Kirk:

I hope I haven't been bombarding you with letters too much lately. However, you were the one who asked for them.

Kirk, when I left Rome, you gave me a copy of STRANGE HARVEST. I read it briefly on the plane, but wanted to read it again and give it more thought before I wrote to you. First of all, Kirk, I honestly can't understand why I couldn't have gotten a copy of this sooner. The darn thing was mimeographed and I certainly made enough requests for it. Especially since Willie and you and I and Sam are supposed to be working together, I think it might have been a good idea to let us read this at least at the same time everyone else was reading it.

From what I understand, neither you, Sam nor Willie have any particular enthusiasm for the project at the moment. Frankly, I must disagree with you. Upon rereading STRANGE HARVEST I feel it has the making of a darn good motion picture. There are, of course, a number of ways you can go ahead with the project. I still think there is room enough for this picture to be made in Italy -- and, when I say 'room enough' I mean that there have not been too many projects of this type, especially in American films, and I don't think the Italian films would take the edge off this completely.

Of course, the project would need a very definite rewrite. I would like to see the relationship more along the lines of "Angels With Dirty Faces" or "Salty O'Rourke". In other words, the tough kid stuff should be even funnier than it is now, with the group of little mobsters. Also, your relationship must definitely be more firm and you should be involved in some of the shenanigans with this gang. As it stands now, the kid is completely the protagonist and I think you should share in the responsibility of causing the action in this project. I think you should be more on the level with the kid himself -- I think you should be tougher and perhaps a bit mischievous, etc., so the kid's fondness for you stems out of a more obvious understanding in his recognition of certain characteristics you both have.

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Also, I feel strongly that at some point in the picture you should prove to the kid that you are not only as daring but have as much guts as he has -- when it's necessary to use these traits for a good purpose.

This brings up another point, Kirk, to which I have given a lot of thought. You are a natural athlete. I saw THREE LOVES again the other night and the audience really gasped at you on the trapeze. I could hear people whispering, "that's really Kirk Douglas doing that". I really believe, Kirk, that this kind of action is a fan-getter. So far, in your pictures, you have done a bit of juggling, a bit of riding, trapeze work, boxing, etc. -- and, I think that perhaps in this picture you could do some of all these things. Perhaps you could take the kid to a gym to try and get to know him - then, when he tries to show you how tough he is, you can show him how tough you are. Or, perhaps, you could take him to a swimming pool. This would be a wonderful chance for you to (a) strip down and (b) do some fancy diving etc. Also, I was thinking that it might be a good idea for your wife to be pregnant, with your not knowing it, and this might be an even deeper basis of her resentment of the boy until such a time as she realizes there is room enough in her heart for all three. Or, she should know earlier (to the audience) that this is your son and this should make her accept him.

Of course there are other ways of doing this -- perhaps, you could be an American Olympic star traveling in Europe on your Honeymoon, etc.

On the other hand, the idea of Billy Wilder doing it with a Japanese kid could be extremely exciting I think. The biggest book right now is the new (as far as motion pictures are concerned) Michener book. Basically this is a 'Madame Butterfly' story of an Army officer and his Japanese bride. Therefore, if you did STRANGE HARVEST with a Japanese kid I think you could be getting the jump on one of the most important projects of the day.

At any rate, I feel certain that this could be one of the productions for the deal that you and Sam and I have been discussing.

Paul
Ray