

“Well, that’s good news, isn’t it?” Charlie piped up tentatively. “Another horcrux gone?”

“Yes, and no,” Remus hummed. “It’s good that it’s gone, but it’s a little worrying that Albus is hunting them. If he finds out we know about them, that we found and destroyed one ourselves... worse, that Harry knows about the one in his scar...”

Charlie paled behind his freckles. Yes, that was not what they wanted.

“There is some good news out of the whole mess,” Snape added, drawing their gazes once more. “I did what I could to stop the curse, but I couldn’t get rid of it entirely. The Dark magic is leeching off his own, slowly destroying it. Albus Dumbledore will be dead within a year.” A cold smirk curled across his lips. “You’d better start defaming him, Harry, before he can die a martyr.”

Harry stared, hardly able to believe what he was hearing. “I... really? You’re sure?” Snape nodded. “Bloody hell.” He’d never really thought too hard about the act of killing Albus Dumbledore. He’d resigned himself to likely having to do it, but always hoped it would sort of... take care of itself.

Now, apparently, it was doing just that.

“That changes things,” Sirius murmured. Harry nodded.

He had to make some plans.

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The news about Dumbledore was certainly unsettling, but there was little Harry could do about it so far. Amelia had already gotten the ball rolling, after her pointed questioning at Sirius’ trial; Harry had some time to kill before he could make his next steps.

He had to admit, it was oddly... freeing, to know that Dumbledore was dying. To have the certainty that even if Harry failed to discredit the man, he would soon be gone; restructuring the Ministry would be doable, even if Dumbledore’s legacy was still in tact. Harry really just had to focus on staying alive long enough to kill Voldemort.

With that in mind, he pestered Snape into training with him the next morning. He could tell the man was in need of a little stress relief, after spending half his evening thanklessly saving Dumbledore’s life. So Harry finally got the adults to break on their little moratorium on training him, and soon he and Snape were back in the ballroom with spells flying.

It felt good, to be back at it. Considering his last fight had been with very real consequences, it was nice to train again with the security that he wasn’t fighting for his own life. Sure, Snape was pushing him hard, but it wasn’t any harder than Harry could handle.

They hit a stalemate, Snape gesturing with one hand to end the duel, and Harry was grateful for the moment to catch his breath.

“You’ve been holding out on me, Potter.”