

Sadly for Ginny, most of the chaos and destruction had been handled., but there were still some signs of things. Harry was too tired to go searching for the best parts, especially as people were looking even more keenly at him now. He just wanted to go back to bed.

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Neville bullied him into coming down for lunch, and so Harry found himself accompanying his friend to the Great Hall — Ginny had disappeared hours ago, apparently intent on seeking out some of the more fun pranks before they were returned to normal.

It was a balm on his ire to see the hall as it had been before Umbridge's Decrees; students sitting wherever they pleased, talking and laughing without fear of being put in detention for disruptive behaviour. Hogwarts could actually feel joy again, now.

Harry took a seat at the Gryffindor table, reaching ravenously for a plate of chicken drumsticks.

"Is the *Prophet* telling the truth, Harry?" Colin called from a few seats over, wide-eyed. "Did you really fight You-Know-Who at the Ministry last night?"

"I did. So did Neville and Ginny, and Luna and Susan and Daphne. We all went."

A wave of chatter followed the proclamation. "Wow," Colin breathed. "And Dumbledore duelled him? And you saw it?"

"Dumbledore showed up just as I met Voldemort—" a collective flinch "— in the atrium, after we'd already duelled a load of Death Eaters. Voldemort—" another flinch "— was trying to kill me, so Dumbledore distracted him with a duel. Then the aurors broke the wards and showed up with the Minister, so Voldemort—" less of a flinch, this time "— grabbed LeStrange and scarpered."

"You mean Professor Dumbledore wasn't with you when you fought the Death Eaters?" Katie Bell queried, frowning. Harry hid a grin — it was never too early to start dismantling Dumbledore's lies.

"No, we were alone when we got there," he said.

"It was nearly two hours before anyone showed up," Neville agreed. "And even then, Dumbledore never came down to the Department of Mysteries — that's where we were fighting," he explained. "He didn't make it down there until after all the fighting was over, when he came to take us back to school. All the Death Eaters who were still standing fled as soon as the anti-apparition wards broke."

Wide-eyed gasps, and another explosion of quiet chattering.

"The six of you fought Death Eaters for *two hours* all by yourselves?" There was more awe in Colin's eyes than Harry had ever seen before, which was saying something.

Before Harry could respond, Neville was smiling widely and clapping him on the shoulder. "It's what Harry taught us to do, right?" he reasoned.