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On

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Inhaltsangabe

Even Harry's courage has its limits.

Vorwort

Set up in the 7th book, chapter 'King's Cross'.

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„I can choose?“, asked Harry.

„Of course you can“, Dumbledore answered calmly, „This is King's Cross, you say? Well, then if you wanted you could, let's say, board a train.“

„And where would it take me?“

„On.“

Harry gazed at the twinkling blue eyes for a moment. The images of dead Fred, Lupin and Tonks rose in his mind, blurring his view. He thought of Fenrir Greyback, feeding his bloodthirst from the motionless Romilda Vane. The memory of Dobby's empty eyes, who had died in his arms, and the pain later that night, when he lay still on the sofa at Shell Cottage, from digging the grave all by himself.

Suddenly, though it seemed quite a soothing atmosphere here, the pain seemed to have come back. It was a burning, nagging sensation in his muscles like before. Only now it had spread from his upper arms through his torso, stopping his heartbeat, crushing his lungs. He couldn't breathe. By stopping to do so, he discovered that he did not have to.

More images appeared behind his inner eye, one more vivid than the last. Sirius being hit by Bellatrix' Killing Curse. Neville Longbottom abysmally deep ashamed in the closed ward in St. Mungo's, pocketing the paper waste because it was a present from his mother. Nagini leaping from what had been Bathilda Bagshot's body. Finally, Dumbledore falling off the Astronomy tower.

“I'm sorry, Professor”, he croaked hoarsely.

Harry rose beneath the headmaster's gaze, calmly as if after another lesson about how to find Tom Riddle's horcruxes. Few sure-footed steps carried Harry to the platform.

Dumbledore did not comment on it. His face was one single frank, empty expression.

“I can only repeat what I said a moment ago”, Dumbledore broke the silence after what seemed only seconds, but could have been an eternity just as well. “It is your choice, Harry, and yours alone.” He sounded almost indifferent.

“It is”, Harry answered. On the threshold, he turned to Dumbledore. “Hermione and Ron know all about the Horcruxes, don't they?”

“Just as you much as you told them.”

“Then they do know everything, just like I promised, Professor. And now Neville knows, too. It's three wizards against him. Three wizards who know his greatest weakness. They will carry on to fight him, they will end it.”

“I suppose they will.”

“So the prophecy's true after all, Sir”, Harry said, smiling. “You said, Trelawney could have referred to Neville as well.”

“Indeed, I did.”

“And by killing me, he marked Neville as the one to finish him off”, Harry went on, uncertain if he would believe what he was saying at some point in his journey, or at least soon after the train had left station.

“That's one legitimate interpretation of it”, Dumbledore nodded.

Silence rose between them.

It was a pure, white, painless moment. The longer it stretched, the more Harry realized how tired he was, and how much he longed for rest.

“Please don't blame me, Professor”, Harry whispered. He couldn't resist it: tears rolled down his cheeks, hot like a stream of lava, but surprisingly not easing the burning guilt in his lifeless chest.

“I don't blame you, Harry”, Dumbledore reassured him. “It is up to every man how much they can take. And as we always appreciated your courage, your will to face Voldemort and carry a burden you never asked for, ... by the same token we must accept that one time you say no.”

And with two long, swift steps he stood next to him, stretching out an arm. The Boy Who Lived as an orphan hugged the man who had been closest to him, next to the father he had never known.

Then Harry boarded the train.