

such qualms at this point. Snape had taught him to be liberal with his Cutting curses, and any other bit of magic that could give him the upper hand.

Whatever dregs were still standing, it all seemed to be well in hand now, so Harry didn't waste time stopping to check on anyone. Bellatrix was headed for the atrium, and he wasn't going to let her get away.

Waiting in the lift was like an out-of-body experience, his heart pounding a mile a minute in his chest, his brain still burning with the image of Lucius Malfoy disappearing behind the veil.

How the hell was he going to tell Draco he'd killed his father?

Would Draco thank him for it?

He shook away the thoughts; he could deal with that later.

Bellatrix was screaming in the atrium when he arrived, and he shot a spell at her, but she blocked it. "How *dare* you!" she yelled. "You jumped-up little *half-blood*, I'll kill you, and pry the Prophecy from your cold, dead hands!"

"It's far too late for that," Harry taunted in reply. "It got smashed, in the fight." He spoke with utter conviction, watching Bellatrix turn white with fury.

"Impossible. *You're lying!*" Her words came out as an inhuman shriek, and she tried to summon the orb, but of course nothing happened.

Harry felt the Dark Lord's arrival before he saw it; a searing pain in his scar, which he had to use all his limited talent in Occlumency to shove away. When his vision stopped blurring around the edges, he saw the snake-like man in front of him, Bellatrix prostrate at his feet.

"You smashed my Prophecy, Potter?" Voldemort asked in that high, cold voice. Harry smirked.

"Yup. My bad."

A cry of rage came from the Dark Lord, while Bellatrix sobbed loudly.

"You worthless little *fool!* I shall make you experience pain so will *long* for death. Months of preparation, and my Death Eaters have let Harry Potter thwart me again!"

"Well, you know what they say," Harry retorted, dodging a Killing curse. "If you want a job done right, you've got to do it yourself."

He was a little glad everyone else was downstairs, not there to see him so recklessly taunting Voldemort himself. Adrenaline was surging through his veins, his plan utterly disintegrated in his mind by now. All he could do was hope that Amelia Bones had received his Patronus, and was working on the wards as they spoke.

Then, out of nowhere, there was a pillar of phoenix fire and a burst of birdsong.