

Show Me

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Show Me

by [loveglowsinthedark](#)

Summary

"We can be friends, if you like," he says instead, nonchalant and careless.

"What I'd like," Potter says seriously, "is to kiss you."

Draco feels his jaw drop, feels the way his hair tumbles into his eyes when he whips around to stare at Potter. "What?" he breathes.

"I think I'd like to kiss you," Potter repeats sombrely, no hint of mirth evident.

"You think?" Draco says steadily, proud of himself for holding himself together.

Potter's eyebrows slide up briefly but then Draco can't think or act or speak or breathe because Potter is leaning in and cupping his cheek gently. "I know," Potter says simply, and kisses Draco.

Notes

For my darling, Jules - please don't hate this. D:

When I asked her what kind of fic she enjoys, this is what she said:

"There doesn't seem to be a name for what I like, it's not really a trope, but I like honesty and vulnerability and trust. I like the boys being a safe space for each other to share secrets and feel accepted, and the kind of sex where everything is warm and passionate and painless."

And I swear to god my throat closed up and I thought it was just so *beautifully* put. So...I've tried?

This is barely beta'ed (by me). Forgive any errors, pls. ♥

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It's cold enough that his ears hurt despite the thick, black earmuffs he's got on. He can't decide if it's the snow that's unnaturally white where it flutters down around them or whether the sky is just that densely black, but the scene around him looks oddly ethereal.

His breath fogs in opaque clouds of white before him, almost exact in resemblance to the other opaque, pearly white forms prancing gracefully above their heads all around the courtyard. Draco pretends to watch his own breath-cloud as it forms, dissipates and reforms with each deep breath of frigid air he pulls in. It's freezing cold and yet the courtyard resonates with shrieks of glee, bright, carefree laughter and bellowed, genial name-calling, all of it complemented further by the presence of over half a dozen silvery Patronuses with their warm, pearlescent radiance that dazzles them all.

He can't remember *why* he'd agreed to accompany the other Eighth Years outside to 'enjoy the first snow', but a half hour ago he'd found himself muttering wearily under his breath even as he'd readily pulled on an additional jumper, gloves, earmuffs and his house scarf before following the small crowd down to the courtyard along with Pansy who had then promptly ditched him when Ginny Weasley had popped up out of nowhere, sly grin on her stupid, pretty face at the sight of Pansy.

And so he'd just found himself sitting quietly on the low wall that ringed the oval courtyard, as people had scooped up the scant bit of snow that had collected on the ground, and was basically just sludgy mulch at this point, and thrown it at each other, hooting and howling like a bunch of boorish kerns. Finnigan had climbed into the frozen fountain in the centre of the courtyard, slipping and sliding on the ice, to poke at the marble centaur's gonads, and upon being dared to lick the bulbous carving (by his own boyfriend, no less) proceeded to get his tongue stuck on the centaur's balls.

Even Draco couldn't help but heave in silent mirth as he'd watched Finnigan shriek and scrabble at the centaur's hindquarters, Thomas almost pissing himself, judging by how hard he'd laughed, before going to rescue him while the rest of them, Potter included, had roared with helpless, *breathless* laughter.

And then the Patronuses had leapt to life. It started with Ginny Weasley conjuring hers, a graceful, spindly-limbed horse (probably just to show off in front of Pansy), and then most of the others had joined in, lighting up the courtyard luminously, each movement of the conjured forms scintillating.

Potter hasn't cast one though, Draco notices. He sits there and watches his friends muck about in the snow and spontaneously have their Patronuses race each other but he doesn't join in. He's sitting quietly, Potter, directly opposite Draco, and is watching with a happy, modest sort of pride as nearly all their classmates guide their respective conjured Patronuses around the courtyard.

For the enth time since they'd come back to Hogwarts, Draco notices how Potter appears to have not changed a smidge since the War while simultaneously seeming like a new person altogether. He still wears his hair rumpled and mussed up, still dresses carelessly and slightly sloppily, still flies a broom like he was born to; but there's also something startlingly *adult*

about him now, something that makes Draco wonder whether he himself carries an air of having grown up too fast, too soon as well, or whether it was just Potter.

Maybe it's the stubble, Draco thinks quietly now, watching discreetly as Potter lifts a hand to let Granger's friendly little otter butt it's silvery head into his palm before streaking off to her again. Potter's nearly always wearing a very light stubble, like he can't be bothered to put much thought or effort into his shaving spells. Maybe it's the way Potter's smile doesn't very often reach his eyes anymore, although these smiles *are* genuine, warm and readily available.

Or maybe it's the fact that he's back here, back at Hogwarts; back in the very same place Voldemort's lifeless body had thumped to the floor, where Potter had cried quietly over the corpses of the friends he'd lost, where Potter had *died*.

And where Potter had carved himself ineradicably into history forevermore – whether or not he'd intended to.

Maybe it's something else altogether, something Draco would never be able to guess or know more about; or maybe it was just Draco's own filtered view of the tousled prat. Maybe Draco was simply imagining this indiscernible change in Potter; maybe Potter still is the incorrigible piece of shit Draco once wanted to ruin.

Potter looks up now and Draco's belly plummets as their eyes meet. He smiles at Draco, soft and friendly, and gets to his feet, strolling up to him through the sludge.

"Nice earmuffs," he comments and Draco feels his cheeks warm.

"Shut up," Draco replies and Potter chuckles, sitting down beside him and lifting one ankle onto a knee, arms slung loosely over his legs. He's not bundled up like Draco is, although he *is* wearing an outrageously ghastly, maroon jumper with a giant, green 'H' on the front, and his house scarf coiled loosely around his throat, the pilled wool catching on the rough stubble on his jaw whenever he moved his head.

"D'you enjoy the snow?" Potter asks casually, looking over at their classmates like Draco is.

"There isn't much to enjoy, at the moment," Draco draws.

Potter chuckles. "I know. I dunno what these idiots thought, coming down for this."

"I think it's the fact that it's the first snow since the War or something," Draco says, tone vague and rather flat. After a beat he turns to look at Potter only to find him frowning thoughtfully.

"I guess," he finally says, shrugging. "I suppose a lot of events will be celebrated like that now – first winter after the War, first Christmas, first spring."

"You don't see things that way?"

"Sure, I do," Potter answers easily. "This is the first time I'm at Hogwarts for a school year and Voldemort isn't actively trying to murder me." Draco winces but when he glances over, he sees the bright twinkle in Potter's eyes.

“Arse,” Draco mutters when Potter guffaws. “Why aren’t you shooting your silver beast at the rest of them?”

Potter just shrugs again, waving a hand carelessly, but doesn’t actually answer Draco. “Can you conjure one? A Patronus?” he asks instead.

Draco’s nostrils flare and even though Potter’s demeanour is polite and innocuous, he finds himself struggling to control the urge to bark at him to back off and mind his own fucking business. “No,” he says stiffly, not elaborating.

“Did you ever learn to cast one?”

“No,” Draco repeats, pointedly not looking at him again.

“Would you like to learn?”

Draco’s head whips around, mouth slightly open as he stares at Potter in disbelief. Potter looks puzzled, head tilted slightly as he takes in Draco’s wordless gaping.

“Are *you* offering to teach me, Potter?” Draco asks, voice unintentionally carrying a bit of an edge. “Is this an invitation to be part of whatever little *club* you’d started in fifth year?”

Potter grins. “Technically, Hermione started it.” There’s a pause as he grimaces playfully. “And she and Ron sort of bullied me into heading it.”

“Always the victim,” Draco mutters, looking away, and Potter laughs again, this time elbowing him lightly in the flank. Draco’s heart skips dizzily and he makes a deliberate effort to keep breathing.

“So, would you?” Potter asks.

“Would I what?”

“Like to learn to cast a Patronus?”

“Why?” Draco turns to him, unable to keep the suspicion out of his tone, “Why are you offering without me even showing the slightest inclination?”

“Because you’ve been watching,” Potter says simply, gesturing to the Patronuses that are still gambolling around. Granger’s otter is racing her boyfriend’s fluffy terrier and said boyfriend is bellowing as his conjured animal loses spectacularly.

“It’s hard not to watch your groupies make fools of themselves,” Draco says airily but his ears are still warm; the familiar humiliation at being bested is creeping in, and the need to vehemently reject Potter’s offer, purely out of spite, is on the very tip of his tongue.

Potter just chuckles. “Well, it’s an open offer,” he tells him. “It’s sort of a useful skill to have, yeah? Sending messages in an emergency and stuff.”

Draco turns to him with a soft huff. “Why are you helping me?” he demands. “Why are you even talking to me?”

Potter still appears confused as he frowns a bit. “What do you mean, Malfoy?” he replies, a tad defensively. “We talk now!”

“Yes, about homework, and Quidditch schedules, *et cetera*.” Draco waves one hand rather wildly. “Not about spending one-on-one time together, learning *magic*!” The moment he says it, Draco feels his neck prickle with embarrassment.

“Is that the problem?” Potter scowls. “Spending one-on-one time with me? You’re afraid I’ll drag you into an empty room, and what? Curse you?”

Draco is properly blushing now, he’s sure of it; his face burns hot despite the frigid air and his stomach flops clumsily at the thought of being dragged into empty rooms by Potter.

Merlin, what the *fuck*?

“You don’t frighten me,” Draco informs him, making up for the light quaver in his voice with an icy glare.

“Good to know,” Potter says, his pleasant, friendly expression slowly melting off, replaced by annoyance. As Draco sits there debating a way to accept Potter’s offer while also insulting his hair, Potter makes to stand and, presumably, leave.

“I might not be a very good student,” Draco blurts hurriedly, resisting the impulse to reach out and grab Potter by the arm. “We’ll likely lose patience and end up flinging hexes, Potter.”

Potter’s expression lightens again, his lips twitching in amusement. “But since you’re not afraid of me...?” He suddenly grins. “Unless you’re suggesting that *I* should be afraid of *you*?”

“You ought to be, if you have even a single iota of common sense,” Draco says smoothly, smirking when Potter’s grin widens. “When and where?”

Potter blinks, looking thrown for a moment. “Tomorrow, seven PM; Room of Requirement,” he says, shoving his bare hands into his pockets and bouncing on the balls of his feet. “We can get in a solid hour before dinner.” He looks rather pleased with himself, Draco thinks, while his own heart vaults itself up his throat.

“The Room of...?” Draco swallows hard. “Is it even still...there?” he asks casually.

Something flickers across Potter’s face for a brief second and he looks mildly horrified with himself. “We can meet elsewhere,” he says quickly.

“No,” Draco says at once. “The Room is fine. I’ll see you there at seven.”

Potter opens his mouth, looking uncertain, but then nods. “Right. See you then.”

“I’ll be waiting with bated breath,” Draco drawls, helpless as he returns Potter’s wide grin.

~*~

The following evening, Draco cuts short his study session with Pansy to ensure he's ten minutes early, hurrying up to the seventh floor, smoothing his hair down and sniffing his armpits, checking that his robes aren't too wrinkled.

Potter is already waiting for him, staring at the tapestry of Barnabas the Barmy and absently fiddling with his wand, rolling it between the fingers of one hand. He's done away with his school robes, as is his wont, and wears only the white shirt and grey trousers, house tie stuffed into his breast pocket. Behind him, across the corridor, there's already a door in the wall.

"Hey," Potter greets him mildly as Draco walks up, scowling a bit. "I requested the room," he adds, indicating with his thumb.

Draco comes to a halt and stares long and hard at the door, throat going dry as he randomly imagines massive, red flames licking out from underneath, smoke billowing out in thick, black clouds.

"Malfoy?" Potter's voice is soft and when Draco looks around, Potter's standing a few steps closer, looking gently concerned.

Draco hurriedly straightens up, jerking his chin at the door. "What'd you wish for, then?"

"A room to practice in," Potter answers as though obvious. "Shall we?" He strides over and pushes open the door, sticking his head in and looking around before shooting Draco a grin over his shoulder. "Come on, then."

It's a small, square room, bare but for an overstuffed sofa against the back wall piled with a few cushions, a pitcher of water and two goblets on a low, end-table beside it.

It doesn't smell of smoke and the air is pleasantly cool against Draco's suddenly sweaty brow.

"It's not on fire," he blurts lamely before he can help it.

Potter stands there, wand loosely held at his side, stance easy, smiling at him. "No, Malfoy," he says softly, "it's not on fire."

~*~

Potter is a ridiculous teacher. He's full of garbage techniques like 'focusing on happy memories' and 'emptying your mind of negative thoughts'. Half the time that they're there together, pointlessly practicing something Draco feels he'll never actually succeed at, Draco wants to ask Potter to stuff it.

"*You* show me, then, if it's so easy!" Draco snaps, four days later, when he's still not managed to produce even a tiny wisp. "*Expecto Patronum!*" he bellows before Potter can do more than sigh. "There's no *point*, Potter!" he shouts, turning and flinging his wand onto the sofa. He's

sweating profusely and his robes feel heavy and stifling and so Draco angrily tears them off over his head and flings those aside too, concluding his strop with a kick to the wall.

Certain that he's broken at least two toes, Draco turns to glare at Potter, who in turn is standing very still, hands on his hips, expression patient and calm.

"You can't let it upset you this much," he says softly.

"Fuck you!" Draco screams, finally throwing himself onto the sofa and easing his foot out his shoe to clutch at his throbbing toes. "Just because it's so fucking easy for you—"

"It wasn't," Potter interrupts, not even raising his voice. He strolls a few steps closer and pauses in front of Draco, hands in his pockets. "It truly wasn't. And I was practicing on a Boggart-Dementor which made the whole thing ten times as hard because I kept fainting."

"Wait, what?" Draco blinks up at him. "Why aren't *we* using a Boggart-Dementor, then?" he demands.

Potter raises his eyebrows. "Is your Boggart a Dementor?" he asks dryly.

Draco's hands go a bit cold. "No," he says shortly. "But yours is," he adds, nodding at him. "We could practice against your Boggart."

"No," Potter replies, just as shortly. "Besides, when I taught the DA to cast their Patronuses, we didn't have a dummy Dementor to practice on. And they've all learnt it just fine, as you saw the other night."

Draco's lip curls. "Right, so I'm not as accomplished as the rest of your *DA*, that's what you're saying."

"No," Potter says slowly. "You're rather a lot more accomplished than any of us were back then. Your magic does really pack a punch, Malfoy. You're just not tryi—" he breaks off suddenly and looks rather pensive even as Draco glares at him as though daring him to continue. "You *are* trying, actually," Potter says taking another step closer, staring intently at Draco. "You're trying very hard and your focus is sharp as fuck."

"But?!" Draco snarls when he doesn't continue.

"You're focusing on the wrong thing," Potter says simply, hint of wry smile on his lips.

"Potter, I'm focusing on casting a fucking Patronus," Draco spits after seething in stunned fury for several seconds.

"Exactly," Potter says pointedly. "While all along, I've been asking you to focus on the *memory* you're using to cast the Patronus." Eyes narrowing thoughtfully, he adds, "What memory have you been using, Malfoy?"

"None of your business," Draco grits out, looking away.

Potter looks exasperated. "I'm only asking to know if it's a powerful enough memory," he says. "I had to switch a few memories before one worked."

"What worked for you?" Draco asks at once, stepping back into his shoe and standing up.

"The night I found out I'm a wizard," Potter tells him, without a shred of hesitation. "On my eleventh birthday, Hagrid found me smuggled away by my Muggle relatives in a fucking hut in the middle of the sea somewhere near Cokeworth, broke down the door and gave me my Hogwarts letter."

Draco stares, mind curiously blank as he processes that. He still remembers Potter from the first time they'd met, skinny as a fucking twig and garbed in atrocious, oversized clothes, blinking at Draco from his stool at Madam Malkin's, seeming as nervous as Draco secretly felt but wasn't allowed to show.

That Potter had shared something personal with Draco, as if it were nothing, as if they were...*friends*, throws Draco off kilter for a moment. He regards Potter in silence, taking in the way he stood there, tall and effortlessly graceful, hair falling into his face, expression pleasant but carrying that hard edge Draco's noticed since term began.

"The day Father bought me my first Crup," Draco mumbles, apropos nothing.

"Sorry?" Potter leans in, confused.

Draco sighs, picking up his wand and dragging a hand through his sweaty hair. "I was seven and Father finally gave in to my relentless begging and bought me a Crup," Draco says, rolling up his shirt sleeves and not looking at Potter. "She had black fur, was terribly moody and slept right on my chest most nights."

Potter looks rather charmed. "What'd you name her?"

"Ebony."

"D'you still have Ebony?"

"She died."

Potter's face softens a bit. "I'm sorry, Malfoy."

"s okay, she fell really ill and was in a lot of pain," Draco says, shrugging.

"I guess, that explains why the memory of you getting her doesn't work," Potter says gently.

"Yeah." Draco doesn't look at him now, staring at the floor instead.

"Can you recall anything else? Something that still brings you happiness when you think of it?"

Draco shrugs again. "I dunno. I guess." Then suddenly, "Can you show me once?"

Potter blinks, looking taken aback. “What?”

“Cast your Patronus,” Draco waves a hand in a vague gesture, “Show me once.” And, mischievously, “Let me bask in the blinding glow of your magnificent, legendary Patronus.”

Potter laughs, turning away as he shakes his head. “Stop faffing around, you git,” he says, beckoning Draco over. “Decide on some other happy memory and let’s give it another go.”

~*~

Two days later, he’s manages to produce a shapeless, silvery wisp.

It’s his fifteenth or sixteenth attempt of the evening and he isn’t even sure he’d expected or hoped for it to work but then he’s saying the incantation and his wand vibrates in his hand as a shapeless cloud of glowing silver puffs out the end and arcs across the little room.

He turns, gaping, and Potter’s right there, looking more ecstatic than Draco feels, and with a rough laugh, Draco’s dragging Potter forward with one hand fisted in his shirt. Potter grabs his arms, laughing with him, leaning in as Draco shakes him by the collar with a hoot of glee.

And then their noses brush – for one fleeting second where Draco feels the warm huff of Potter’s breath against his face, the lens of Potter’s glasses cool against Draco’s cheek as they laugh and trip over their own feet, the tips of their noses rub gently together, mouths literally less than an inch away.

They both move away at the same time, Potter jerking back neatly in a rather controlled manner, Draco reacting with far less control and nearly falling over backwards. He stumbles and catches himself, gulping hard before looking around to see his useless little silvery wisp dissipate and glancing back to see Potter smiling vaguely at it too.

“Good, Malfoy,” he says with a nod, smile widening when their eyes meet.

But the swooping joy that Draco had felt when that gleaming cloud had burst out his wand had dissipated right along with it. “Don’t patronise me, Potter,” he says quietly, temper suddenly flaring.

“What?” Potter’s frowning now. “That’s a good start, right there, Malfoy. What, you think everyone just produces a full, corporeal Patronus within the week?”

“It’s fucking *useless*, Potter!” Draco shouts, flinging an arm out and pointing at where his shapeless wisp had disappeared. “You think I can send someone a message with *that*? You think that’s going to work on an actual Dementor?! The only way I’d escape would be because the fucking thing would be too busy pissing itself *laughing* at me!”

Potter seems to consider that very carefully. “Can Dementors actually laugh?” he asks curiously.

Draco bares his teeth at him. “Are you fucking serious right now?” he asks menacingly.

“Sorry!” Potter says quickly and after a beat, he takes a step closer.

Draco's stomach does a back-flip and he doesn't care for this sort of hysterical, physiological reaction to Potter's proximity – regardless of how good Potter smells and how his eyes crinkle up when he smiles, or how much time Draco spends thinking about him nowadays even when he isn't around; regardless of the fact that these sessions with Potter, no matter how fruitless they've been so far, have been the highlight of Draco's week.

"Is your memory powerful enough?" Potter asks softly; he's standing just about a foot away now and speaks so quietly that rather than being snapped out of his reverie, Draco floats back to the present rather dazedly.

"It's fine," Draco replies a bit sullenly. "It's not just about the memory, Potter. It's not as easy for others as it is for you."

"It's not always easy for me, either," Potter insists.

"Show me," Draco demands irritably. "Let's see how many attempts it takes you to conjure your Patronus. Chances are, you won't need more than one shot at it. Go on, show me."

Potter simply shakes his head with a frown. "We're not here for me," he says. And then, "May I ask what memory you're using?"

"You may, but that doesn't mean I'm going to tell you," Draco says blandly, quirking a reluctant smirk when Potter huffs and rolls his eyes. "D'you still use the same memory?" he asks carefully, "The memory of your eleventh birthday?"

"No." Potter sinks down onto the bare floor and wraps his arms around his knees so Draco does the same, sitting down and leaning back against the wall. "I think about whatever jumps to my mind most clearly at the moment; whatever brings me happiness, or hope, or *some* sort of positive emotion, during that exact moment."

Potter doesn't seem to resent parting with personal information, Draco realises. "So what else d'you think about?" he asks boldly.

Shrugging, Potter dips his head and looks at Draco over the rim of his glasses, lashes fluttering. "My parents," he murmurs. "Sirius, Remus... Ron and 'Mione." Then he meets Draco's gaze squarely. "Anyone or anything that makes me feel safe."

Draco stares at him, Potter's words swirling around in his mind, blindingly radiant in its honesty. "Surely *you* don't need anyone to keep you safe, Harry Potter," Draco challenges benignly.

Potter's smile is sweet and strangely vulnerable. "You'd be surprised."

~*~

Draco is up studying late, two nights later, in one dimly lit corner of the dark common room, when Potter shuffles noiselessly down the stairs and pads into the room, holding a rather hefty looking book of some sort in one hand and an envelope in the other, heading straight for the roaring fire in front of which he plonks down.

He's wearing striped, soft looking pyjama bottoms and the same jumper he'd worn the night he'd offered to teach Draco. His hair is pillow-mussed and his face a bit pale and he sits hunched over with his back to Draco.

Draco shuts his Transfiguration text books, taps his finished essay to dry the ink and rolls it up neatly, putting away everything in his bag before silently getting to his feet and walking over.

"You're up late," he says softly, standing several feet away still.

Potter jumps a bit but seems to recognise Draco's voice even before he's turned around fully, slanting him a small smile over his shoulder. "Couldn't sleep," he tells him.

Setting his bag down on the nearest armchair, Draco makes his way over. Potter doesn't look up, and doesn't attempt to hide what he's doing. The large book he'd been carrying, Draco now sees, is a photo album, and Potter is wordlessly perusing old, spasmodically moving photographs.

He sits down on the plush rug next to Potter and waits. The fire flares wide and bright, spitting very quietly every now and then. Someone's pet cat slinks into view, purring loudly, and slowly walks up to them, gliding against Draco's hip with a squeaky meow before disappearing under a sofa.

"s my mum," Potter says suddenly, after a long pause, his voice gravelly. Draco leans in, determinedly not paying attention to the horde of butterflies that gather in his belly when their shoulders brush, and looks at the woman in the photo Potter's thumb swipes across.

She very young, barely just a couple of years older than Potter and he are, and Draco can make out, despite the grainy, faded quality of the photo, that she's extremely pretty. She's in a wedding gown, effortlessly elegant, red hair up in a chignon, stray tendrils framing her heart shaped face. She's holding a simple little bouquet of red and white roses and looks positively euphoric as she smiles at the camera, gaze dipping bashfully.

"She's beautiful," Draco whispers, sneaking a look at Potter just in time to watch his eyes light up a bit behind his glasses, the bright flare of orange from the fire reflecting off the lenses.

"Yeah," Potter whispers back, and turns the page.

Two men stand side by side in the photograph on the other side, the one on the left bearing such a stark resemblance to Potter that Draco does a double take. He has the same jet black, chaotic pile of hair, the same square jaw and that familiar, unexpectedly handsome grin that Draco's become rather *too* fond of lately. James Potter is tall and slim and radiates the sort of pampered, self-assuredness that his son decidedly lacks.

Next to him is Sirius Black, nearly unrecognisable from the photos Draco had seen everywhere a few years earlier. Shockingly attractive and oozing the smug arrogance Draco had been accustomed to seeing in the mirror until a couple of years ago, Black stands with one arm flung across James Potter's shoulders, nose high in the air, before leaning in and

murmuring something in James' ear that has them both throwing their heads back and laughing with the gleeful, slightly bawdy air of overconfident young daredevils.

"He was kind of a prick," Potter suddenly grunts, and Draco tears his eyes off his father to look at him in surprise. Potter's mouth quirks but he doesn't return Draco's gaze. "They both were. But Dad loved Mum longer than she him. He *loved* her." Draco is unwittingly holding his breath, throat tight and chest pounding.

Potter doesn't talk again for a bit, flipping the page again and smoothing a hand softly over the next photograph – his parents, clearly just wed, standing and beaming at the camera alongside Sirius Black, Remus Lupin – bright-eyed, far less burdened in appearance – and – Draco realises with an unpleasant start – Peter Pettigrew. He's *much* younger than he'd been when he'd resided at the Manor and looks almost faint with happiness and excitement as Black tousles his hair playfully.

Potter doesn't comment and simply continues flipping through the pages, quietly letting Draco in on the only existing memories of his family. When he gets to a photo of James and Lily Potter, a tiny, rotund baby with wispy black hair and vivid green eyes, sat on Lily's hip waving fat little fists at the camera, Draco lets out a slightly strangled sound of wicked delight and drags the album closer.

"*Merlin*, Potter!" he laughs, and next to him, Potter is grinning too, sheepish and a bit shy. "Look at you, you fat thing!"

"Hey!" Potter elbows him in the ribs, cheeks endearingly pink. "Babies are *supposed* to be fat, okay?" Draco just laughs harder, shaking his head and slapping his knee; Potter just elbows him again. "Yeah, I bet *you* had a pointy arse even when you were a baby," he mumbles and Draco's laughter sputters dead in shock.

"Are you saying I have a pointy arse, Potter?!" he chokes out, voice shrill.

"Fuck, no!" Potter blurts, cheeks even pinker now. "Your arse is *round*! I—I mean--!" The album slides out of Potter's lap as he goes purple-faced and shakes his head vigorously, spluttering wetly as Draco bites his lip to keep from laughing and narrows his eyes threateningly. "Not that I've *looked*—I mean I've seen your arse but only in passing! And not like...*seen* it! Not when you're naked or anything?! I mean--!" He looks a bit hysterical now. "Your arse is fine, Malfoy!" he wheezes desperately.

Fighting to maintain his straight face, Draco sniffs and looks back down at the album. "Thanks," he says stiffly, grinning into one hand when Potter deflates a bit and lifts the album back onto his lap. "Your arse is okay too," he says, and when Potter turns to him, mouth wide open, Draco points at the photograph. "Such a darling bum, look."

He laughs along with Potter this time, heart happily skipping up and down his oesophagus. When they get to the empty pages at the end of the album, Potter reaches for the envelope beside him, pulling out a few shiny, new photographs, all of them featuring a sturdy little baby with bright turquoise, and in one photo vivid pink, hair.

“Androm—” Potter breaks off, glancing at Draco with a small smile. “Your aunt Andromeda,” he says pointedly, “sent me these earlier today.” He hands Draco one of the photos; the little boy is sitting up in his crib, staring up at the camera with huge, deep blue eyes, gnawing at one tiny fist. As Draco watches, his hair goes from turquoise to jet black. “He does that when someone says my name,” Potter chuckles. “She must’ve said my name out loud to him while she took the picture. That’s Teddy,” he suddenly adds. “My godson.”

“Remus Lupin’s son,” Draco mutters awkwardly, handing the photo back. “Lupin’s wife was a Metamorphmagus, wasn’t she?”

Potter simply nods in answer, smiling vaguely as he carefully adds the pictures of the blue-haired baby to his album before throwing the empty envelope into the fire. They both watch it shrivel up and slowly burn away as Potter sets aside the album and sighs, neither of them speaking for a long while.

“Potter,” Draco says in a small voice, staring down at his own hands, “I’m sorry.” When he feels that penetrating, green gaze on him, he says, “For everything you know... For all those years of...” Unable to find a way to finish the sentence without spontaneously dying of embarrassment and shame, Draco just lets it hang between them pathetically.

“Yeah, me too,” Potter replies clearly, expression and tone clear of any resentment or dishonesty. “I’m glad we’re friends now.”

The nervous chuckle Draco emits is mortifying and he wants to hurtle across the room and jump out the window. “Friends...” he blurts weakly to cover it up.

“You don’t want to be friends?” Potter asks serenely.

I want to be so fucking much more, Draco wants to bellow into his face.

“We can be friends, if you like,” he says instead, nonchalant and careless.

“What I’d like,” Potter says seriously, “is to kiss you.”

Draco feels his jaw drop, feels the way his hair tumbles into his eyes when he whips around to stare at Potter. “What?” he breathes.

“I think I’d like to kiss you,” Potter repeats sombrely, no hint of mirth evident.

Silently unravelling, mind and soul, Draco breathes in and out, deep and deliberately, forcing himself to maintain eye contact until he’s able to think through the hoarse roaring in his head. Potter gazes back at him, blinking slowly, and Draco is suddenly hyperaware of the way their thighs press together, warm and firm.

“You think?” Draco says steadily, proud of himself for holding himself together.

Potter’s eyebrows slide up briefly but then Draco can’t think or act or speak or *breathe* because Potter is leaning in and cupping his cheek gently. “I know,” Potter says simply, and kisses Draco.

And it's everything and more than Draco could've ever fucking imagined.

~*~

“*Expecto Patronum!*”

The same, shapeless cloud of silver mist he's been producing consistently for the past week dissipates almost the moment it appears, and Draco just stands there, staring in irate frustration until he hears Potter's soft sigh.

“Don't—” Potter starts but Draco has already chucked his wand across the room. It bounces off the wall and clatters across the floor. “Yes, because a broken wand always produces a perfect Patronus,” Potter says wearily, picking it up and coming over. “Let's just call it a day, hm?” His fingers are warm where he gently strokes Draco's nape.

“We've barely practiced this week,” Draco snaps. “We've been too busy snogging.”

“Hey, we've barely snogged today!” Potter says with a faint laugh that promptly dies out when Draco glares. “We won't snog anymore during practice, okay?”

“Yes, because the *snogging* is what's keeping me from producing a fucking Patronus!” Draco grits out. “Can we quit already?”

“No,” Potter says calmly. “You can do this.”

“Potter, you probably did a better job at thirteen than I'm doing at *eighteen*.” If Draco hadn't spent the past week falling too hard and too quickly for Potter, he'd have definitely considered flinging a sharp hex or two at him, if only to wrest a more charged reaction out of him.

“You're taking it personally,” Potter points out. “This isn't something you can *force*.” He presses Draco's wand into his hand and curls his fingers around Draco's. “Let's just go get an early dinner? Then we can head upstairs to the dorms while everyone else is eating.”

Draco scowls. “I'm not in the fucking mood to suck your cock tonight, you wanker.”

“Okay, but I'm still sucking yours,” Potter says at once, smirking slyly when Draco flushes. “Let's not practice for a few days,” he adds suddenly, coaxingly. “You could use the break.”

Draco shakes his head, sighing when they step up close enough to let their brows press together, Draco's breath fogging Potter's glasses. “I just...” Draco bites his lip, mouth curling down unhappily. “I just want it to work *once*,” he mutters gloomily.

“It *will*, give it *time*.”

“Just show me once.” Draco steps back and indicates to where Potter's got his wand tucked into his belt. “Cast your Patronus for me once.”

Potter shakes his head with a small smile. “Don't be an arse,” he says playfully. “I'm starving so can we just go to dinner, already?”

There's something off about it – the way Potter's smile is slightly strained at the corners of his mouth, or the way his hands are balled into fists, the casual avoidance of eye contact – and Draco wouldn't have noticed it had he not spent the past week rather desperately familiarising himself with All Things Potter.

“Cast a Patronus for me, Potter,” Draco repeats calmly.

Potter's light smile stays fixed. “Why?”

“I want to see,” Draco says simply. “Cast your Patronus for me.”

“Merlin, you're annoying,” Potter says laughingly, grabbing Draco's wrist and hauling him close.

Draco remains stiff as he's nuzzled. “Are you going to?”

Potter's smile finally flickers a bit. “No,” he says, eyes glinting in warning.

Draco doesn't heed it. “Cast your fucking Patronus, Potter.”

“No.” Potter's jaw clenches and he releases Draco, stepping back and staring coolly.

“Why not?”

For a moment, he genuinely believes that Potter's going to pull his wand on him. The burning fury that flickers across Potter's face is frightening in its heat and Draco's hand involuntarily tightens on his wand.

And then Potter says, very quietly, “Because I can't anymore.”

~*~

They don't talk about it. They don't practice anymore either.

They go about their days. Pansy walks in on them snogging rather vigorously in their empty Potions classroom one afternoon around early December, and every last student in the school seems to know by dinner that evening. The next day, Weasley threatens Draco rather incoherently and Granger asks them, very sombrely, if they're ‘using protection’. Draco doesn't touch Harry for the rest of the day.

They spend the Christmas break apart, Potter at Weasley's and Draco at the Manor, writing each other every day, and the evening they return to Hogwarts after New Year's, they make love for the first time.

It's unplanned and clumsy and frantic and entirely too sweet, and Draco is mindless throughout, gasping out expletives the whole two minutes that Potter spends inside him, rocking unsteadily and groaning softly. He barely makes a sound as he flies over the edge, dragging Potter along too, and lies trembling in Potter's arms afterwards, silent and overwhelmed.

They're rather unapologetically wrapped up in each other, spending most of their free time together, much to the weary disgust of their friends. Potter becomes Harry and Malfoy becomes Draco, and eventually, they're able to walk down a corridor holding hands without a swarm of breathlessly whispering, avidly staring students following them.

It's the most intimate Draco has let himself get with anyone and so the knowledge that they still haven't addressed what Harry had revealed is a constant thorn in Draco's side. He doesn't, however, have it in him to bring it up, Harry's expression of shameful defeat from that evening still fresh in his mind.

One day in early spring, they're out in the grounds sitting under a gigantic oak, Harry's head in Draco's lap as he pretends to read his Charms textbook, Draco not fooled for a second as he goes through Harry's Potions essay. It's lightly breezy and the bright yellow sunshine is comforting, and Draco is deliriously content. That is, until Weasley's terrier comes zooming at them in a silvery streak, landing on Harry's chest and speaking in Weasley's voice:

Where the fuck are you, mate? Er...something's come up. We're in the common room. You'd better come take a look.

Draco thinks it's the perfect opportunity to discuss things, what with an actual Patronus in sight and all, but Harry must've detected something in Weasley's tone that makes him quickly pull their things together and hurriedly lead Draco back to the castle.

It's an article in Witch Weekly and judging by the way the whole castle buzzes, *everyone* seems to have read it. Skeeter is ruthless in her slander, gleefully mocking their relationship, having dug up everything from Harry and Draco's childish rivalry to the time Harry was taken captive and brought to Malfoy Manor during the War.

Harry is nearly blind with fury and Draco, cold all over and fighting the urge to vomit all over himself, shuts himself up in his dorm room. Harry stands outside and begs him to come out, first knocking and then eventually pounding at the door with his fist. It's the first night in many, many weeks that they spend in separate beds.

Sometime around dawn the next morning, Draco gets an owl from Harry: *I fixed it. Stop worrying, you git.*

~*~

Turns out Harry wrote a letter.

Not to Witch Weekly, no. Harry wrote a letter to the Daily fucking *Prophet*.

Two days after the Witch Weekly article, Draco reads the Prophet over breakfast, his heart about to dive out his mouth and into his porridge, his hands shaking where they're clenched in the newspaper.

Draco reads about how Harry stands staunchly by what he'd said in Draco's favour at his trials, how Harry finds it ridiculous that anybody should think him *Imperiused* by Draco when it's public information that Harry can throw off an *Imperius*; how Harry thinks Draco is

far truer than people give him credit for being, and how Harry considers Draco to be his first stroke of luck since the War, his centre of security and comfort.

Draco sits there and struggles to process that he, Draco, makes Harry feel safe.

He runs. He streaks out of the castle, bolting towards the Quidditch pitch where he knows Team Gryffindor is still at practice. He nearly trips over and lands face-first in the damp grass before furiously waving Harry down from the air.

“What’s wrong?” Harry demands breathlessly, hopping off his broom before he’s even landed fully. “What the fuck happened?”

“I read the fucking article, Potter,” Draco says loudly. “This is your idea of fixing things?!”

“Oh, that’s out *today*?” Harry blinks, and then *tsks* irritably when Draco glowers at him. “It’s my word against Skeeter’s, Draco, of course it fixes things.” He pauses. “Somewhat.”

“Did you even mean any of it?” Draco’s throat is so dry that his eyes start to prickle from the need to cough. He’s overly aware of the seriousness of this moment and doesn’t know why the urge to kiss Harry is so overwhelming when he’s trying to convince himself that he’s livid with the bastard.

“Did I mean any of wh--?”

“Any of those things you said about me,” Draco cuts in. “Those things you said about *us*.”

Harry’s nostrils flare as he raises his eyebrows. “The fuck do you think, you asshole?” he asks, voice very low. “D’you think I made all of it up?”

Something in Draco snaps. “I think I am falling in—” Draco nearly slaps a hand over his own mouth as he breaks off mid-sentence. Harry’s eyes are very big behind his mud flecked glasses, his breathing suddenly ragged and loud.

And then Harry *beams*, the sort of grin that not just reaches his eyes but makes them light up brilliantly, face going wonderfully pink. “Me too,” he admits shakily, stepping closer, and Draco feels like he’s about to explode with whatever’s pumping his heart to fifty times its size.

Almost without thinking, Draco draws his wand, points it at the Forbidden Forest and loudly chants, “*Expecto Patronum!*”

A fucking *stag*.

He conjures a fucking *stag*, sleek and long-limbed with a proud head of antlers. It darts them a look before it gallops off into the thick cluster of trees, almost dazzling in its brightness, practically solid silver in its intensity.

When he looks around, Harry is staring after it with an expression so thoroughly, comically gobsmacked that Draco bursts out laughing, heaving great big shouts of mirth that makes his sides hurt.

“Should’ve—expected—” Draco wheezes, almost dizzy with joy. “Should’ve *known*—”

Then Harry is laughing too, despite the shock still evident in his gaze. Dropping his broom, he steps forward to press a firm kiss to Draco’s mouth. “I bet mine’s bigger,” he says, grinning rakishly, before drawing his wand, and nearly yelling, “*Expecto Patronum!*”

Harry emits a choked off sound as his stag erupts out his wand, leaping gracefully through the air and cantering around them twice before galloping off into the Forest.

“I did it,” he whispers tremulously, and Draco’s chest aches. “I didn’t notice if mine’s bigger?” Harry says quickly, clearly trying to yank himself together; his chest heaves as he stares after his Patronus in disbelief, and he appears on the verge of tears.

Draco snorts, lacing his fingers through Harry’s. “It definitely has a bigger head than mine does, sure.” He squeezes lightly. “I bet mine has a nicer arse, though.”

Harry turns, eyes moist, and they simply stand there, nose to nose, beaming at one another. “I showed you, Malfoy,” Harry murmurs softly, buffing a knuckle against Draco’s jaw.

Draco cups his face gently, still grinning like a loon. “You certainly did, Potter.”

~end~

End Notes

Comments and kudos are swell. ♥♥

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xoxo

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