

The Ghost of Albus Dumbledore

Something had changed.

Something big had changed.

Dumbledore was dead.

Albus Dumbledore was dead.

But where was the guilt?

Where was the feeling that everything was his fault?

Where were the incessant nightmares?

They didn't exist. That was what had changed.

Bill and Fleur were getting married today, and everyone expected him to be upset.

Well, he wasn't. He was going to be ready. So he sat, several magical theory books he'd borrowed from Mad-Eye Moody in front of him, and he studied.

He studied so hard that he knew Hermione would be proud of him - if bizarrely she hadn't seemed to lose forty five IQ points over the previous year.

The sun rose, as it did nearly every morning.

There was the odd morning or two when it was late, but Harry put that down to the sun oversleeping.

"Wotcher Harry," Tonks said as she entered the room at the Weasley's where he had escaped from the pre-wedding nightmare. "Ready?"

Harry looked at her, and wondered if he would end up dating Gabrielle Delacour.

The young Auror -- he'd worked out she was 23 -- was now dating someone literally old enough to be his dad, and Bill and Fleur weren't much closer in age than that.

"Sure," he said, absently closing the spell book. He had the spells he wanted now.

He picked up a matching wide brimmed brown hat that went with his brown suit, and placed it on his head, tilting it slightly. He quickly tightened the tie that matched his khaki coloured shirt, and nodded at Tonks.

She activated a Portkey, and they tumbled endlessly through space for what seemed like an eternity -- but was actually only a couple of seconds.

They appeared in front of Hogwarts, where row after row of chairs was set up for an outdoor marriage.

A sense of surreal-ness surrounded him as he looked at the archway in front of him. Each of the chairs seemed to be saying, "Voldemort, attack me!"

He shook himself, and wandered around, keeping to the shadows. Everything seemed preternaturally normal, and it wasn't a feeling he enjoyed.

He spotted Ginny, looking radiant in the corner, and once again wondered just what kind of relationship he'd had with her. It seemed pretty random now he looked back at it. One second he was cool with her, the next he was jealous, the next he was snogging her -- and she did taste nice -- and finally he was dumping her, all with out any real conscious thought between his actions.

He was going to have to do something about that.

He took a seat at the back, sliding his wand into his hand. He saw Ron, Hermione, and a few other people gesturing for him to come and sit by them, but he ignored them - he had to be ready.

The wedding was, well, boring. Sure Fleur looked radiant, but then, what Veela didn't look radiant?

Harry did wonder what would happen if she got really excited on the wedding night - would it kill the passion for Bill to suddenly doing "it" with a giant bird? Or had that already happened, and was Bill just that way inclined? Not that it mattered, but it helped pass the time to think about it while the Wizarding priest droned on in a voice that would probably break if he changed tone.

"I now pronounce you man and wife," the priest said, finally ending the torture that made the Cruciatus curse look like the good option.

Harry looked at his watch, and started a countdown - giving it an hour and thirty minutes.

They all walked inside the Great Hall, where the house-elves had put together a lavish feast. He merged into the shadows again; wondering what would happen if the elves put together a less-than-lavish-feast. Would the world end? Would Voldemort spontaneously combust? Or would people just mutter and grumble in that peculiarly British way they had of expressing their discontent?

There were speeches, Fred and George's were funny, but the rest were full of the same sort of sickening sentimentality that made him want to deposit the lunch he'd just eaten in the nearest

lavatory.

Bill and Fleur danced, and lots of other people joined in, as if today was a day for normality. A day for celebration. A day to forget the problems of the world.

As if there wasn't a Dark Lord's soul to put together and destroy.

And then it started to happen. A feeling of magic permeated through the atmosphere. Harry looked at his watch and smirked, it was right on time.

The air pressure in the Great Hall seemed to increase, as the feeling of magic, profoundly ancient magic, grew and grew.

And then, in a glowing nimbus of light, a figure rose from the floor of the Great Hall, serene and benevolent, it spread its arms, and its ghostly eyes twinkled merrily.

Albus Dumbledore was back, as a ghost.

There was a great gasp through the room, and then some cheering and laughter.

And that was Harry's cue to move.

He dashed out of the shadows, casting a spell on the floor in front of him. Underneath Dumbledore a pentagram appeared, trapping him in place.

He'd known Dumbledore was going to do this, and he was prepared. It had been obvious that his death was as carefully orchestrated as everything else he'd done, and that he'd told Snape to kill him.

What that made Snape, Harry didn't really care. He was going to kill the greasy git on principle - and the principle of him being ugly was just as valid as any other principle.

"Harry?" Dumbledore asked, his ghostly visage looking surprised.

"I know your secret," Harry declaimed in a great voice. "Oh Great Deceiver."

"What are you talking about?" Dumbledore asked, looking confused.

"You're not Albus Dumbledore," Harry cried, "you're Voldemort."

"No I'm not," Dumbledore said firmly.

"Yes, you are," Harry replied. "The Albus Dumbledore I knew said that he was planning for the next great adventure, not returning as a ghost!"

Dumbledore looked surprised, "I did say that," he admitted. "But my task isn't done here."

"But it is, you can't fool me that way," Harry said, acting so much he wondered if an award ceremony would be in his future. "For before you died, did you not tell me how to defeat Voldemort?"

"Well, yes," Dumbledore said.

Harry turned dramatically, "See, he is a deceiver, he is Voldemort incarnate."

The wedding party were looking torn at him.

Harry shrugged. "By the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, I cast thee out," he shouted.

Dumbledore's glowing image seemed to waiver in the air. "Evil is affected by the power of the light," he cried. He was pretty much making it up as he went along now. It wasn't that hard for him to cast some wordless magic while saying what ever came to mind.

Ron and Hermione joined him, and he nodded solemnly at them. They pointed their wands at the ghost of the ancient Headmaster as well, and he whispered the spell to them.

The three of them cast the spell.

"Why, Harry," Dumbledore asked in a whisper, as he started to fade.

"Because you've interfered enough in my life," Harry whispered back. "Coming back as a ghost? You need to have a word with your script writer; it's the biggest cliché in existence."

"This really is Dumbledore," Ron asked quietly, sounding a little surprised.

"Of course it is," Hermione whispered. "But Harry's right, Dumbledore's interfered too much, we need to be able to move on."

With a sudden bang, the ghost of Dumbledore disappeared.

Harry took off his brown jacket, and absently undid a few buttons on his shirt.

On the table to the left, were the presents that some people had given the happy couple.

"I'm sorry about that," he apologised to the Bride and Groom. "I knew Voldemort would try and do something today."

"Thank you, Harry," Bill said, smiling at him. "I'm glad you stopped him before anything could happen."

On that table, one of Bill's friends had left him a joke gift, a whip.

Harry walked over to it, and picked it up, looking at Bill suggestively.

Bill winced and shook his head.

Harry smirked and took it. He walked to the door, Ron and Hermione following him. "Well, I've got a job to do," he said. "Voldemort's soul to destroy and all that."

There was a gasp from the wedding guests, including several people walking forward to stop him.

Harry unrolled the whip and cracked it in front of them, causing them to jump back. He could feel the magic inside the whip, and smiled to himself. This would really come in useful.

He tilted his hat at a jaunty angle, and struck the whip out. It stretched out, longer than before, and wrapped around the waist of Ginny Weasley.

He wheeled her in, till she was standing in front of her.

"Hey," he said quietly.

"What are you doing?" Ginny asked.

"We had a strange relationship," Harry said. "I should never have let you go, and I should have thought about what I wanted a lot more. I have now, and if you answer the next question with a yes, I promise to never make such a mistake again. Can we try again?"

Ginny slapped him hard across the face. "That's for leaving me."

She leaned up, and kissed him hard, her tongue pressing into his mouth. "And that's for making up for it," she whispered softly, her hands absently opening more of his shirt, and revealing his chiselled chest and stomach underneath.

He smiled and wrapped an arm around her. He looked out at the Great Hall.

He raised his hat, attached his whip to his belt and turned, off to find the antiques he needed, for the first time, without the interference of an Old Man.

He had his girlfriend, his two friends, what more did an archaeologist Adventurer need? Something was missing.

"Wait up, Harry," Fred and George yelled, "We're coming too."

The comic relief -- that was what he had been missing. All he needed now was a dramatic exit.

"*Accio* Sirius' Bike," he yelled at the top of his voice, his wand in his hand. From the direction of Hagrid's hut came a crashing noise, and a 1940's style German bike came to a stop in front of him.

He climbed on and started the engine, revving it.

"Coming?" he asked Ginny.

She grinned impishly at him, tore of the bottom of her dress, and straddled the bike, wrapping her arms tightly around him.

"We'll meet you at Diagon Alley later today," he said to Fred, George, Ron, and Hermione.

"Okay mate," Ron replied with a grin.

Harry threw a one-handed salute at the rest of the room, and placed his right foot down, wheel spinning the bike around in a circle, before he let loose the break, and darted off.

He raised the front wheel, and could hear Ginny squealing with pleasure as he burst through the doors to Hogwarts and out into freedom, adventure, and the future.