

Fallacy

by Fervesco

My HBP explanation... HBP SPOILERS *cough*

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Chapter 1 of 1

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AN: Okay dokey... to save myself the trouble of writing an explanation in every single one of my fics as to what I believe happened in HBP, I'm writing this ficlet. Nope, no smut in this, plenty of plot and, obviously, a lot of HBP spoilers. You have been warned. However, I do believe I have managed to explain most of what happened, at least in relation to Snape, in HBP and I am quite happy for anyone who wishes to use this themselves to do so (for I'm sure I'm not the only one who can't really be bothered with great ranting explanations) though I wouldn't mind if you linked to it from your own fics. *cough* Review-whore-ferv*cough* *blimey, ferv, this doesn't even have an R rating... despicable!)

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It had been merely two hours since Severus Snape had last seen Albus Dumbledore, but the change in the elder wizard in that brief moment in time was infinite. No longer was he the lively, chirpy, sparkling wizard who's cheery optimism grated on Snape's every nerve. He was old, withered and sickly. The twinkle had vanished from his eye and there was no hint of any underlying humour. Were it not for the fact that Albus Dumbledore was undoubtedly the most powerful wizard in existence, Snape would have suspected that he had been killed and resurrected as an Inferi his demeanour was so radically changed.

The old man sipped meekly at a glass of water Snape had fetched, cradling his right-arm fragiley.

"Sir, I could brew you a healing potion or fetch Madam Pomfrey..."

"That will not be necessary, nor would it be advantageous."

Snape disfavoured the tone of Dumbledore's voice a very slight change of pitch and a hint of wariness morphed what would normally have been a perfectly adequate statement into the foreboding of doom. Though he acknowledged he would have to hear out what the Headmaster had to say, Snape knew that he would detest it and that it would be disturbingly monumental. Nothing perturbed Dumbledore and certainly not to this extent.

"Forgive me for asking, Sir," Snape said, his gut lurching at the thought of attaining this knowledge, but knowing all the while that he must, "but why should we not even attempt to cure you?"

Dumbledore sighed a long, exhausted sigh. "Because, Severus, tonight I sealed my fate."

Snape cocked one eyebrow at Dumbledore, suspecting he knew the truth but all the while hoping he was wrong. "I am dying, Severus, and there is nothing that can be done about it."

"But Sir, there are many potions, many spells I have seen so many injuries over the years, many inflicted upon myself, some of which should have been incurable but..."

"I believe," Dumbledore interrupted, "that I owe you an explanation."

Dumbledore waved his good hand in the direction of the stone basin that resided on the edge of his desk. With a moment's hesitation, Snape fetched the Pensieve and returned it to Dumbledore. Cringing slightly in pain, the Headmaster retrieved his wand from his pocket and, with his charred right hand, placed the tip of his wand to his temple and began to draw silvery strands from between his hair, placing each carefully into the basin. Snape watched on silently, viewing each removal of a memory with dreary anticipation like a man knowing his world was about to end, but awaiting the cause.

"That should do. If you don't mind, I shall remain here and rest..." As the Headmaster's eyes slipped shut, Snape was torn between viewing the memories and trying to aid the wizard. Finally, he decided the most logical thing to do was to view these thoughts for if nothing else they may give him a clue as to what was afflicting the Headmaster and how an antidote may be found.

With one last look at Dumbledore, Snape leant forward into the basin and was forcibly drawn in. He landed with an ungraceful thump on a cold, flagstone floor. Glancing up, he was shocked to find himself in his own laboratory, right there at Hogwarts not more than four hours ago. His head was bent over a steaming cauldron in concentration, finely chopped ingredients lying on the board beside him. His lips visibly moved as he counted each clockwise stir. Dumbledore appeared in the laboratory, presumably through the open door, though neither Snape ever saw him enter. He stood there quietly for a few moments, before the past Snape drew back from his potion, the slight look of satisfaction on his face was all the belied the fact that he had, as usual, made a completely perfect brew.

"Headmaster," he said, suddenly noting the man in the room. "Severus. It is complete?"

"Yes, Sir. Though I don't quite understand why you require this, after all, you are perfectly apt at Transfiguration..."

Dumbledore stared thoughtfully at Snape for a few moments before speaking. "Severus, you are well aware that I have the Order and the good of the wizarding world at heart? That the protection of our students and the defeat of Voldemort are my utmost concern?"

Past Snape looked a little bewildered by this comment, but replied, "Without a doubt, Sir."

"Then I ask a favour of you, Severus, though I cannot tell you the reasoning for the favour, just keep what I have just said in mind. I wish for you to place one of your own hairs in the potion."

Past Snape glanced at the cauldron and then back at Dumbledore. "Sir, this is Polyjuice Potion."

"Brewed to perfection," Dumbledore replied, with a grateful smile.

Past Snape went to enquire as to his choice of subject, but Dumbledore gave him a gentle shake of his head.

Present Snape remembered the doubts that ran through his mind earlier in the evening what was the headmaster going to do? How would it effect him? Could he trust Dumbledore? It had been with this last one that he had automatically plucked a hair from his head and tossed it into the brew, in compensation for ever having doubted his trust in Dumbledore. The headmaster accepted the thrust out beaker of gloopy green potion, and with a curt nod at Snape, had graciously departed.

The memory faded and Snape wondered why the Headmaster had felt the need to remind him of that something he quite clearly had on his mind, given that it had occurred only hours earlier. However, the Headmaster always had his reasons and now was not the time to question them.

Once again Snape found himself in a familiar setting his own house at Spinner's End. Once again, he saw himself, this time pacing the book-lined sitting room, so small in space that he kept having to turn every pace or two. This, however, did not seem even remotely familiar. Snape was not one for pacing... and certainly he wouldn't have ever done so in the sitting room, for though it was dank, he found the room oddly comforting. Dumbledore. It must be.

An urgent knock sounded at the front door. The other Snape Dumbledore peered through the curtain and when he drew back, he had an oddly resolute look. He strode across the room and pulled the door open a crack. Narcissa Malfoy stood there, looking as pale and ghostlike as ever.

"Narcissa!" Dumbledore-Snape said, and Snape cringed at his enthusiasm. A further sinking feeling flooded him as Dumbledore opened the door wider and there stood Bellatrix. Something was wrong, very, very wrong. "What a pleasant surprise!"

Snape literally shook his head when had he ever said that to anyone, especially with that sort of sincerity and enthusiasm? To be perfectly honest, he was surprised Bellatrix hadn't hexed Dumbledore on the spot.

Snape watched on as the two women entered his tiny sitting room, as Wormtail was summoned and sent for drinks, and though he knew Dumbledore was not a particularly vindictive man, he could have sworn he saw a slight smile cross his own face just briefly as he hexed the traitor. He listened to Dumbledore's explanation of his own loyalty and thanked the gods that he had discussed that lie with Dumbledore on several occasions. It sounded so strange to have Dumbledore lying to the two women with tales of how much he detested himself how stupid he thought himself to be, how easily fooled. Then, as Narcissa started the tale of her son's task, the sinking feeling turned more into one of drowning. He watched on in muted horror as Dumbledore agreed to carry out Draco's task should Draco fail... as Dumbledore agreed to the Unbreakable Vow... as he, for all intensive purposes, signed his own death warrant. As the third and final tongue of flame twisted serpentine like up his Dumbledore's right wrist, locking him into the promise with Narcissa, the scene began to fade, the real Snape's protesting, "No!" echoing throughout the memory.

Snape suddenly found himself back in Dumbledore's office, completely speechless. Dumbledore's eyes flicked open and studied him. Snape's eyes wandered to the Headmaster's disfigured right hand his deceit in making the Unbreakable Vow had left its lasting mark, though obviously not until after he had returned to being Dumbledore. Dumbledore had taken quite a risk with that theory, Snape thought, for surely it had not previously been tested.

"Sir, I don't understand," Snape finally said limply. "Why would you agree to kill yourself?"

"There are far worse things than death, Severus, as I am sure you are aware. I am also aware that you would never have agreed to such a pact... not under the Unbreakable Vow."

"Certainly not!" Snape bellowed.

"Your loyalty, Severus, is your saving grace and your downfall. If I had not agreed If you had not agreed Narcissa and Bellatrix would have run straight to Voldemort and you would no longer be able to spy for us, let alone have lived to tell the tale."

"Sir, I highly doubt you agreed to this simply to save my own life."

"Your efforts and information for the Order are invaluable, but no, Severus, this was not simply to spare you. It is also to save Draco. If the boy succeeds in killing me there will be no stopping him, there will be no chance of redeeming him. Even you have said that you don't believe the boy is pure evil."

Snape stared at the Headmaster in shock. "You did this to save Draco Malfoy?"

"Yes." Dumbledore didn't break eye contact with Snape for even a moment. "Narcissa believes you are going to help him with his quest, Severus, and I want you to appear to do just that."

"But..."

"No questions. It is what is necessary."

The school year past and, with great self-loathing, Snape did just as Dumbledore asked - he aided Draco in his quest. Though he despised every moment of it, he knew that Dumbledore was a great and wise wizard and that his request would not have been made had he not believed it were for the greater good.

It was late one evening when Professor Flitwick burst into his office, ranting about the Death Eater attack and requesting his help. The tiny Professor was bordering on hysteria and, not so surprisingly, had passed out cold on Snape's office floor. Knowing what was occurring, Snape bolted from his office and straight to the tower where Flitwick had said the battle was raging. Running straight past all the members of the Order, fighting so diligently for their lives, he found himself out on the cold tower. His black eyes swept the scene, taking in the four masked Death Eaters and Draco Malfoy wand shaking precariously at Dumbledore.

"We've got a problem, Snape," one of the Death Eater's had said, but Snape wasn't paying attention.

"Severus..." Dumbledore was pleading with him. He was leaning against the stone wall, looking so close to death and yet so vigilant. Tossing Malfoy to the side, Snape stalked up to Dumbledore and, with practised ease, read the old wizard's mind.

"The time has come, Severus. You can save the boy!"

"But, Sir..."

"Now, Severus! I am dying anyway do me the service of making my death an honourable one!"

"Avada Kedavra!"

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A/N: I noticed that no one ever actually asked Flitwick in HBP what happened in Snape's office who's to know that he didn't just faint? And I think *crosses fingers* that this explains everything if not, well... um... let me know!