

from *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, by J.K. Rowling (2003), p. 812-816

Harry opened his eyes.

Tall, thin, and black-hooded, his terrible snakelike face white and gaunt, his scarlet, slit-pupiled eyes staring ... Lord Voldemort had appeared in the middle of the hall, his wand pointing at Harry who stood frozen, quite unable to move.

"So you smashed my prophecy?" said Voldemort softly, staring at Harry with those pitiless red eyes. "No, Bella, he is not lying. ... I see the truth looking at me from within his worthless mind. ... Months of preparation, months of effort...and my Death Eaters have let Harry Potter thwart me again...."

"Master, I am sorry, I knew not, I was fighting the Animagus Black!" sobbed Bellatrix, flinging herself down at Voldemort's feet as he paced slowly nearer. "Master, you should know--"

"Be quiet, Bella," said Voldemort dangerously. "I shall deal with you in a moment. Do you think I have entered the Ministry of Magic to hear your sniveling apologies?"

"But Master-- he is here-- he is below--"

Voldemort paid no attention.

"I have nothing more to say to you, Potter," he said quietly. "You have irked me too often, for too long. *AVADA KEDAVRA!*"

Harry had not even opened his mouth to resist. His mind was blank, his wand pointing uselessly at the floor.

But the headless golden statue of the wizard in the fountain had sprung alive, leaping from its **plinth**, and landed on the floor with a crash between Harry and Voldemort. The spell merely glanced off its chest as the statue flung out its arms, protecting Harry.

"What--?" said Voldemort, staring around. And then he breathed, "Dumbledore!"

Harry looked behind him, his heart pounding. Dumbledore was standing in front of the golden gates.

Voldemort raised his wand and sent another jet of green light at Dumbledore, who turned and was gone in a whirling of his cloak; next second he had reappeared behind Voldemort and waved his wand toward the remnants of the fountain; the other statues sprang to life

too. The statue of the witch ran at Bellatrix, who screamed and sent spells streaming uselessly off its chest, before it dived at her, pinning her to the floor. Meanwhile, the goblin and the house-elf scuttled toward the fireplaces set along the wall, and the one-armed centaur galloped at Voldemort, who vanished and reappeared beside the pool. The headless statue thrust Harry backward, away from the fight, as Dumbledore advanced on Voldemort and the golden centaur cantered around them both.

"It was foolish to come here tonight, Tom," said Dumbledore calmly. "The Aurors are on their way--"

"By which time I shall be gone, and you dead!" spat Voldemort. He sent another killing curse at Dumbledore but missed, instead hitting the security guard's desk, which burst into flame.

Dumbledore flicked his own wand. The force of the spell that emanated from it was such that Harry, though shielded by his stone guard, felt his hair stand on end as it passed, and this time Voldemort was forced to conjure a shining silver shield out of thin air to deflect it. The spell, whatever it was, caused no visible damage to the shield, though a deep, gonglike note reverberated from it, an oddly chilling sound. ...

"You do not seek to kill me, Dumbledore?" called Voldemort, his scarlet eyes narrowed over the top of the shield. "Above such brutality, are you?"

"We both know that there are other ways of destroying a man, Tom," Dumbledore said calmly, continuing to walk toward Voldemort although he had not a fear in the world, as though nothing had happened to interrupt his stroll up the hall. "Merely taking your life would not satisfy me, I admit--"

"There is nothing worse than death, Dumbledore!" snarled Voldemort.

"You are quite wrong," said Dumbledore, still closing in upon Voldemort and speaking as lightly as though they were discussing the matter over drinks. Harry felt scared to see him walking along, undefended, shieldless. He wanted to cry out a warning, but his headless guard kept shunting him backward toward the wall, blocking his every attempt to get out from behind it. "Indeed, your failure to understand

that there are things much worse than death has always been your greatest weakness--"

Another jet of green light flew from behind the silver shield. This time it was the one-armed centaur, galloping in front of Dumbledore, that took the blast and shattered into a hundred pieces, but before fragments had even hit the floor, Dumbledore had drawn back his wand and waved it as though brandishing a whip. A long thin flame flew from the tip; it wrapped itself around Voldemort, shield and all. For a moment, it seemed Dumbledore had won, but then the fiery rope became a serpent, which relinquished its hold upon Voldemort at once and turned, hissing furiously, to face Dumbledore.

Voldemort vanished. The snake reared from the floor, ready to strike--

There was a burst of flame in midair above Dumbledore just as Voldemort reappeared, standing on the plinth in the middle of the pool where so recently the five statues had stood.

"Look out!" Harry yelled.

But even as he shouted, one more jet of green light had flown at Dumbledore from Voldemort's wand and the snake had struck--

Fawkes swooped down in front of Dumbledore, opened his beak wide, and swallowed the jet of green light whole. He burst into flame and fell to the floor, small, wrinkled, and flightless. At the same moment, Dumbledore brandished his wand in one, long, fluid movement--the snake, which had been an instant from sinking its fangs into him, flew high into the air and vanished in a wisp of dark smoke; the water in the pool rose up and covered Voldemort like a cocoon of molten glass--

For a few seconds Voldemort was visible only as a dark, rippling, faceless figure, shimmering and indistinct upon the plinth, clearly struggling to throw off the suffocating mass--

Then he was gone, and the water fell with a crash back into its pool, slopping wildly over the sides, drenching the polished floor.

"MASTER!" screamed Bellatrix.

Sure it was over, sure Voldemort had decided to flee, Harry made to run out from behind his statue guard, but Dumbledore bellowed, "Stay where you are, Harry!"

For the first time, Dumbledore sounded frightened. Harry could not see why. The hall was quite empty but for themselves, the sobbing Bellatrix still trapped under her statue, and the tiny baby Fawkes croaking feebly on the floor--

And then Harry's scar burst open. He knew he was dead: it was pain beyond imagining, pain past endurance--

He was gone from the hall, he was locked in the coils of a creature with red eyes, so tightly bound that Harry did not know where his body ended and the creature's began. They were fused together, bound by pain, and there was no escape--

And when the creature spoke, it used Harry's mouth, so that in his agony he felt his jaw move....

"Kill me now, Dumbledore...."

Blinded and dying, every part of him screaming for release, Harry felt the creature use him again....

"If death is nothing, Dumbledore, kill the boy..."

Let the pain stop, thought Harry. Let him kill us... End it, Dumbledore... Death is nothing compared to this...

And I'll see Sirius again....

And as Harry's heart filled with emotion, the creature's coils loosened, the pain was gone, Harry was lying facedown on the floor, his glasses gone, shivering as though he lay upon ice, not wood....

And there were voices echoing through the hall, more voices than there should have been: Harry opened his eyes, saw his glasses lying at the heel of the headless statue that had been guarding him, but which now lay flat on its back, cracked and immobile. He put them on and raised his head an inch to find Dumbledore's crooked nose inches from his own.

"Are you all right, Harry?"

"Yes," said Harry; shaking so violently he could not hold his head up properly.