

in the process as long as Harry was dead.

“Expelliarmus!” Harry yelled, hoping to Disarm the man so the aurors could deal with him. The spell hit Dumbledore with enough force to knock him to the ground, while the wand jumped straight into Harry’s left hand. The moment it touched his skin, it felt like a livewire pressing against him, power coursing through his body.

“Albus Dumbledore, you are under arrest!” Tonks’ voice called out over the chatter of the crowd. She strode over with a pair of aurors at her back, and Dumbledore gasped where he was crumpled on the floor.

“No! You can’t— you don’t understand! The boy must die!” He was clutching at his chest, craning up to look at Harry, shock filling his face when he saw the Elder Wand in the Gryffindor’s hand. “No! My... my wand.” The last word came out as a breathy croak, and Harry saw the exact moment life left Albus Dumbledore’s body. The Elder Wand seemed to *shiver* in his hand, warm against his palm. In the middle of the atrium, Albus Dumbledore slumped down, utterly still.

Not waiting for Tonks to move, Harry strode up to him. He had to *know*, had to see if there was any truth to this Master of Death business. Surely, as a Peverell — as *Lord Peverell* — he would feel something of that connection if it existed.

Harry dropped to his knees at Dumbledore’s side, looking right into the man’s blank eyes. As if in a trance, he reached out, placing a hand on his thin chest. He wasn’t breathing. There was no magic to him, not even a tiny fading spark. Just... nothing.

“He’s dead,” he announced dully, looking up at Tonks. “I suppose the shock was too much for him. That curse in his hand...” He trailed off; let the public make of that what they will.

They couldn’t say Harry killed him. Everyone had seen it was a simple Disarming charm he had thrown.

How much damage Harry had done with such a simple spell, over the years.

No one moved. No one seemed to know what to do now — Dumbledore had been raving madness to his very last breath, but before all that he’d been a beacon of hope to them all. How was one supposed to react to that?

Looking back down at the body, Harry’s gaze caught on a glint of something shiny.

Where Dumbledore’s withered hand was still at his chest, there shone the resurrection stone on its plain silver ring. Once a horcrux, now both so much less and so much more.

It was as if another entity was moving Harry’s body. Discreetly, as if just adjusting Dumbledore’s robe, Harry reached forward and slipped the ring off the blackened, shrivelled finger. He tried not to shudder as he touched the cursed flesh; that dark magic was long inert, now.

He pulled back, dropping the ring in his pocket as he got to his feet.