

Albus Dumbledore had arrived.

Harry grit his teeth at the man's genial greeting, like he'd bumped into Voldemort while out for an evening stroll. But it was doing its job; the Dark Lord's attention was no longer on Harry.

"It was foolish to come here tonight, Tom," Dumbledore reprimanded, magic flowing from him with such force that Harry felt it like a heatwave. Voldemort conjured a bright silver shield, and the magic hit it with a sound like a gong. "The aurors are on their way."

That was a relief, though Harry had to wonder why Dumbledore had not arrived with the rest of the Order. It didn't matter now. Harry shuffled backwards towards the golden fountain, the only defensible position in the atrium.

The duel between the two most powerful wizards in the world had begun, and Harry was not going to get in the way.

Their magic was flashy. That was all Harry could say for it. They were not fighting to kill, or even necessarily to harm. Dumbledore was fighting to intimidate, and Voldemort was doing whatever he could to show he was not cowed by it.

If it would have counted for anything, Harry would have shot a Sectumsempra right then to cut Voldemort's head clean off. But that would only buy them a little time until the man resurrected himself. Hardly any time, now he had servants who knew how to do it.

All of a sudden, the golden statue beside Harry jumped to life, the metal goblin leaping to take a Killing curse headed straight for Harry. Voldemort was trying to kill him again, clearly fed up with trying to best Dumbledore.

Harry stayed crouched low with his wand in his hand. Then there was a sound like a whip cracking, and the feeling of pressure releasing in the air, so strong and abrupt Harry's ears popped.

The wards had broken.

A flurry of pops sounded, and suddenly there was a crowd in the atrium. Among them was Cornelius Fudge, wearing his pyjamas — and at the front of the group, a woman Harry knew to be Amelia Bones, her wand raised as she stared Voldemort dead in the eye.

Fudge barely had time to gasp, before Voldemort was sweeping across the atrium towards Bellatrix, grabbing her by the arm and disappearing instantly. All around the atrium, fireplaces were flaring green as witches and wizards spilled in, but Harry was focused on Fudge. The Minister looked like he was having some sort of fit, stuttering helplessly.

"That was— he was— You-Know-Who! In the Ministry! Great heavens, how can— I don't —"

"Mr Potter," Amelia Bones called, and Harry stood up properly, walking straight towards her.

"Well met, Lady Bones," he greeted, making her smile.