A Gentleman's Dilemma

by EmeraldSage

Summary

Otherwise titled, "The Things Alfred will do for Love...both familial and romantic"

Notes

I absolutely cannot believe I did this...but I hope you liiiiiike it!

See the end of the work for more notes

His day started at a small outdoors café tucked away in a corner of Selfridges. A block or so from the Bond Street tube station, and two floors up in the crowded shopping center, it would take a truly devoted stalker to find him.

Which made it all the more surprising when it wasn’t a familiar pale haired, violet-eyed nation that stopped next to where he’d set himself up with a morning cup of tea. Head bowed over his favorite book, he almost blinked when he noted a familiar pair of expensive oxfords. The coal and navy lined and tailored suit cloaked a familiar form, familiar gloved fingers wrapped tightly around a briefcase and the hook of an umbrella, prepared for the vicious London rain. If he hadn’t recognized the familiar green eyes, warm smile, and identifying eyebrows, he would’ve thought the man before him was any young English gentleman who’d stopped by for a cuppa in the morning.
But he did know who was in front of him, so he smiled and set his book down. “Wasn’t expecting you here,” he said as a greeting, “In fact, I was positive you had a meeting right about now,” he added, checking his phone to make certain. His father raised an eyebrow, amused.

“I had a feeling you were up to something today,” the elder nation said, “thought I’d see how much damage control I could do.”

He huffed, and debated whether or not to be offended, but smirked, letting the tease roll off of him, “No damage to control today. I just wanted a lazy day, that’s all.”

“And let you get bored of yourself, dear?” the green-eyed man scoffed, and Alfred rolled his eyes.

“That’s your job, old man,” Alfred snickered, and Arthur raised a brow as some of the nosier patrons looked at each other in confusion.

“Nonsense,” he said, “I can’t be boring if I’ve come to take you out for the day.” Alfred raised a brow in surprise, though to be fair, it wasn’t too off the mark for Arthur to do something like this…especially since after he’d discovered Alfred’s cross-dressing habit that one night….

“Can’t a man take his son out for the day?” the island nation smirked, catching the doubtful look in the teen’s eyes, “Or daughter, rather. Whichever you want to be.”

He raised a brow at the smirk, but smiled, and pushed his chair back to stand. The pale blue backed, lace fairy skirt swished around his legs as he stood. He reached down, ignoring the choking sound coming from the other nation, and snagged his blue handbag, tucking his book safely within its depths, before shrugging on the shoulders of his cardigan jacket.

His father’s expression blanked for a second when he saw what he was wearing, and Alfred almost thought he imagined the murmured, “I need to sharpen my cutlass,” before Arthur’s face cleared.

“And what shall I call you today, then, my dear?” he said, offering his arm to the younger man, smiling when he felt the other take it. “I’m afraid we’ll get quite a few looks if I call you Alfred.”

Alfred debated whether or not it would be worth changing his name in the split second after Arthur had asked, but in the end, he didn’t mind the mild embarrassment if it made his old man smile, “It’s Elizabeth for the day,” he said, and smiled when Arthur jerked a bit at the response. “Liz or Eliza will do.”

Arthur regained himself and looked pointedly – evenly, due to the flats Alfred had worn and the slight heel of his own black oxfords – at the younger nation, “Elizabeth it is, then.”

Alfred laughed, “Just so.”

They went everywhere.

Arthur, despite his often stationary office work at Parliament, was no stranger to walking or using public transport to commute. Even so, he was getting tired from their marathon tourist trip, and his feet were killing him for choosing to wear oxfords over a more comfortable, suitable derby, or even a pair of loafers.

Alfred, on the other hand, seemed perfectly content to keep exploring all the old, familiar
sights. He was wearing a pair of flimsy lace-patterned flats, and yet he was as enthusiastic as he had been at the beginning of their trip. It kept his energy up, to see his only blood child so enthusiastic about rediscovering all the sights Arthur himself held so dear. And certainly, Arthur had to be constantly aware enough to discourage the riff-raff hanging around and eyeing the flashes of tanned skin that were revealed whenever Alfred’s cardigan shifted. He even had to glare at a pair of rascals who he’d caught staring at the boy’s long legs.

Perhaps they should break for tea soon…it was just about that time, anyways.

He just turned around to suggest adjourning to a nearby tea shop when he caught sight of another hoverer making eyes at his boy. He felt the ire build up and turned to glare at the bastard –

- wait a tic’…he knew that face.

Just as much as he knew the kind of look said face was wearing as he eyed up Arthur’s son. Just as much as he knew the kind of look Arthur’s precious, innocent, cross-dressing son was sending right back at the bastard whose face Arthur knew.

Oh no. Oh hell no.

His fists clenched and he yearned for the familiar grip of his cutlass, or the heavy, comforting weight of Excalibur, with the sun glinting off the flat of his blade. He was an ancient nation – he’d once borne the weight of an empire, with all the power that designation implied – and he’d lived through Europe’s full strains of power. He knew every one of his European kin. Every. One.

Which meant he knew that unwelcome presence staring at Arthur’s precious child with an intimacy that made his heart shriek and every part of him scream for blood. He knew that pale face, those smirking, lecherous eyes…the smirk that had haunted his nightmares over the last century as that goddamned bastard started hurting his baby…he knew them far too well. He knew what it meant that Alfred returned those looks.

He didn’t know when it happened – only now that it did. The evidence was laid out in front of him, exposed in the split second it took his blue-eyed child to glance away from Arthur’s face to grin at the other nation.

Then Alfred turned around, grin still curling on the curve of his lips, and caught sight of his face. And paled.

“Dad,” he began, but all words froze as Arthur held up a hand for silence, a tiny voice rambling in his mind that well, at least he didn’t lose all his childhood behaviors, and didn’t move his gaze from the vicious violet that dared him to make a single comment.

He was the bloody British Empire.

“When,” he snarled, “did this,” he gestured between the two of them sharply, and Alfred exchanged a significant look with Ivan that only made the rage in his blood boil hotter, “happen?”

“Dad,” Alfred said again, and this time he wasn’t deterred by Arthur’s lethal glare, “let’s talk about this, please.”

A small part of his brain hummed in pleased surprise at hearing the plea – something Alfred rarely, if ever, used around him, much less when directed at him. The rest of him was too riled up to care.
“We are talking about this,” he growled, “right now.” Alfred let out a frustrated noise of his own, and Ivan, unwisely in all opinions present, took a step forward and let a hand rest lightly on the blond superpower’s shoulder.

*Mistake.*

Alfred suddenly recalled all the moments throughout his childhood when Father had thought he’d been threatened and the cutlass – a “relief” from his privateering days – appeared magically in hand without a single clue as to where it’d appeared from. He added the memory with the tone that had snuck into his father’s voice; the aura that would solidify around him, clogging the air and suffocating any and all in sight. Added it up. And glanced over to Ivan with a tight smile, “Vanya?” he said.

Ivan’s eyes turned to him, eyebrow raised in question.

“Run.”

And suddenly, the cutlass was there; as ominously sharp as hearth heated steel wire and shining like a jeweled rapier in the warm glow of the sun, and Ivan’s eyes widened.

His lover threw himself backwards as Arthur dove forwards, steel gleaming, shouting bloody murder as the people all around them shrieked and fled.

“Daaaaaaaaaddyyyy,” he whined, throwing himself forward so he wrapped his arms around the furious island nation, carefully avoiding the deadly kiss of steel. He dodged all attempts of the elder nation to shrug him off until he could get in front of livid green eyes, pushing steel away. “Daddy, please listen to me.”

Pleading bonnie blues – his only weakness, goddamn it. Still, he tried to lunge past his son to impale that smirking nation just out of range.

“Dad!” came the indignant yelp, and he leveled a potent glare back at Alfred, who only barely restrained himself from flinching backwards.

“Alfred,” he said tersely, “move out of the way.”

Golden wheat tresses shook vigorously, and Alfred turned his glare on him, “Not until you calm down.”

“I am perfectly composed, poppet,” he said serenely as he nonchalantly threw the cutlass like a javelin – just barely missing the edge of Ivan’s coat – and the world around him erupted in a cacophony of terrified screaming. The cutlass reappeared in his hands, miraculously undamaged, and he smiled calmly.

Alfred eyed him warily and sighed. He turned to Ivan, glared hard enough that Arthur felt the bloodlust simmer, momentarily pleased, and spat something in Russian with a fluidity that had his eyebrows and his blood pressure rising rapidly. Ivan seemed to visibly consider whatever it was Alfred had said – his Russian was rusty, excuse him for not being able to keep up, he was a world power, thank you – before he glanced at Arthur and his shimmering cutlass, and nodded very reluctantly, disappearing into the crowd. Alfred sighed again, this time in relief, and turned to Arthur once more.

He eyed him sternly, making it very clear he wasn’t going to accept any washed out, half-hearted explanation.
“Can we talk about his over food?” Alfred said after a moment of staring (i.e. glaring) at each other. “You’re a lot more reasonable with tea in your system,” he added bluntly, to which Arthur really couldn’t deny. He was always more reasonable with tea, though there were some things that there wasn’t enough tea in the world for him to deal with.

This just happened to be one of those things.

“Oh, we’re definitely going to talk about this one, dear,” he intoned, slipping his phone from his coat pocket and typing out a carefully worded message, before tucking it away and turning his attention to his poor, misguided little boy.

Said poor, misguided little superpower eyed the old empire suspiciously as the text whooshed away, “What did you do?”

Arthur merely smirked. “I’ve called in reinforcements.”

No more than a hundred miles away, minding his ridiculous little brother’s manse in the countryside while the nation himself attended the meeting, Alistair lazily flicked open a text on his phone, only to choke on his whiskey when he saw the words “Code Valentine,” sent to him by said baby brother.

He staggered upright, choking down the last of his whiskey with little remorse for the lack of attention he’d given it, ignored the staff’s concerned looks his way, and started up the stairs.

“REILLEY,” he bellowed, startling half the life currently residing in and around the manor grounds, “– OI, YA DAMNED LEPRECHAUN, HAUL YER ARSE DOWN HERE – ALFIE’S GOT HIMSELF A BOYFRIEND AND ALBION’S LOST HIS NUT!”

A clamor of shattering objects and a commotion of crashes echoed from all corners of the mansion, and in unison, nearly a dozen voices responded:

“WHAAAAAT?!!!”

“AND BRING ME DAMNED CLAYMORE!”

Alfred eyed his old man’s phone, which had started going off like it was managing a barbeque with a free-for-all buffet on Fourth of July. A hand landed heavily on his shoulder, and he regretted for a second not wearing heels when he got dressed this morning. Arthur’s eyes grinned, even as the man’s smile showed far to many teeth for Alfred’s sanity.

“No need to worry, poppet. We’re just going to talk.”

“What do you mean he’s dating Russia?!!!!”

The first thing he noticed when his lover came storming in through the front of the fancy French restaurant he’d picked for their dinner date, was that the gorgeous blond had changed. And he was still cross-dressing. Even if he wasn’t wearing a skirt.

The next thing he noticed was that his lover was pissed.

“I could feel you staring from the door,” the gorgeous cross-dressing blond said crossly.
“You don’t usually tell me to stop,” he countered, amused, as Alfred slipped into the comfortable chair across from him. Alfred gave him a dirty look, before his face relaxed as he sunk into the comfort of the ridiculously comfy chairs the restaurant had. It was totally rare for restaurants to have chairs this comfortable. Damn.

Ivan was just watching him relax, amused. Alfred glared at him.

“Do you have any idea what kind of day I’ve just had?” he hissed at him, but Ivan’s smirk didn’t abate; actually, it seemed to grow larger.

“Quite a trying one, I imagine,” he drawled, watching with definite interest as Alfred crossed his legs, the white-striped black dress pants creasing, outlining the definition of his thighs.

His phone buzzed, and he glanced over the screen only to raise a brow in surprise when a text from an unknown number pulled up, saying only: *Eyes up.*

_Well, well._

Alfred still hadn’t noticed, “You just _had_ to show up today, didn’t you?” he growled, and so Ivan smiled.

“Of course,” he said, almost insulted that his darling sunflower thought he wouldn’t seek him out when they both had time off in the same city. How was he supposed to know Arthur had known of his son’s non-conformist approach to gendered clothing and was spending time with him?

“No,” he said wryly, “but I’m willing to bet, _dorogoy_, that it wasn’t a slit throat.”

Alfred leveled him with a deadpanned stare, “No,” he agreed frostily, “but if I hadn’t dealt with _that_, that’s what _you_’d be dealing with, _Vanya._”

He raised his hands innocently, smirking at the visible frustration wafting off of his lover. He could hear his lover’s heels clacking in a rhythmic _tap-tap-tap_ that was barely audible, but he was close enough to notice. The light gleamed off sloping, exposed golden shoulders, before the maroon of his top swallowed it down. Even seething, his lover was so very beautiful. _So very frustrated you are, my love._

He caught the waiter’s attention wordlessly, and the young man who’d been serving them nodded and dashed off towards the kitchens. Alfred glanced at him and raised a brow in wordless question.

“You’re hungry, are you not?” he asked.

“You already ordered,” he said, the corner of his lips kicking up in a wry smirk.

“Are you surprised?” he countered, and smirked when Alfred sighed in fond exasperation, but said nothing. He wasn’t surprised. Alfred was used to him taking over on the date scene, particularly when his lover dressed up, though he wasn’t afraid to counter him if he felt the need. He’d always gripe about reinforcing gendered stereotypes – which was true enough, though they both knew for a fact that Alfred could kick his ass in high heels and a mini-skirt – but Ivan knew enough of his lover’s tells to know that he enjoyed being pampered when he dressed up.

It was maybe half way through their main course when Alfred returned to his ordeal of the
day as a conversation topic, frustration still evident in his voice.

“You’d think I wasn’t a superpower, or have ever dated before?” he remarked, frustrated, careful to keep his voice down as the staff waltzed nearby, “It’s like all of a sudden, I’m still a little baby Kirkland that needs help fending off the big bad Red. Argh, it’s so frustrating!”

“You’ve never needed help with that,” he commented dryly, but Alfred didn’t seem to hear him.

“I’m not even the youngest!” he exclaimed, and a sharp, cut off gesture from his hands meant he’d been about to throw them up in the air in exasperation, “And Australia was there, practicing his boomerang throwing as they were talking about what to do with you!”

He thought it was a tad bit ambitious of Australia to think a boomerang had a chance of injuring a former superpower, but he’d let the delusion stand for a while. Alfred was undeterred.

“I though Uncle Al would moderate things – he’s good at cutting down bullshit to size. So I asked him to say it wasn’t necessary – because it isn’t – and he said ‘It’s hard to do that when you’re wearing a skirt, lassie,’ and why didn’t I remember that my uncles could be ridiculously sexist?!”

Probably because everyone older than America had a large dose of inherent sexism; it was just the way the world had worked for a very long time.

“And then, I went to Mattie – because you know Mattie’s known about our relationship for a few decades now -,”

As a point of fact, Ivan hadn’t known that little detail.

“ – so I thought he would be on our side. But it turns out that the turncoat busted us, and told Dad about Alaska.”

Oh dear.

“And then no one would listen to me!”

That wasn’t surprising.

“I’m not even a bloody Kirkland anymore!” There was the sound of an outraged noise from the corner behind him and Alfred desperately suppressed the urge to turn and see who it was. Ivan, of course, had no such compunction.

A loud chime filled the air before Ivan could even think to open his mouth, and Alfred didn’t even have to check to know his phone had just gone off with a message from his father, but he did anyways. He resisted the urge to chuck his new device – his boss was getting tired of replacing the ones he lost, and hey, those were justified usage of materials (for science!) – at the wall when he read the blunt, succinct: Yes, you are, gleaming on the screen of his phone.

“Huh,” Ivan pondered as he stared at something over Alfred’s shoulder, “I didn’t know Australia and New Zealand liked traditional French cuisine.”

Alfred was fifty shades of done with this shit. Oh God.

“They don’t.” he deadpanned, staring at the table and the wonderful food he was so enjoying –even through the rant – and wondered if he could block out the incessant staring, “I can
smell the blooming onions Australia made himself and heated up before he got here. He’d better save me some, or I’m going to forget about the seasons cricket tickets that he was going to get for his birthday.”

His phone chirped again, and he glanced over the two lines, both from Australia. The first confirming: Are you a bloodhound? Cause if you are, that’s wicked. The second: I left some at home for you! I want those tickets, mate!

Why was this his life?

“So,” Ivan murmured, and his ears twitched when he caught the undertone of heat in his lover’s voice, “I guess that means dessert’s out of the question.” He glanced up from the glare he’d leveled his phone with and stared at the other nation. The nation with mischief in his violet eyes, and a wicked smirk on curled lips, and an absolute death wish, because he knew that Ivan realized who was close enough that they could hear them, right??!!

His phone buzzed angrily, consistently.

You know what, he thought distantly, fuck this shit.

“Like hell we’re skipping dessert,” he snapped, before forcing himself to calm and smirked. “I’ve got Devil’s Food Cake in the fridge at my hotel room. If you’d like to head back there…I’ve got a kitchenette and some plates, we can share.” He let the heat in his eyes warm the air crackling between them, smirk curling on darkly painted lips, and stood. “Get the bill would you, darling?”

He snatched the blush pink clutch from the table and strode off, ignoring the enraged screeching, the wolf whistles, and the promising heat of his lover’s eyes on his swinging hips as he made his way out the door. He ignored the way his phone was screaming at him, Johann Strauss’s Homage to Queen Victoria blaring at him indicative his very pissed of father wanted to speak with him. Well…

His father would have to wait. He was about to be very busy tonight.

EXCERPT:

“Hey old man, I thought Braginsky was meeting Alfred?”

“But daaaaamn Australia, lookit; that’s one lovely Sheila…”

“That’s Alfred.”

“WHAAAAAAT????!!!”

“Um, sirs? We’d ask that you keep it down to prevent from disturbing the other customers.”

End Notes
If you're reading this, thank you so much for reading all the way through! Many thanks to Usagi323, who helped me with some of the dialogue for the dinner scene, and kicked off my inspiration, which is the reason you all now have this lovely fic (at least I hope it's lovely).

All of Alfred's outfits have their inspiration on my Pinterest board, which is named after said fic! Please do check it out! I will be linking the specific items of clothing I did describe below, just for y'all to check out if you wanted to!

Day Outfit: Blouse, Skirt, Hairband, and Shoes

Evening Outfit: Outfit and Shoes

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!