

drowned me in compulsions until I'd throw myself into the danger that *you* orchestrated with a fucking smile on my face, and ignore every bit of the world except the bits you deemed acceptable for me! Was it fun for you, making your little plans to test how far I would go without getting myself killed? Making me hate myself, making me believe I had nothing — making me believe my life was only worthwhile as a sacrifice so others could live? You decided from the second you saw that scar on my head that I had to die, so you turned me into a living bomb, chaining my magic so tight that I'd level all of fucking Hogwarts when I came of age unless you chose to release it. All so I could *fulfil my destiny* and you could sweep in and take care of the rest, claim my death was a *tragic accident* and go on acting like your every word is fucking gospel.”

Harry trembled with rage as he stared at Dumbledore, his words spent — what else was there to say? None of it would change anything. None of it would make Dumbledore feel one single *speck* of remorse for what he'd put Harry through, what he'd put all of them through.

“Harry...” Dumbledore's mouth drew in a frown, his eyes going serious. “I see now that you are not as free of his influence as I thought. All of these lies fed to you, this poison against me — can't you see how he lurks within you still? His soul, bound to yours?” He shook his head sadly. “As long as he is present, there is a chance for his return, a chance to ruin the peace we have all worked so hard for.” The old man drew his wand, and Harry tensed. “I am truly sorry it has come to this, my boy, but sometimes difficult decisions must be made. It is for the greater good.”

The first spell came hurtling towards him, and sent the crowd of onlookers scattering. Harry ducked it, firing back one of his own immediately. He could hardly believe this was happening, hardly believe Dumbledore was trying to kill him in the middle of the *Ministry*. What did he hope to achieve, even if he succeeded?

All people would see was him murdering their saviour. He was truly mad if he thought he could repair his reputation enough to save that.

But Dumbledore was giving it all he had; this was not like his duel with Voldemort, in this very space just over a year ago. That duel had been a show of power, a brag, a mockery. Not to harm but to make the other feel inferior.

This time, Dumbledore was aiming to kill.

But he was not the man he had been a year ago. And Harry was not the same boy he had been, either.

Draco was right; the power difference between them was almost laughable. Dumbledore was clearly trying his hardest, and Harry wasn't even struggling with it. Considering the other man had the Deathstick, the Elder Wand, it was truly a show of how far he had fallen.

Or perhaps the wand recognised Harry as a Peverell, and refused to try too hard against one touched by Death.

Either way, Harry knew he had to end it before someone else got hurt. There were at least forty other people still in the atrium, and Dumbledore did not seem to care about who he hit