

4 Old Mitre Court,
Fleet Street, E.C.4
Ludgate Circus, S.E.35.

15th July, 1942

Dear Rex Stout,

It was a great thrill to have your letter of July 13th, though I think Tom Guinzburg has been guilty of a gross breach of security in making you privy to a top secret page from my next book!

I am afraid M was rather sniffy about your works, but if you ever see specimens of the Autumn Ladies Dresses you will realize that there is a great psychological gulf between him and your admirable N.

Incidentally, your books have given me vast pleasure for as long as I can remember, and on a brief flying visit to New York last week, I was wifed to find nothing from you on the book stalls.

Actually, we might have quite fun together starting up a kind of Bob Hope and Bing Crosby relationship between our two heroes. And I should be very amused to find the English agent, James Bond, slipping into one of your pages and perhaps being thoroughly seen off over a girl by Archie Goodwin.

Anyway, thank you very much for your letter and for all the pleasure you have given me over the years.

Yours sincerely
Ian Fleming

Rex Stout Esq.,
High Meadow,
Brewster,
New York

Bond automatically took his traditional place across the desk from his Chief.

M began to fill a pipe. "What the devil's the name of that fat American detective who's always fiddling about with orchids, those obscene hybrids from Venezuela and so forth? Then he comes sweating out of his orchid house, eats a gigantic meal of some foreign muck and solves the murder. What's he called?"

"Nero Wolfe, sir. They're written by a chap called Rex Stout. I like them."

"They're readable," condescended M. "But I was thinking of the orchid stuff in them. How in hell can a man like those disgusting flowers? Why, they're damned near animals, and their colours, all those pinks and mauves and the blotchy yellow tongues, are positively hideous! Now that" — M waved at the meagre little bloom in the tooth-glass — "that's the real thing. That's an Autumn Lady's Tresses — *spiranthes spiralis*, not that I care particularly. Flowers in England as late as October and should be under the ground by now. But I got this forced-late specimen from a man I know — assistant to a chap called Summerhayes who's the orchid king at Kew. My friend's experimenting with cultures of a fungus which oddly enough is a parasite on a lot of orchids, but, at the same time, gets eaten by the orchids and acts as its staple diet. Mycorrhiza it's called." M gave another of his rare smiles. "But you needn't write it down. Just wanted to take a leaf out of this fellow Nero Wolfe's book.

from *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*

by Ian Fleming

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