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Mann, Erika

o.O., 1961-12-09

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December 9, 1961

Mr. Harold A. Fendler
Fendler and Lerner
333 South Beverly Drive
Beverly Hills, California

Dear Mr. Fendler, -

thank you very much for your lines of November 27th and
for the enclosed check..

I am glad that matters are progressing as planned but should like to know whether Messrs. Littman and Wookey have as yet approached either Sir Laurence Olivier or Sir John Gielgud. Not only would it be very important to learn whether either of these stars would be interested, but the time element would also appear to be of the essence. Presumably both, Olivier and Gielgud are booked - and fully booked - for at least a year, and though I have no idea just when your clients intend to go into ~~the~~ production, I should think that the casting of the lead would even ~~know~~ be most desirable. I understand, of course, that there can't be any actual "casting" as long as the screenplay isn't as yet in existence. Even so, the story itself provides the reader with ample material regarding the part of Aschenbach in any motion picture based on "Death in Venice"; which is why I'd think an actor might well decide whether or not he'd like to play the part.

Regarding the fact that the proposed film should indeed be "based" on the story, ~~he~~^{she} explained to me that no ~~clause~~ confirming your clients' intention to adhere ~~as~~ as closely as possible to the work in question could be inserted in the contract. On the other hand Mr. Robert Littman in his first letter to me (of June 1961) wrote: "We would like to make DEATH IN VENICE as a motion picture retaining Mr. Mann's characters and intentions as he illustrated them in his fine story."

Let me hope that Mr. Littman's intentions haven't altered; that he is still planning "to employ the talents of a writer such as Gavin Lambert" and those "of a director such as Jack Cardiff... or Jack Clayton" and so forth.

I am looking forward to seeing the first draft screenplay.

Please give my very best regards to Dr. Erich Wolff and to Victoria Wolff.

With kindest season's wishes,
sincerely yours,