

# When my Archrival Dies...

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The Death Eaters left behind the shades of the forest, slowly marching towards the dark outlines of Hogwarts. The war was won. Voldemort led his followers to the castle's court that showed clear signs of the battle. Walls were crumbled, rubble lay on the ground, blasted from its former place by curses, and blood was splattered over the flat flags.

One by one, students, teachers, parents, and ghosts entered the court to watch the procession approach them. Carefully, Draco snuck out, as well, trying to avoid meeting any of them while attempting to catch a glimpse of the scene. Not so much to see the Death Eaters' victory march but rather to find the faces of two of them: his parents. He knew they must be among the crowd following the Dark Lord. He scanned the masked figures as they started lining up in the court until his eyes fell on a large figure. His breath caught.

In Hagrid's arms lay the limp bundle of limbs the blonde knew all too well. "Potter..." he whispered startled.

"NO!" McGonagall screamed, her usually strong voice shaken by utter desperation.

More shouting and wailing tore through the silence as the opposing students saw the corpse of their leader, their hero, their last hope- their only hope.

Yet their mourning wouldn't reach Draco. His body froze. Time seemed to slow down. He hadn't been able to hand Potter over to the Dark Lord. His last shot to redeem his family's honour in their master's eyes had been lost for naught. Harry Potter, the boy who lived, was dead and he hadn't had any influence on this, hell, he hadn't even been there to witness it. There was no chance for the opposition anymore. With their leader dead, Voldemort would win and take over the world, suppressing anyone in his way. Or kill them.

Draco clenched his fist in a fit of desperation and rage. Why? All these years he had hoped for Potter to fail, to just die! And yet that black-haired nuisance had always managed to win, to somehow turn the tables and tap the scales in his favour, no matter how much effort Draco had put into defeating his rival. On how many occasions had he failed to beat him?

The shame of the lost Quidditch game in his second year came to mind. It flashed before his eyes. He had been so proud to be accepted as Seeker, to play Quidditch for his house, clad in green in silver. After all, he'd been flying on a broom for as long as he could remember and finally it had paid off- even if his father had had a hand in it. His father had even shown up, spurring him on even more to win against his arch-rival. But of course, he hadn't been granted a win. He could remember his fall, the pain, and most clearly the air of disgust his father had exuded afterwards. He hadn't contacted

or answered his son for the following month.

And what of the house cup in the first year?! Slytherin had been in the lead so far ahead of everyone else. They had worked hard and excelled all year and yet Potter and his friends had somehow managed to snatch such a clear win from them, after all. He remembered cursing Dumbledore that night over and over again.

He couldn't remember how often Potter had ridiculed him, chipped away at his pride, or flat-out defeated him. Only last year he would have died by Potter's hand were it not for Snape saving his life. Potter himself had saved him just a few hours ago from the fiery depths of the Room of Requirements.

And now? Now the teenager lay there in the weeping half-giant's arms, all signs of life had left his body from the point where Draco stood. But Draco couldn't enjoy it. There was no pleasure in seeing his rival dead, fallen to the Dark Lord's evil scheme. Not just, because he hadn't gotten his revenge. Not even because of his parents. Harry Potter had saved his life. He didn't deserve to die. He couldn't be dead, Draco had counted on him!

Finally, Draco's grey eyes found his parents. Both of them seemed dishevelled. It must have been a long night for them, too. His mother's eyes were scanning the students, fervently looking for him, he was sure. She must be scared. The poor, sweet woman was on the brink of breaking down, both physically and mentally exhausted it seemed - and yet her only thought was her son. Draco's heart grew heavy. He wanted to show her he was alive, that she did not have to worry and be scarred on his account, yet he knew better than to blow his cover. He had to wait and lay low until he could come up with a course of action. Would the students now put down their weapons and follow the Dark Lord? Or fight to the death? Mayhap he could jump out and save his Lord from a curse to regain his favour? This was all getting over the head of the 17-year-old.

His mother was clinging to the figure of his father and Draco had to swallow as he took in his sight. The usually so proud and elegant Lucius was but a shadow of himself. His skin was sickish green, his dull eyes sunk deep into their sockets, covered in red. His normally neatly combed hair hung in dirty strands from his bowed head and his cavernous cheeks were covered in stubble. Overall, he seemed barely taller than his wife, his eyes void of all hope and pride- of all life.

Draco's heart sunk. That couldn't be his father, the man he had idolised since he was a little child. Nothing remained of the once strong, proud man that nothing could have brought down. The Dark Lord had broken him, left him and defenceless, without a home, pride- even his wand had been taken from him. And now there the two stood, holding each other as they were all that was left.

Draco had failed. His parents had counted on him and he had failed them...

Tears were building in his eyes. "Bloody hell, Potter, get up," he muttered frustrated. He had trusted in the black-haired wannabe hero just this one time in his life and Potter had better not leave him hanging! Not now!

The scene in the court had changed by now. Students had picked up their wands, fighting with the Dark Lord. Draco needed a bit to take the scene in, his eyes leaving his parents as he returned to the present. Neville was screaming, his head covered by a burning sorting hat. Others tried to defeat the Dark Lord, while Hagrid shouted over the battle noise, looking for Harry that had disappeared from his arms.

Draco's heart skipped a beat. Was it possible? He knew of Harry's cloak of invisibility, it had not been two years since he'd found out about it. Yes. Yes, he had to believe!

"Protego!" shouted an all too familiar voice and Draco's eyes flickered to the source

along with those of everyone else present at the scene. There he stood, Harry Potter in the flesh. Draco's lip twitched into a small smile. Yes. His rival, the one that had always managed to defeat him, was alive and facing the most dangerous wizard of all. His heart beat steadied. This was it. The Dark Lord would fall. All the desperation and pain that had had its iron grip on Draco fell off, replaced by unwavering certainty and hope, that Harry Potter would win and free them off the Dark Lord's madness. Oh, Voldemort would learn first-hand how it was to have the odds in one's favour, already tasting victory, only to have it taken away by that brat Harry Potter.

"You better show him, Potter..." Draco whispered as the two faced off.

Then his attention was distracted from the fight. His parents. In the heat of the battle, he had lost sight of them. Careful not to be seen, Draco slipped out of his hideout and started heading in the direction of the Death Eaters watching the battle that would decide the very fate of the wizarding world. But Draco couldn't be bothered by it.

He snuck around a pillar to find the body of his aunt. Well, she'd never been his favourite to begin with... While all life had left her eyes, an air of madness still surrounded her traits.

"Draco!" a female voice ripped him from his thoughts.

"Mother..." he barely brought from his lips and glanced up as he saw his parents heading towards him. Relief flushed over him. They were all right.

Tears filling her eyes, Narcissa wrapped her arms around the boy and kissed his forehead as she pulled him close. "Thank God, I was so worried!" she cried and held him close, her shaky fingers brushing through his platinum blond hair.

Lucius approached and wrapped his arms protectively around his family. He tried to say something yet naught but stifled noises left his raspy throat.

Draco clung to the two. He couldn't remember the last time they had hugged each other like this, if ever.