

Much Madness is Divinest Sense

by cocoasnape

When Albus Dumbledore's subtle attempts at seducing Severus Snape fail, he resorts to extreme methods to see if his feelings are returned: he takes a young lover, hoping to spin Severus into a jealous frenzy. Comedy of errors ensues. AD/SS

The Mad Plan Takes Shape

Chapter 1 of 3

When Albus Dumbledore's subtle attempts at seducing Severus Snape fail, he resorts to extreme methods to see if his feelings are returned: he takes a young lover, hoping to spin Severus into a jealous frenzy. Comedy of errors ensues. AD/SS

Albus Dumbledore was not a man easily frustrated. He was a man who valued reflection and fortitude, and it had been these attributes, among others, that had enabled the Order of the Phoenix to win the war against Voldemort six months ago. Now Dumbledore had a new problem, one that he had approached with similar care. However, after many months of subtle hints and gentle advances, his patience was beginning to wear thin. Albus Dumbledore was frustrated to say the least.

His 'problem,' quite simply defined, was that he was in love with Severus Snape. He had been for quite some time in fact, but pursuing this matter had never been a consideration up until now. The war had been an all-consuming effort, occupying Dumbledore's days and nights and every moment in between. In addition, Severus's work as a spy for the Order had made Dumbledore reluctant to make an advance sooner he did not want to burden Severus with anything else he would have to keep secret from Voldemort.

But all that had changed six months ago, and Dumbledore had set about determining if Severus shared a similar interest in him. He'd tried nearly everything he could think of to gauge Severus's feelings everything except actually asking him outright. Although that would have been the simplest option, Dumbledore worried about the possible repercussions of upsetting his rather reserved Potions master. He and Severus had been very good friends for years now, a friendship that he valued above all others, one that he could not bear to damage or even lose because of an unwelcome advance.

So Dumbledore approached the situation with a cautious step. He began by increasing the frequency of the invitations he extended Severus to tea, from biweekly to once weekly. It was subtle to be sure, but having had regular tea once every two weeks for nearly 17 years now, Dumbledore felt certain Severus would get the hint. He had been wrong. In response, he bumped up his invitations to twice a week, and then to three times a week. But still, Severus had made no indication he found this unusual. He simply accepted, as he always did.

Feeling humbled, but not beaten, Dumbledore changed his strategy. He realized he needed something bold, something new. And so, for the first time ever, he'd asked Severus to forego the Great Hall and have dinner privately with him in his quarters. Severus had been somewhat taken aback by the invitation, but had accepted. And Dumbledore was certain that he had finally successfully conveyed his sentiments. But several dinners later, it seemed that he was, once again, mistaken. They ate, they talked, and that was it.

Truth be told, despite the lack of romance, Dumbledore enjoyed the dinners immensely. The time spent with Severus was wonderful. Sometimes after dinner, they'd play chess or even go for a walk by the lake. They talked about almost everything of importance, but oddly enough, it was their conversations about the inane that pleased

Dumbledore the most he could not remember when he and Severus had ever had time for that. Dumbledore relished every moment, learning things about his Potions master he never knew. He fondly remembered the childlike glee on Severus's face when he'd asked him to explain his research projects in detail. Though these dinners did not bring about the result Dumbledore had intended, they did serve to further reinforce the fact that he was in love with Severus now more deeply than ever before.

Dumbledore had originally been so encouraged by Severus's presence at tea and their private dinners, he'd completely ignored (intentionally perhaps) what was now seeming like the most likely possibility that Severus was interested... in being very good friends with him and nothing more. And Dumbledore thought that perhaps it was time to give up, to stop thinking about what might be, and simply enjoy the friendship he had with Severus. But he decided, being the thorough and persistent Gryffindor he was, to give it one more chance.

Dumbledore had thought long and hard about how to indicate his romantic interest to Severus without making an overt advance. An idea had come to him some time ago a ridiculous, outlandish idea one he knew he would never actually go through with. He had settled instead on another dinner, this time in London. Given the dramatic change in venue, Dumbledore had thought that this would be enough to make the intent of the invitation obvious. Needless to say, things had not gone according to plan.

And now here he was, a few hours away from his crazy idea becoming a reality. Had he lost his mind? *Most definitely*, Dumbledore thought. He blamed it on that maddening dinner and the events that followed they had provoked him into going through with this outrageous plan. He glanced at his watch anxiously, as he waited for his guest to arrive, and thought about the evening with Severus that had pushed him over the edge.

"Would you like to have dinner with me in London tomorrow night, Severus?" Dumbledore asked, keeping his voice deceptively calm.

"London?" Severus repeated, his expression shifting into obvious surprise.

"Yes," Dumbledore replied unruffled, but very pleased that he had engendered such a reaction. At this point, any reaction was a good sign. "I've been hearing exquisite things about this new Mediterranean restaurant. Good food, great atmosphere... Would you care to join me?" Dumbledore asked, holding his breath slightly.

Severus took a moment before replying coolly, "I think I heard Minerva mentioning something about it. Is it near Boylston Street?"

"Yes."

"Oh, perfect," Severus continued. "There's an Apothecary near by. I'm completely out of bat wings."

Dumbledore should have known then that Severus's reply would only be a prelude of things to come. Dinner was an equally ambiguous event, leaving Dumbledore at a complete loss of how to interpret Severus's attitude. Severus gave no indication that he viewed this dinner differently than any of the others. Dumbledore knew he was on the edge of desperation when he delighted in Severus's comment, however minimal, about his robes.

"Are those new robes you're wearing, Albus?"

"Yes, they are. How very kind of you to notice, Severus. Do you like them?"

"They are very... colorful."

Looking at his dinner companion, Dumbledore was growing tired of this tiptoeing act. How much he wanted to reach across that table and take Severus's hand in his own! But he knew there would be no going back from that. Instead, he clenched his water glass tighter and continued with the conversation.

When the bill arrived, Dumbledore lingered over his dessert to see what Severus would do. Severus continued to drink his wine, ignoring it completely.

Perfect, Dumbledore thought. *Progress at last*. He reached for the bill and examined it, only to have Severus cut through his triumphant feeling a moment later.

"I had the more expensive dish, I believe. I'll get the tip in addition to my half."

"Severus, it's fine. I'd be more than happy to get this."

"Nonsense," Severus replied firmly, reaching into his pocket for his portion of the bill.

Disappointed, but determined not to let his last attempt slip by, he asked Severus up to his quarters for a nightcap when they arrived back at Hogwarts. Could his overtures be any more obvious?

As Severus took his usual seat on the sitting room couch, Dumbledore decided to forego the lounge chair he always selected and took the seat right next to Severus.

"Is this alright, Severus?" Dumbledore asked significantly as he sat down.

"Why wouldn't it be?" Severus replied, a slightly confused look on his face.

Dumbledore struggled hard not to scream and pressed on, "Do you have any plans this summer?"

"Well, I have this new project I'm starting. I've begun the preliminary research into..."

Dumbledore interrupted, "I didn't mean research-wise, Severus. I meant plans for relaxation. This is your first free summer in a long time. You should take advantage of that and go on holiday."

"Oh?"

"Have you ever been to Australia?"

"No."

"I myself was thinking of going there for a few weeks this summer."

No response.

"What do you think of that?" Dumbledore asked, doing his level best to make it sound like an invitation.

Severus hesitated a long moment before replying, "I'm sure you'll enjoy it, Albus. I've heard very good things."

After Severus left, Dumbledore barely resisted the temptation to set his desk aflame.

It was that disastrous evening that had left Dumbledore exasperated beyond belief. He had told himself he would give up and move on. And he would have, if Severus had looked at him and replied, 'I hate Australia,' or anything else resembling a rebuke. But Severus had been so unreadable, so impassive throughout the whole evening and for the months before.

Even Severus's decision to attend dinner in London with him had been an ambiguous one. It left Dumbledore wondering if Severus would have gone at all if he hadn't run

out of bat wings. Had it been an excuse to accept or simply a convenient reason to go? *For Merlin's sake!* Dumbledore fumed mentally. His decision about whether to pursue a romantic relationship with Severus hinged on bat wings! This was ridiculous and unacceptable.

Dumbledore had indeed been prepared to drop matters, however regretfully, but he also recognized that unless he knew for certain whether Severus shared a similar interest in him, he would never be able to bury the idea from his mind.

Hence Dumbledore's plan. He knew it was a drastic measure, but he was truly desperate. He figured if he could take a lover, then maybe, just maybe, he could assess Severus's reaction to such a development.

However mad the idea seemed to Dumbledore, he couldn't shake the fact that it made some strange sort of sense. The plan had the distinct advantage of announcing his sexual orientation loud and clear to Severus, hopefully enabling Severus to read his advances differently, or rather, appropriately. The idea definitely had promise especially since the summer was starting in one week and he could conduct his experiment without any students around.

Dumbledore glanced at his watch again. Andrew would be arriving in just a few minutes.

Severus Snape remembered the first time he saw him the blonde Adonis walking along the lake path with Dumbledore. As the pair turned and made their way back towards the castle, Dumbledore caught sight of him and waved a hand in hello. Severus grudgingly remained and waited as they approached, trying to disguise the fact that he was examining every detail of the man walking beside the Headmaster. He was very young, younger than himself, perhaps 30. He was tall, thin but muscular, clean-shaven with blonde hair, dressed in designer clothing, and, to Severus's consternation... positively stunning.

"Severus," Dumbledore began, "This is Andrew. He's..." a brief pause, "...staying with me. Andrew, this is Severus. He's our Potions professor here at Hogwarts."

"Hello," Severus said, trying to make his voice as neutral as possible.

"Hi," Andrew said flippanantly, barely sparing Severus a glance.

Dumbledore broke the awkward silence, "I was giving Andrew the tour. He's just arrived. But we must be going." Turning his attention to his companion, Dumbledore said, "You must be hungry, Andrew."

"Yes, very," Andrew replied with a sly smile. Dumbledore smiled in return.

Severus tried not to stare as the two men walked away, but it was difficult. He could not help wondering who this mysterious man was this very young, striking man. Of course he could have been a friend, but Severus was nothing if not observant. He saw the way Andrew had been staring at Dumbledore, leering almost. But what really sent Severus over the edge was the way he was sure Dumbledore seemed quite pleased with the attention.

Severus cursed himself silently as he headed back to the dungeons. Perhaps he'd been a fool all along. Over the past few months, he had come to think that Albus might be pursuing him the tea invitations, the dinners in his quarters, and then the unexpected dinner in London. It was wonderful and he'd wanted to tell Albus as much that evening, but he'd hesitated. His suspicions were far from concrete, and Severus thought it was very possible that Dumbledore simply wanted to further their friendship. However much Severus wanted something more, he was determined not to ruin what the two men already shared.

In the first place, Severus knew it was quite the assumption to make, especially since he had no idea if Dumbledore even liked men. Not to mention how utterly humiliating it would be if he had indeed misinterpreted Albus's overtures. It would permanently mar their friendship. A friendship he treasured above all else.

And so Severus decided to wait and trust that if Albus felt as he did, he would say so. Now, given Andrew's presence, Severus wondered if he had imagined the events of the past few months, wishfully misinterpreting Albus's kindnesses and the celebratory mood after the war as something more.

You're overreacting. He's probably just a friend, Severus thought... and hoped.

Dumbledore had been up for hours, having woken very early this Sunday morning. He had been thinking about Severus and the madness of his plan aimed at his Potions master. He hadn't seen Severus since Andrew's arrival yesterday. The interaction had been uneventful, but then again, he reminded himself, Severus probably assumed that Andrew was just a friend.

Dumbledore had chosen Andrew because he was gorgeous by traditional standards, not to mention the fact that he was very young, which Dumbledore felt could only heighten any potential jealousy on Severus's part. But the primary reason he had chosen Andrew was because the young man was willing. Albus was surprised by how easy it had been. A very awkward Floo conversation had ended with Andrew's delighted exclamation, "Uncle Albus, I'd be so happy to do this for you. Besides it's been a while since I've seen you. Rumor has it you've been quite busy saving the world."

Andrew was Albus's great, great nephew, and as good fortune had it, he had the summer off after successfully passing the Preliminary Qualifying Exam for his Charms Masters work. His plans for the coming months were to relax and do as little work as possible a much needed break after having had his face buried in books for the better part of five years, not including his Wizarding education at the Beauxbatons Academy of Magic. Delighted to see his uncle and finally get the tour of Hogwarts Dumbledore had promised him for years, Andrew had gladly accepted the invitation to stay with him for a couple of days.

Dumbledore, who was still uncharacteristically dressed in his nightshirt and bathrobe, had been sitting at his desk for the better part of three hours thinking about how to subtly suggest to Severus that Andrew was more than just a friend. He'd discussed his dilemma with his nephew last night, but they had failed to come to a consensus. One thing Dumbledore knew for certain, he didn't want to do anything that might make Severus uncomfortable.

Dumbledore's thoughts were interrupted by a soft chime, which indicated that someone was ascending his staircase. He stood and tied off his robe. Who could possibly be disturbing him at 8:00 o'clock on a Sunday morning? The answer came to him before he even finished the question. *Severus!* Dumbledore cursed himself silently. They often had breakfast together in his quarters on Sundays. In all the stress of Andrew's visit, he had completely forgotten.

"Albus..." Severus began as he entered, stopping when he noticed that Dumbledore was not yet dressed. "Did I wake you?"

"No, Severus, not at all. I've been... up thinking for a while. I suppose I got distracted," Dumbledore began, his voice flustered. "I'm sorry, Severus. I completely forgot about breakfast. Perhaps we can reschedule for a more convenient..."

Dumbledore's explanation was interrupted by Andrew, who was descending from the upper level his hair tussled, his robe hanging open, revealing his boxer shorts and bare chest. He spoke loudly, "Albus, are you coming back to bed or do I need to entice you with something to get you back in here?"

Dumbledore's mouth flew open and his cheeks reddened in embarrassment. What the hell was his nephew doing?!

Andrew stopped in his tracks when he caught Severus's eyes, which were now as wide as saucers. But in contrast to his uncle, Andrew did not appear at all flustered. If anything, his manner was quite the opposite, composed and calculating.

"Oh, hello," Andrew said very deliberately, staring directly at Severus.

The words may have been innocent enough, but Snape understood Andrew's meaning in his sudden swagger and the absurdly proud look on his face he was saying,

"Yes, it's exactly what you think. He barely suppressed the urge to hex Andrew right then and there.

Finding his powers of speech, Dumbledore began apologetically, "Severus..."

But Snape cut him off, "I apologize for interrupting you, Headmaster. I'll leave." He was out the door in a flash.

Dumbledore rounded on his nephew. "What the devil was that all about, Andrew?! I thought we were going to be subtle!"

"You wanted to be subtle. Trust me, Uncle, that never works. Now, at least you know exactly what he thinks. You just have to try and gauge his reaction from here on out."

Dumbledore sat down and put his head in his hands and asked himself out loud, "What in Merlin's name am I doing? I've lost my mind."

"I think it's kind of romantic actually, in a weird sort of way," Andrew consoled. "I mean, if you don't want to risk just telling him how you feel outright, then I don't know what else you can do. Speaking of... I see what you mean, Uncle, he's a tough one."

"That is an understatement," Dumbledore said with a sigh and then looked at his nephew. "Thank you, Andrew, for agreeing to do this although I'm not so sure about your methods! I suppose I'll just have to muddle my way through the rest of it. I've imposed on your time enough already."

"It's no problem, and actually, I wouldn't mind staying a bit longer. I told some friends of mine in London that I was here, and they're coming to Hogsmeade next week. We're having a bit of a reunion party. And, I have another idea about how to help you with your Severus problem," Andrew said with a twinkle to rival Dumbledore's own.

A Very Frustrating Dinner

Chapter 2 of 3

When Albus Dumbledore's subtle attempts at seducing Severus Snape fail, he resorts to extreme methods to see if his feelings are returned: he takes a young lover, hoping to spin Severus into a jealous frenzy. Comedy of errors ensues.
AD/SS

Albus Dumbledore hadn't intended for this charade to go on for more than one or two days. He had felt certain that the stunt his nephew had pulled would have been enough to engender a reaction from Severus. But other than shock (which Dumbledore would have expected from anyone), Severus's reaction once again gave nothing away. In fact, it only furthered Dumbledore's curiosity to learn what this man was thinking behind that expressionless facade.

And Andrew certainly wasn't helping him put the whole plan to rest. In fact, he seemed to be relishing the opportunity. In the few days he'd been at Hogwarts, Andrew had dreamt up dozens of plots designed to make Severus finally burst his bubble. Now that the summer had officially begun, Andrew convinced Dumbledore to begin phase two he would attend meals in the Great Hall at Dumbledore's side.

"I'm not so sure about the last part, Andrew."

"I have to sit next to you, don't I? And besides, I can't wait to see the look on his face when he finds I've taken his seat."

It was a light turnout of faculty for dinner that evening, since many of the professors were away at their summer homes or on holiday. Besides Dumbledore and Andrew, only Flitwick, McGonagall, Hagrid and Snape were there. The latter was making his way to the table at this very moment. Dumbledore studied his Potions master's expression as he entered the Great Hall. He looked annoyed, but not overly so. Annoyed that someone, anyone, was occupying his usual chair, not especially incensed that it was Andrew. *Foiled again*, Dumbledore thought.

Severus Snape was incensed. *How dare that arrogant whelp take my seat!* He struggled to remain calm and not let his countenance betray his rage.

As soon as dinner began, Andrew was talking up a storm. He was babbling really, talking in circles about utter nonsense. Knowing full well that the only thing Severus loathed more than long-winded talkers was ignorance, Andrew decided to go for broke and marry the two. He hoped his uncle wouldn't be too angry with him later for his improvisations.

"So, are the rest of you as narrow-minded as my Albus when it comes to the Ministry?"

"What do you mean?" Flitwick asked.

"I, for one, am pleased that Fudge is still the Minister of Magic. And I happen to know that most wizards and witches agree. I admire the way Fudge stuck to his principles throughout the war and was defiant against He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named until the very end. Albus here babbles on and on about Fudge deceiving the public," Andrew said with a heavy sigh. "But he was just trying to protect them. He's a leader, and that's what leaders do. As teachers, you must understand that. It has, after all, been a long time since Albus was in the classroom."

Pleased by the stunned and angry stares he was receiving, Andrew added sweetly, "Severus, be a dear and pass me the rolls."

Dumbledore winced mentally. This hadn't been the plan at all. They'd agreed that the point of Andrew coming to dinner was simply to put in an appearance. Dumbledore glared at his nephew, trying to quiet him, but he only smiled back in return, and it was then that Dumbledore realized that he'd created a monster. Dumbledore couldn't help but find this whole thing slightly humorous, even as it was utterly humiliating. Now, half his faculty thought he must be barmy for dating this 'unique' young man.

Snape was gripping his fork so tightly his fingers and knuckles had gone completely white. He bit back the hoards of angry retorts threatening to spill from his mouth. He looked over at Minerva McGonagall and smiled inwardly. She was about to blow up for him.

"Excuse me," McGonagall interrupted angrily. She was not about to sit there and listen to another second of Andrew's assessment of how the Ministry of Magic had done a wonderful job seeing the Wizarding community through the war. "Have you lost your mind? The reason the war is over is because of years of tireless effort on Albus's and Severus's parts and some extraordinary work by Harry Potter. The Ministry is a gaggle of idiots."

"So Albus keeps telling me," Andrew began skeptically. "Something about some Order of the something. But it's hard to know whether I should believe him. He does like to brag in bed."

Albus nearly spat out his tea and began coughing violently. "Andrew..." he said firmly, willing his nephew to shut up.

"There's no need to be shy, sweetie," Andrew insisted. "We have no secrets from these people." Addressing McGonagall once again, he asked, "So what do you teach?"

"Transfiguration."

"Oh... sorry," Andrew replied. The look on McGonagall's face nearly sent him over the edge. He cast a relaxation charm on himself to prevent his laughter from boiling over.

"What the devil do you mean by that?" McGonagall asked.

"I always thought that was a ridiculous subject," Andrew began, taking note of the table. Flitwick seemed totally delighted with the 'show' taking place in front of him. Hagrid seemed confused. Snape's face was expressionless as ever.

"Andrew, that's not very polite," Dumbledore chided.

"Whatever..." Andrew replied dismissively. Sensing McGonagall was about to speak, he cut her off, "But at least it's got some use. Not like Potions."

Andrew was aware of the burning glare being leveled at him. He ignored it and went on. "I mean why not just do a charm? Seems like Potions is just glorified cooking."

Dumbledore was fidgeting nervously now. Was his nephew out of his mind? "Andrew!"

"Just my opinion," Andrew replied. "No offense, of course."

"None taken," Snape replied coldly. "I hope you don't take offense the next time I slip some poison into your tea, and we'll see if you can 'cook' your way out of death then."

"Good one, Severus. Very funny," Andrew remarked.

"I was being serious," Snape muttered under his breath.

Dumbledore tried to diffuse the situation by changing the topic, albeit badly. "Andrew, would you like some more potatoes?"

"No, Un..." Andrew stopped himself just before the word 'uncle' had slipped from his mouth. "... unless you want me to have some, Albus?"

Dumbledore struggled not to laugh. "Please do, on my account, Andrew."

"Albus likes me well-fed," Andrew volunteered in explanation to the staff, winking significantly at them.

The faculty were now staring openly at the pair of men, wondering if Dumbledore had gone off the deep end with this bizarre choice of lover. Dumbledore was trying to pretend he wasn't mortified by this whole ordeal.

"So how long have you two known each other?" McGonagall asked.

Snape's ears perked up.

"Oh, we've known each other for a quite while," Andrew replied, his voice lowering a bit as he continued with a smirk, "but I think you're asking a very different question, aren't you... Minerva, is it?"

Andrew ignored (with some difficulty) the icy glare McGonagall was directing at him. "I'd be happy to tell you, of course, but Albus is so uptight about his privacy."

"Andrew..." Dumbledore cut in.

McGonagall cut to the chase and asked the one question on everyone's mind. "May I ask how long you will be staying with us?"

"Oh, that depends entirely on Albus," Andrew replied, his eyebrows raising meaningfully.

Albus was blushing now. How had he got into this mess?

"What school did you go to?" McGonagall asked, unrelenting.

"My parents sent me to an academy in America, but I left. It was boring."

McGonagall shot Snape an encouraging look, apparently waiting for the scathing remark she knew was on the tip of his tongue. But it never came.

Snape was struggling to remain silent. He knew if he spoke, he wouldn't be able to stop, and he'd end up completely losing control. But sitting here, listening to this, he was positively dumbstruck. Albus was actually romantically involved with this tosser? Snape would have never imagined it possible, no matter how attractive he might be.

"So then, what do you do exactly?" McGonagall prodded.

"Nothing right now. I'm enjoying life," Andrew replied.

"How do you plan on supporting yourself?"

"I'll figure something out. I'm not worried."

McGonagall thought she had entered the twilight zone. Who was this idiot? What was Albus thinking? And why the hell was Severus being so quiet? She would have expected him to be finished tearing this little twit to shreds by now. She kept elbowing him, but he ignored her.

Snape was inexpressibly grateful for Minerva's nosiness at this moment. He'd barely said a word, but fortunately Minerva was doing his work for him, revealing Andrew as the utter moron he was. He would have to send her flowers.

As McGonagall settled back into her barrage of questions, Albus sighed. Damn it, he wanted Severus to be the one going off the deep end, not Minerva. In fact, Severus appeared rather cool and uncaring throughout. This was not looking good.

Andrew's voice interrupted Dumbledore's haze. He was speaking to McGonagall. "You need to chill out, woman! Why are you asking me all these questions anyway? Are you Albus's keeper or something?"

"Do not call me 'woman'!" McGonagall said furiously.

"Andrew... please apologize," Dumbledore said.

"Because I think Albus can take care of himself," Andrew continued. "What... are you in love with him or something? Is that it? Am I cramping your style?" Andrew deadpanned. "Because I can assure you, he likes men... *a lot!*"

McGonagall's mouth was now hanging wide open.

"Andrew please... that's really uncalled for," Dumbledore admonished.

"I was joking, Albus. Not about that last part though! Minerva knows I was joking, don't you, Minerva?"

McGonagall was certain she would have transformed this cretin into a mouse to hunt down in her Animagus form had Snape not sensed this and placed a restraining hand on her shoulder. She didn't know whether she should be grateful or angry at Severus for keeping her at bay, but her thoughts returned once again to his inexplicable silence. She could feel the man was positively trembling with rage.

As the elves began serving tea and coffee, Andrew remarked in displeasure. "No cappuccino, Albus?"

"Ah... we don't normally serve such specialty items," Dumbledore explained, still marveling at his nephew's ability to transform into a total jerk. He would have to remember to tell him that he should have gone into acting. Cappuccino? Where did he come up with this stuff?

"But you know how much I like cappuccino, Albus," Andrew whined irritatingly. "I hate regular coffee. It's so... plain."

"Well, dear, I'll be sure to ask the elves to prepare some especially for you tomorrow morning."

"And I'll ask them to shove it up his arse," McGonagall whispered under her breath, causing Snape to snort his tea.

Once they were back in the Headmaster's quarters, it took Andrew a good five minutes to stop laughing.

"Andrew, that was over the top!"

"That's what I intended, Uncle. The plan is going well."

"You're enjoying this too much."

"How can you tell?" Andrew replied, his face beaming with mirth.

"I don't think my faculty will ever look at me the same way again."

"Well then, you better hope this works so you can tell them who I really am."

"Merlin willing..." Dumbledore sighed.

"Don't be down, Uncle. At least Professor McGonagall's got a thing for you!" Andrew began laughing again.

"She's just being protective," Dumbledore explained and then added grudgingly, "which is more than I can say for Severus."

"I must remember to apologize to her by the way. She was too easy to pick on."

"Well, you might as well do it now. I think that dinner pretty well settled things," Dumbledore said, his voice defeated.

"You do?" Andrew asked in surprise. "I'd say it's 50-50. I was pretty obnoxious."

"How would that make it 50-50? He barely said a word to you... He didn't care enough to bother."

"Uncle, you're way too close to this thing; it's clouding your legendary intellect. First of all, McGonagall was doing the work for him. But besides that, imagine for a moment that I wasn't your fake lover," Andrew said, resuming his chuckling again. "If I was a friend of McGonagall's, for instance, do you think Severus would stay silent through all that? Or would he have hexed me for my comments?"

"I see where you're going with this..."

"He was unusually quiet, don't you think? He's remaining silent because he's worried about upsetting you by attacking me."

"Yes, that is possible," Dumbledore agreed, the smile returning to his face.

"Of course," Andrew added seriously, "he might just really like you as a friend and not want to offend you. Didn't you say that he's overly polite to you, especially around other people?"

The smile flew off Dumbledore's face. "You're right."

"Hence 50-50." Andrew was deep in thought, now pacing narrow circles in his uncle's office. Dumbledore couldn't help but be amused by the parallel. "We need more evidence," Andrew finally declared.

"Andrew... I think that's enough."

"I'm really getting into this now. It's my personal mission to figure him out. But he's such a tough nut to crack. He's very in control of what he says, isn't he?"

"You have no idea," Dumbledore acknowledged, rolling his eyes.

"Based on the way he instinctively reacted to my cooking comment, I'm thinking that your only hope is to get him angry enough to explode and accidentally say something..."

Dumbledore sized his nephew up and down and asked seriously, "Andrew, have you done this before?"

"No," Andrew replied with a chuckle. "But seriously, you're going to need to protect me, Uncle."

"Protect you?" Dumbledore asked in confusion.

Andrew smiled. "I may be talented in charms, but I don't think that'll help me if Severus should lose it. As it is, I don't feel safe drinking in the Great Hall anymore."

"My dear boy," Dumbledore began with a smile, "if Severus gets that angry, I shall need protection as well."

Miscommunications

Chapter 3 of 3

In a desperate attempt to get rid of Albus's lover, Severus decides to write Albus a letter (sort of)!

Severus Snape was exasperated beyond measure. Albus's 'guest' had been at Hogwarts for only a week, and yet to Snape it felt like an eternity. But the worst of it was that Andrew showed no intention of leaving. On the contrary, he seemed to be getting more and more comfortable as the days wore on. Snape wouldn't have thought it possible, but Andrew's manner had only become more outlandish and rude. And inexplicably, Dumbledore did nothing about it.

Snape hadn't been out of the dungeons much in days, and the truth of the matter was, he felt trapped in his quarters. He didn't think he could bear catching sight of Albus with Andrew, the two walking arm and arm by the lake. Nearly the only times he ventured out of the dungeons were for meals which were now absolutely dreadful as Andrew was always at Dumbledore's side.

This was all slowly driving Snape insane. He needed to do something. But what could he do? This was Albus's life... his personal life. He couldn't interfere. Could he?

All right, Snape thought to himself, perhaps he could interfere, but the real question was: how? What could he do without risking upsetting Albus? If only he could get someone else to say something to Dumbledore. McGonagall perhaps. She seemed almost as incensed by this situation as he was. But she was leaving in a few hours on holiday and... Snape stopped. That was it!

Snape began frantically fishing through his desk for the end of term announcements he had received a few weeks ago from McGonagall. Finding it, he examined her writing. *Perfect!* Pointing his wand at the paper, he cast the Suppono charm for forging handwriting. When he put his quill to paper and began to write, the words appeared flawlessly in McGonagall's handwriting.

Now what to write? This was a dilemma indeed. Snape knew Dumbledore and McGonagall were friends, but he had little idea of how personable they were. How would she address the Headmaster in a note like this? How could he communicate what he wanted to Dumbledore and still manage to make it sound like this note was coming from the Deputy Headmistress? And of course, how to find a way to write this note without it later getting back to McGonagall that he had done so in her name?

Over two hours later, surrounded by large piles of crumpled up attempts, Snape was finishing his note. He struggled for several minutes for an appropriate way to close. He eventually realized what needed to be said in that last sentence, however horrifying. With a shiver, he forced himself to write something he never thought he would.

Dumbledore's brow crinkled in confusion as he re-read the note he had found this morning on top of his stack of mail.

Dearest Albus,

I am compelled to send you this missive on the eve of my departure on holiday as I am not comfortable discussing this delicate matter with you in person.

I cannot pretend to understand the reason for, or the dynamics of your relationship with Andrew, but I must insist that it is inappropriate for you to bring him to meals in the Great Hall. I have been struggling with my resolve not to transfigure him into a rodent over the past few days. In particular, he is very rude to poor Severus. That cooking comment about Potions, for example, was uncalled for!

I fear that at our age it is easy to be blinded by youth and not see the horrific, horrific flaws it covers. And so I advise extreme caution and due vigilance going forward in this matter.

I apologize if I have offended you in any way. Let us never speak of this.

Long live the house of Gryffindor!

Yours, Minerva

Dumbledore was completely dumbfounded by this note. It was odd to say the least. Other than the formality of it, it didn't sound very much like Minerva at all. Perhaps she was so troubled by his 'relationship' with Andrew she hadn't been thinking straight when she wrote it. *'Long live the house of Gryffindor,'* Dumbledore revisited. Or perhaps, Dumbledore thought, she had been hitting the sherry a little too hard before her departure.

Annoyed that this charade seemed to be affecting everyone except the one person he had intended, Dumbledore threw the letter aside in frustration.

"That's wishful thinking, Andrew," Dumbledore said.

"I'm telling you, Uncle, he's coming to spy on us. This is beginning to look better and better for you. And since when have you been so pessimistic about anything?"

"Hmm." Dumbledore reflected on his nephew's words. He had received a note from Severus early this morning asking for an appointment in the afternoon to review his completed syllabi for the fall term as well as finalize his N.E.W.T. level enrollment. Considering that they were barely a week into the summer, this was unusual to say the least. Severus normally left these formalities to the last minute.

Snape arrived just before three in the afternoon, entering Dumbledore's rooms with some trepidation. Over the past few months, he had grown quite comfortable in these quarters, but now he felt like a stranger, intruding where he wasn't welcome.

After Andrew's arrival, Snape's first impulse had been to stay as far away from the Headmaster as possible. He had written the note in the hopes of snapping Dumbledore out of his bizarre behavior, of returning Dumbledore to himself. But it seemed to have no effect. And to Snape's great consternation, Andrew was still attending meals. Apparently, with McGonagall away, Dumbledore hadn't taken any action in regards to his note. Grumbling at his misfortune, Snape was beginning to feel that Andrew was like splinter under his fingernail, occupying his every thought and impossible to remove.

Snape had tried to stop thinking about it the fact that Dumbledore was in a romantic relationship with that insufferable excuse for a human being. But he could not ignore the fact that this whole situation with Andrew seemed deeply wrong to him somehow. He needed more information, and so Snape had decided to come see and Albus on the pretense of discussing his syllabi. And what was more, the truth was... he missed Albus. The past week and a half had been a sudden and unwelcome change given the frequency of their dinners and teas over the past few months.

Taking the proffered seat at Dumbledore's desk, Severus winced as he caught sight of Andrew a few feet away in Dumbledore's sitting room. Despite the fact that it was

the afternoon, he was still wearing a bathrobe. He had his feet on the coffee table and was slurping some beverage as loudly as humanly possible.

Catching Andrew's eye, Snape asked irately, "Do you mind?"

"Not at all," Andrew replied calmly, indicating that Severus wasn't disturbing him.

Not a little flabbergasted, Severus turned his gaze on Albus.

Dumbledore spoke at once. "Andrew, would you give us some privacy?"

"In a minute... when I'm done."

Dumbledore gave Severus a slightly defeated shrug, as if to indicate he could say no more. "Severus, I was surprised to get your note. You're getting quite a jump on things this year. We're only a week into the summer."

I've come to spy on you, Albus Snape thought, but instead replied, "I am beginning several new research projects, and I would like to focus on them without further interruption."

"Of course," Dumbledore replied, disappointed by this all too probable explanation. "Well then, let's get down to business."

Two hours later, as Snape and Dumbledore were finishing up, Andrew descended the stairs, finally fully dressed. He spoke in an almost infantile tone. "Albus, I need new clothes. Everything I have is boring."

"Didn't you just go shopping last week?" Dumbledore asked, playing along.

"Yes, but don't you want me looking my best for you, lemon cookie?"

Dumbledore began to cough violently at Andrew's ad-libbed pet name.

Andrew turned to Snape and explained, "Albus loves it when I call him lemon cookie." Placing his hand on Dumbledore's shoulder, he said suggestively, "Don't you, Albus?"

Lemon cookie? Snape thought, utterly bewildered.

"Ah..." Dumbledore began.

Andrew cut him off. "No need to be so shy, sweetie. Anyway, back to my pitiful wardrobe. I'm really in need of new things, Albus. Especially since we're going to Australia."

Dumbledore felt his stomach jolt. He could not believe Andrew had just said that. That was definitely not in their plan. He had recently told Andrew of his subtle and unsuccessful attempt to invite Severus to join him on holiday. Dumbledore glanced over at Severus, but once again, the comment had elicited no reaction from him. His face was completely expressionless.

Snape felt like he was going to be sick. Dumbledore was going to Australia with him? With *him!*

"All right then, I'm off," Andrew said.

"I'll see you at dinner?" Dumbledore asked.

"Maybe," Andrew replied, not moving. He was standing next to Dumbledore, apparently waiting for something.

"Oh, sorry, Andrew," Dumbledore remembered, reaching into his desk for something. A few seconds later he was handing the young man a key, which Snape recognized at once as a Gringotts vault key.

"Thanks, Albus."

It took Snape several seconds to regain his powers of speech. Andrew was long gone before he exploded, "You're giving him your vault key! Are you mad?"

"One of my vault keys," Dumbledore corrected. "And why wouldn't I?"

"The man is a gold-digger, Albus!"

Ah, now we're getting somewhere, Dumbledore thought. Feigning offense, he asked, "Are you suggesting that the only reason someone would want me is for my money?" *Nicely phrased, Albus!*

Momentarily taken aback, Snape replied, "No, Headmaster, I did not mean to imply that. But he is not employed, and he is the most ill-mannered person I've ever had the misfortune of meeting. I certainly do not think it is wise to trust someone like *that* with your finances."

"Why does it bother you so, Severus? It's my money."

Snape opened his mouth as if he were about to say something, but then thought better of it. He sighed and said simply, "Never mind."

Ever since their last encounter, Dumbledore had been contemplating the state of affairs between himself and Severus. Although it wasn't very much to go on, he was encouraged by the fact that Severus had expressed concern for him over Andrew's access to his finances. Faced with that, he couldn't help but feeling guilty that Severus's worries were, in fact, unnecessary that this was all an elaborate farce of his creation.

And so Dumbledore had made a decision he was going to thank Andrew for his help and tell him it was time to leave. As for what exactly he planned on telling Severus, he still did not know, but either way, this continued deception was about to end.

While preparing his tea, Dumbledore reviewed the brief note he had just completed.

Dear Severus,

I must apologize for being so unavailable of late. I confess I have missed our time together. I would very much like it if you would join me for dinner in London the night after next. Or if you prefer, we could dine in my quarters. I look forward to your reply.

Warm regards,

Albus

Dumbledore smiled as he finished perusing his note. This should do just fine. He was confident that Severus would get his message this time around.

But several minutes later, when Dumbledore informed his nephew of the change in plan, Andrew protested, voicing his doubts about this course of action.

"I'm telling you, Uncle, dinner isn't going to work. You've tried that before."

"I think I should to give it another try, Andrew. Severus did seem rather concerned about me after he thought you had access to my Gringotts account. Surely that counts for something."

"I still don't think asking him to dinner is going to change anything."

"Yes, well, maybe now that he knows I prefer men, he'll interpret the invitation differently," Dumbledore insisted.

"Hmm, I doubt it. Like I said before, the subtle approach is not likely to work with Severus. You need to try to get him angry. That's the only way he's going to break."

"I'm not trying to break him, Andrew," Dumbledore replied in exasperation. "I'm trying to date him."

"But..."

"Andrew, I'm tired of playing games. I'm sending the note as it is."

"Uncle..."

A sudden chime interrupted them. Dumbledore opened the heavy oak door to find Hagrid, his clothing torn. "Hagrid, are you all right?"

"Oh, meh... I'm fine. So sorry ter botha yer, Headmaster, but I need some help with the flesh eatin' managrots jus' came in. They're a little outta control it's not their fault, mind yeh. Lovely creatures really, jus' misunderstood, tha's all. But I need some help gettin' 'em settled. Can yeh spare a moment of yer time?"

"Of course, Hagrid." Dumbledore turned and pointed his wand at the note on his desk and said clearly, "Deliver to Severus Snape."

In his rush out of his office and down the stairs, he failed to notice that Andrew had intercepted the note with a spell of his own. Once he was sure Dumbledore was gone, Andrew sat down, pointed his wand at the page, and said clearly, "*Suppono*." Moments later, he began writing another note in his uncle's handwriting.

Andrew knew this was not the most ethical thing to do, but really, his uncle was being rather naive if he thought another dinner was going to get him anywhere.

Certain that his uncle would forgive him if things turned out all right in the end, Andrew crossed his fingers and hoped for a positive outcome to the mess he was about to create.