

Draco hit his opponent with a spell that had them falling to the ground, and they kept moving.

It was easy, looking for Voldemort — he just had to feel in the wards for the magic that felt like a complete blight on humanity. Everything about the man felt *wrong*, twisted, broken.

Actually *getting* to him, however, wasn't quite as easy. The Death Eaters had spotted Harry, and were gathering to try and slow him down, determined to make him work for the *privilege* of duelling their master. Harry thought it was quite bold of many of them, in all honesty — they thought themselves safe enough to risk trying to kill him, stealing Voldemort's vengeance from him? What idiots.

But Harry wasn't alone; he had Draco, yes, but there were others, appearing once they realised the group were converging around Harry. Doing their best to distract and disrupt the Death Eaters. As they drew closer to the edge of the Forbidden Forest, Harry was both amused and deeply disturbed to see acromantula scuttling out from the cover of the trees, grabbing humans between their pincers and dragging them back to the forest. Harry doubted they had been asked to do so — and indeed, they didn't seem to be discriminating between Death Eaters and not, though Hagrid managed to reclaim the student who almost met a very grizzly end. Some of the acromantula were just grabbing fresh corpses and going to town right there.

Harry shook his head; whatever. If it saved them the clean up, he hardly cared.

They were edging closer, making it through the Death Eater ranks. Harry knew he was almost at his destination when he came up against Rabastan LeStrange, his sleeve ripped and his clockwork arm gleaming with every flash of spellfire.

“You want me to take your other arm?” Draco taunted, watching LeStrange's face screw up in fury, his mask abandoned long ago.

“I'll kill you!” the man roared, so focused on Draco that he neglected to see the *other* head of blonde hair approaching.

“You will do no such thing!” Narcissa slashed her wand down in a firm arc, and all of a sudden LeStrange's eyes began to bulge as he gasped for air, choking on nothing, drowning on dry land. He dropped to his knees, and Narcissa didn't release the spell until he'd stopped moving entirely. Then she sniffed delicately. “I never did like him,” she declared, as if she had merely escorted the man from a tea party rather than choked him to death.

But there was no time to stand and admire her handiwork; with LeStrange down, there were plenty more willing to take his place.

And then Harry pushed forward, through a break in the line, and found himself stood face to face with Lord Voldemort himself.

Harry's first thought was that the man had aged; his strangely smooth, pale face was weathered like peeling paint, dark circles below his luminous red eyes. He didn't hold himself quite so elegantly as he had before.