Title: Oliver's Broom

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Glomp For:[info]steamyaffair

Pairing(s): Harry/Draco (and a side dish of Blaise/Pansy)

Summary: Draco crafts the best custom brooms in all of Britain. Leave it to Harry to come along with a special request that puts that into question.

Rating: PG-13 (sorry!)

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Warning(s): None

Epilogue compliant? EWE

Word Count: ~8000

Author's Notes: [info]steamyaffair, I had a lot of fun writing this for you—I just couldn't say no to your prompt of Broommaker & Quidditch Team Owner—and I hope you enjoy this, even though I couldn't make the rating higher (not for lack of trying, I assure you). [info]alaana_fair, thank you for all of your help. You are a rock star cheerleader, sounding board, and plotter! [info]perculious and [info]melusinahp were amazing betas—thank you both so much—and I hope I didn't screw the rest up too much by adding about 500 more words after your edits. (So, yes, if there are any mistakes, they'd be mine. Sorry!) It's been a really long time since I last wrote H/D and I'd forgotten how much fun they can be.

Ginny had warned him the shop would have no name.

Where a sign would otherwise display its founders' names, a year of establishment, and a proud slogan trumpeting its best products, there was instead a simple icon of a broom—probably mid-flight, if the whorl of air beneath it was any indication—etched onto a piece of wood that hung just above the store's hunter green awning. The window displayed three unremarkable brooms, and from the layer of dust that had settled on them it didn't look like anyone had touched the display since the store opened. Actually, it looked like the store was closed.

Ignore how it looks; you're there for the brooms, Ginny had said.

"Hello?" Harry called out, pushing the door open after it resisted his first attempt. Inside, it was no different. Only five brooms were on display, but shelves of broom parts—twigs, bristles, saddles—and cleaning materials crowded the narrow, ridiculously tiny space. Harry inched to the back of the store, where there was an unmanned counter. On it, a stack of parchment. Behind it, a closed door.

"Hello?" he called out again.

It took three minutes before the door creaked open and a woman, who looked no more than twenty, came out. "Can I help you?"

"I'd like to buy brooms."

She nodded toward the parchment. "You can fill that out with your specifications, and they will be ready in six to eight weeks. You'll be Owled when it is available for pick-up."

"I'd like to speak to the owner, actually," Harry said. "I've got very specific things I'd like to ask about."

"Sir, we'll Owl if—"

Harry looked up, wondering why she'd stopped mid-sentence. Her mouth had dropped into a small "oh", and her gaze was on his scar. Harry hadn't wanted to use his name to get special treatment, but the way today was going he was actually quite glad she'd realized who he was.

"I'm sorry," she said. "I made a mistake. We are fully booked for the next six months. We cannot take your order."

"What?" That was not at all what he'd expected to hear. "Why not?"

"We're busy," she insisted. "We cannot take on more custom orders."

"You were ready to until you saw the scar," Harry said. "Why?"

"We're busy," she repeated. "Please, sir, you are disturbing the—"

"Why is it so ridiculously loud out here, Wilma?" a somewhat muffled, entirely too grouchy voice asked from behind the door. Harry looked up, saw Wilma's eyes widen, and—before she could beat him to it—leapt towards the door to fling it open.

"Oh hell no."

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"You're kidding me. And he came back?"

"Two days later."

Pansy raised an eyebrow. "And what did he say then?"

"Oh, he went down on his knees—"

Pansy snorted.

"Not like that, you wicked witch!" Draco rolled his eyes, lobbing a blueberry at her. He picked at a different fruit on his plate—a strawberry, this time—and bit into it. "He begged me to make his brooms for him. Said he was sorry for everything, the Ministry made a mistake, and could I please bestow my talents upon his sorry person."

"What did he really say, Draco?"

"He asked me to do it for free."

Pansy's eyes widened. "The nerve!"

"He told me it was Granger's idea," Draco said. "To do it for charity."

"Why would you even—"

"That's what I told him. I didn't need a publicity stunt." Draco glanced at his shop, which stood just across the street from where he and Pansy often settled for lunch. He'd built it with no mention of the Malfoy name, just a few years' apprenticeship with Ruslan Radulov, the best broommaker in Russia, and a handful of important British clients that Radulov had handed off to him. Draco knew he didn't have to drag his reputation back into this. He glanced back at Pansy once he felt her hand on his arm.

"It might not be a completely ridiculous idea," she started to say.

"Oh, Pans, not you too."

Pansy laughed. "What's that supposed to mean?"

"Blaise already tried to talk me into this—"

"You should consider it, though."

"I don't need anyone's approval."

"Of course not." Pansy paused, the corner of her lips curling up in a smile. "But wouldn't it be nice to see the looks on their faces when they find out it's been you this entire time?"

Draco smirked.

"They were wrong about you. They always have been. If you get Potter on your side, they'll have to admit it, too."

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"Well," Harry started, after a sufficient amount of awkward silence had passed. "I'm glad you agreed to this."

"I didn't so much agree as I was bribed," Draco replied, laying out a few rolls of parchment and flattening them on his work table. "This is what I had in mind."

Though he knew practically everything there was to flying, Harry was less than enlightened at the plans Draco had drawn out. "They look good," he said anyway.

"You have no idea what I just did, do you?"

"No, sorry."

Draco rolled his eyes. He grabbed a nearby quill and, with its tip, pointed at various parts of the parchment as he explained. "You said they've different levels of flying experience. Normally I'd do a few test flights with the intended user, but as you insist on keeping this a secret—" and here Draco gave Harry a look that so far Harry had only associated with Snape when he was docking points from Gryffindor— "I had to make do with this lever, which helps adjust the speed and the amount of balance they'd need."

"That sounds good?"

"It's not good; it's brilliant," Draco told him. "Safety issues? Automatic brakes—the gradual kind, not the sort that could throw you off your broom—with any abrupt downward motion. Can be disabled in case your Seeker is foolish enough to try a Wronski feint. The bodies will be made from aged alder—sturdy, smooth, aerodynamic. Bristles from a mix of—Potter, your eyes are glazing over."

"Sorry, sorry," Harry mumbled. He knew he was doing Draco as much of a favor as Draco was doing him, but still he felt like he owed it to Draco to be impressed. Even if everything was going over his head. "But it really does look goo—brilliant."

"I don't imagine you'd see the difference until you try one out yourself, in which case you're welcome to return in two weeks' time when we've got a working prototype for you."

"That might be a good idea," Harry said. "That covers most of the team. But what about Oliver's broom?"

Draco pursed his lips. He rolled up all his plans, slotting them back into the labeled shelves that stood behind him. "Follow me," he said, leading Harry to a door different from the one he'd entered.

It was the exit, Harry discovered. Behind the small shop, there was an expansive backyard—a forest, really—that Harry was nearly certain wasn't physically located behind Draco's shop. "Wait. Is this legal?"

Draco shot him a look. "I have a business license to operate that door, if that's what you're asking," he said. "There's nowhere else in London that you can find the best material for brooms."

"Ahh. So where are we?" Harry asked, turning around to make sure the door was still there. It was, in the form of a small toolshed.

"Trade secret," was all Draco said. He walked towards a nearby tree. "Alders have thick, strong branches. Sturdy, but not inflexible."

Harry nodded.

"You can come up," Draco said, grabbing a branch as he began to scale the alder. "They're also incredibly potent, and to this day remain one of the more common materials used for wands."

"So this is what you use for your brooms?"

"Sometimes. It still depends on the flyer." Draco by now was straddling the base of one of the slimmer branches, both hands around it as he shook it carefully. "The tree is important, but you also want to use the right part of it. Nimbus Racing and Cleansweep manufacture at least ten thousand brooms a year but to scale their business, they've cut down on quality. Ninety-eight percent of their brooms are carved from the trunk and shaped to look like branches."

"Well that's... dumb?"

Draco scoffed. "It is. They make up for a lack of good, solid broommaking foundation by overdosing their product with potions. It'll be impressive, yes, and it'll be fast and great, but it'll have a lifespan of three

years at the most, and at its core it'll be wrong."

Harry blinked. "Right, then, well. What does this all mean?"

"It means I hand-pick all the materials for every broom I make, and I do very few alterations once I pick them out," Draco said. "A potion or two, some polishing, that's it. We can try to carve it out into something more suitable but you should know that flying is as much a product of the flyer as it is the broom. Brooms can't fix everything."

"I know that, but—"

"Maybe we can start by adding a bi-pod. It should help his balance, even if just a little bit," Draco said. "That's the one thing the Firebolts do really well. It won't be an easy fix otherwise."

"Are you telling me it can't be done?" Harry asked, and if he'd been anybody else he would probably have shrunk back at the look Draco gave him.

"I'm not saying I can't do it, Potter. I'm just letting you know why no one else can."

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"Wilma told me you were still in here, and I almost didn't believe her!" Pansy exclaimed, the door slamming shut behind her as she entered the room in dramatic fashion. "It's half-past-ten!"

Draco winced. He'd been surviving on coffee since he first woke up fifteen hours ago, and Pansy's voice did not help his headache. "Indoor voice, please."

"What are you still doing here?" Pansy asked, flopping on the seat across him. "Blaise and I wanted to invite you to dinner."

"I'm just trying to work on something."

"Potter's broomstick?" Pansy giggled. She picked up a crumpled piece of parchment, one of many that now littered Draco's drafting table, and smoothed it out. "This one's long and thick, isn't it?"

"Have you been drinking again?"

"We had a bottle of red we were s'pposed to share with you, but you weren't 'round."

"Where's Blaise?"

Pansy wrinkled her nose. "Being very sorry, I should hope."

"Ahh." Another tiff, Draco inferred. Blaise and Pansy had one every other week, it seemed. He glanced at his watch. In ten minutes, Blaise would be storming in looking for her, and Draco did not necessarily wish to be around when the two were in the process of making up. "You ought to head back home, Pans. I'll likely be here a little bit longer."

Pansy sighed. "Auror Potter better be extra gracious and reward you for all of your hard work on his stick."

"The innuendos were only funny the first week I started making brooms," Draco reminded her, though he felt his cheeks warm at the image she brought to mind. He hoped Pansy was too drunk to notice.

"Not to us, love." Pansy smirked. "Anyway, couldn't you do these in your sleep by now? What's the

problem—does Potter need some sort of special handling for his flying rod of—"

"It isn't Potter's, and this just needs more planning than normal," Draco said, but he doubted Pansy was able to hear him over her giggling. He opened a nearby drawer and fished out a small pouch. "Here."

"Ooh, a present?" Pansy undid the pouch and spilled its contents onto her open palm. A second later, she was gone.

Five seconds after that, Blaise, King of Timing, Apparated in. "Draco, where is she? I need to talk to my wi—"

"Portkeyed back to yours," came Draco's quick reply. He could no longer count the number of times he'd pulled that trick on Pansy, who was usually sharper than she looked unless her judgment was clouded by Bourdeaux.

"Oh. Thanks. We missed you at dinner, by the way; everything all right?"

"Just catching up with work."

"I'll leave you to it, then. Good night," Blaise said before he Disapparated.

It was now half-past-ten. Draco glanced at the fifteenth draft he'd crudely sketched and decided it looked no better than the fourteen that came before it. Somewhere in the back of his mind, a voice that sounded a lot like Pansy's wondered why he was spending so much time on a losing endeavor, especially one that he was doing for free, for Harry Potter.

"This is ridiculous," he muttered to himself, admittedly in an attempt to silence that voice as well. But he knew that Radulov himself had likely never been faced with a request of this sort before, and if he could somehow succeed—

Draco grabbed a fresh roll of parchment. He could give it one more go, at least for the night.

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"What are you doing here? I've nothing new to show you."

"Right, I know, but I thought—"

Draco sneered. "That you would take a look and see what progress I've made? I can assure you; I'm working on your brooms. You've got to wait like everyone else until I'm ready. Most of my clients understand that, and they're the ones that put down good money too!"

"Hang on, now, will you let me get a word in before you tell me to get off your lawn like a grumpy old man?" Harry asked. Here he was, nothing but his best manners since that first visit, and Draco did nothing but be snide in return. For the most part. Draco was, Harry acknowledged, still making the brooms as a charitable contribution. He supposed that counted for something.

"Then what are you doing here?"

"I told Hermione what you told me the other day, and she said you might find this useful."

"That's a lady's purse."

"It's hers," Harry explained. "She put an Extension Charm on it so it can—it's got books."

Draco made no move to take the proffered purse—all right, so Harry himself had worried about carrying it with him in the first place, but it did hold very important things.

"Let me show you," Harry said, placing the purse on Draco's table and reaching inside. He pulled out a book, then another one, and so on until a sizeable pile of them lay on the desk. "She said these might help."

"Why does that not surprise me?" Draco asked. He picked up a random book. "First Flight: The Wright Brothers?"

"She just said—"

Draco rattled off the other titles. "An Explanation of the Art of Flying, Weather Flying, Tips to Fly By—how does she think this will help with crafting the right broom for a man with a magical impairment?"

Harry shrugged, as much at a loss for an answer as Draco was. "She said every little bit could help?" he offered. "I mean, she also got you books on balance and ears, I'm not sure why, and something about the brain I guess, and it's not all Muggle stuff, I swear!"

Draco glanced over at the other books that Harry had brought him. "The First Broom?" He narrowed his eyes. "How does she think I got into broommaking: by closing my eyes and plucking a tree and making it magically fly? I've read all there is to read about brooms, believe me."

"She's only trying to help," Harry said, feeling quite annoyed once more. "You don't have to be a prick about it."

"She's being a nosy bint, and yes I do have a right to be offended when some know-it-all thinks she knows what I'm supposed to do!"

"Doesn't seem like you do, does it?"

"You can't rush genius!" Draco growled, shoving Harry out of the shop. "Get out, and next time, don't come back until I tell you to!"

The door had slammed shut before Harry could even protest.

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Custom brooms were never meant to be surprise gifts. It was a rule that had, until recently, remained unbroken in Draco's shop. Many wealthy wizards had tried, in vain, to coax Draco to break this rule so they could give their husbands or children or mistresses something they would never have expected for their birthday or Christmas, but he had always been adamant about it.

Creating a broom specifically for a single wizard was a highly personal experience, especially when you wanted it done right. Like wands, Draco strived to make sure the broom fit its owner.

He'd broken that rule with Harry, and if he were to be honest with himself, it was likely due to the fact that he hadn't truly considered it as anything more than an easy project he could do. It hadn't been much more than a step towards regaining the wizarding world's favor.

That was a mistake, Draco now realized, faced with four different prototypes and without any idea which of them would even work. Harry had told him of Oliver Wood's impediment—a hex he suffered in that final battle at Hogwarts—that day he asked Draco to create the brooms for charity, but all Draco had heard then was that it affected Wood's magic in spurts and severely impaired his balance otherwise. Draco didn't even know what the hex had been, or even what it did to the body outside of affecting its ability to commandeer a broom in flight.

Draco sat back, stretching his arms to relieve the tension that had been building and knotting in his muscles all day. He'd worked on nothing but theories, on ideas that had been ingrained in him since he

began his apprenticeship, but it was beginning to dawn on him that if he were to create something revolutionary, he would have to step outside the broommaker's mold.

"Bloody Potter," he muttered. It had been years and still Potter continued to cause him problems. He stretched his legs, nearly jumping when his foot brushed against something lumpy and textured. "What the hell?"

It was Hermione's purse. In his haste, Harry hadn't taken it with him, and when Draco discovered the books still lying on his table he had merely shoved them all back inside and stashed the purse. He'd forgotten all about them, in fact, and out of the need to distract himself from work, he picked it up and took out a random book.

"Inner Ear Balance and Dizziness Disorders," he read, flipping it open and scanning through it. "Looks like a thriller."

Five hours, two more books, and fifty-two inches' worth of notes later, Draco tore himself a scrap of parchment, dipped his quill into a fresh pot of ink, and wrote Harry Potter a short Owl.

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Harry had been expecting an apology. Granted, what he'd really wanted was some groveling, and perhaps an admission that Hermione was really not a bint, even though she did act like a know-it-all a lot of the time, but he'd figured that when it came to Draco Malfoy, he'd have better luck seeing the Cannons win the Quidditch Cup.

Instead, Draco talked to him without mentioning that he'd kicked Harry out at their last encounter, acted as though Hermione's books—now alphabetically arranged in the shelf closest to where Draco sat—had been there all along, and asked if Harry could bring Oliver Wood with him next time he visited.

"Why?" Harry asked. "I told you from the start that this is supposed be a surprise. Why do we need to

bring him into this?"

"I don't know what sort of additional glory you think you might get from being so secretive, but there is simply no conceivable way I can make a broom without having him test it."

"Hang on—I'm not after glory, Malfoy, and anyway, why the bloody hell not?"

"For one thing, this has never been done before. This might be a concept beyond the grasp of your simple mind, but that means I don't have a manual. I know enough to start, but the rest will come from what testing prototypes with Wood will provide." Draco sat back. "Alternatively, I suppose we could just go with any random broom that I think may work and let him give it a go. That does better suit what you Gryffindors like to do, doesn't it?"

"Shut up," Harry muttered, glaring at Draco. He disliked him immensely at the moment though he really couldn't come up with anything else to say in return.

"I don't understand why this is even such a big deal," Draco said. "Why does he have to be surprised?"

Harry shrugged. He had never really wanted to get into it when the acclaimed broommaker had only been a stranger that Ginny told him to talk to, but now that it was Draco Malfoy?

"Potter. Something you're not telling me?"

"Look, I just don't want him to get his hopes up," he admitted after a long pause. "He's lost Quidditch once already, and that took him a while to recover from—it was the only thing he had and I just don't want him to lose it a second time, if it turns out you can't help him fly after all."

Draco pursed his lips. "Right, first of all," he snapped. "I can do it. Secondly, so what if you disappoint him again? It's that or he never even gets to try."

"He got hexed because of me!" Harry blurted out. "I'm why he can't fly!"

Draco frowned. "You said he got hexed during the battle."

"Yes. And if it wasn't for me, he'd—" Harry stopped, interrupted by a distinct snorting sound that Draco suddenly made. "This isn't funny!"

"You're ridiculous, did anybody ever tell you that?" he asked before calmly reaching over and smacking the side of Harry's head with a roll of parchment.

"Ow!"

"Get over yourself, Potter," Draco said. "The war was much bigger than your head clearly is, although not by much, it seems. Wood did what he did because he believed in it, and he was hurt because of it. Nothing more, nothing less."

"I dragged everybody into it—"

"Is that why you've been volunteering at St. Mungo's?" Draco asked. "Is that why you're trying to set up this team for those patients? Because you feel responsible?"

"They're war veterans, not patients, and I am responsible—at least partially."

"You poor thing, carrying the weight of the world on your shoulders." Draco lifted his roll of parchment and waved it towards Harry.

"Stop that!"

"You stop that," Draco said. "Honestly, that's about the most pathetic excuse for charity I've ever heard."

"Just because you can't understand—"

"Oh trust me, I understand plenty," Draco snapped. "You want to talk about how many lives you directly ruined? How about how many lives of good wizards whose deaths you actually caused? I'll tell you something: you won't see me losing any sleep over it, not anymore, because you know what, Potter? We were fucking seventeen, that's why. The world didn't revolve around us then, and it certainly doesn't now."

Harry had no answer to that. He eyed Draco curiously, noting how now Draco refused to meet his gaze or even look anywhere in his general direction. "I just—" he started to say, breaking the silence before it became unbearably awkward, "I just wanted to help him."

"If you really want to help, then don't coddle him. Let him have the best possible chance at playing again." Draco glanced up at him. "I bet he's tougher than you've given him credit for."

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The Oliver Wood that came to his shop was not the Oliver Wood that Draco remembered from Hogwarts. He had an image in his head of a strapping young man, as seriously dedicated to the sport as anyone had any right to be and twice as determined to win. Even among Slytherins no one had been surprised when Puddlemere United picked Wood up right after he left Hogwarts. Draco never followed the sport in his final years at Hogwarts, but where Wood's name came up it was usually uttered in the same breath as the words "promising", "potential", and "future".

The Oliver Wood that came to his shop, however, shuffled in—hunched over, both hands deep in the pockets of his robes—and shrank back when he realized what kind of shop he had walked into. For a

moment Draco almost—almost—wondered if Harry had been right about not telling him after all.

"That went well," he told Harry after the shell of what was once Oliver Wood had gone. They had managed to convince him to test a few prototypes, at least. That was good enough for now.

"You had better get him his broom."

"I will. I know what I'm doing, and I certainly know more now than I did when you were trying to help," Draco said, making a face as he put on his best Harry Potter impression. "'Uhh, here are some books. I'unno, Hermione says they might help. Well, just make it fly. But why can't you make it fly? Uhh, is it flying yet? You don't understand—everyone's in pain because I'm ali—' Ow!"

"I do not sound like that!" Harry said, brandishing a roll of parchment and threatening to hit Draco with it another time, but his voice sounded strangled and the corner of his lip twitched upward.

Draco laughed. "Are you kidding me? Yes, you do, and you don't even know it."

"I don't look like that either," Harry said, wrinkling his nose.

"Sometimes you do," Draco said. He grabbed Harry's glasses off his face and put them on, intending to pull the same face he did before, though he quickly took them off again. "Merlin! You're blinder than a bat!"

"I'm aware, now give them back!" Harry reached out, rather blindly, since he instead smacked Draco's nose.

"Careful!" Draco told him, batting the flailing hands away and placing Harry's glasses carefully on, tucking the ends behind his ears. "There."

Harry blinked a few times, his eyes a really vivid green once they focused on Draco's. "Um," he said after what seemed like an embarrassingly long period of time before Draco realized he was still holding onto Harry's glasses.

Draco jerked his hands away. "You could have broken my nose, you know," he sniffed.

"I can't imagine how the world would ever recover after that," Harry said with a roll of his eyes. "So tell me the plan for Oliver."

Draco, without meaning to, beamed. "This is just an idea, but he mentioned something interesting about how the hex had been affecting him," he said, pulling up some parchment as he started sketching out a potential new solution, Harry leaning over to watch as he explained in detail.

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"What are you still doing here?" Draco asked, turning to Harry as though he'd just realized he was still there. It had been three days since their last meeting, and Oliver had just left after about two hours of tests, as Draco had called it. To Harry, however, it didn't seem as though Draco was any closer to finding an answer at all.

"I wanted to know what you were up to," Harry admitted. "I'm not actually sure anything happened today."

"You're not actually sure anything happened—" Draco gasped and took a step back, his palm splayed across his chest. "Potter, I am offended!"

It was Harry's turn to roll his eyes. "I get it, yeah? Simpleton, don't know your genius, and so on," he said.

"But you've figured it out? I just want to be sure."

"I've got most of the components solved," Draco told him. "There's just one thing that's nagging that I think I'm missing, though of course it'll come to me eventually, I'm sure."

"In a dream from the heavens, with a chorus of angels descending upon you for the big reveal?"

"Cheeky, Potter. I think I preferred it when you couldn't string two sentences together," Draco said, an eyebrow raised. "If that's all you wanted to know, though, I do have some work to do."

"Sorry, should I come back in three days like you told Oliver?"

"Actually, could you stay a bit? I might need an extra hand."

"Erm, fine, but I don't know the first thing about cutting sticks so if you wanted help carving up a broom—"

"Rest assured, Potter, that the last thing I'd want is for your grubby hands all over my masterpieces," Draco said, fiddling around his cupboards and taking out a variety of potions ingredients and materials. "This one's more to your skill level, don't worry."

"I don't do potions either," Harry started to say, but Draco merely shushed him as he got himself all set up. In practically no time, the work table that was normally filled with broom sketches and wood shavings had been morphed into a potions lab. A cauldron was bubbling happily in a fireplace that Harry hadn't even noticed existed before, and Draco was rather furiously mixing up multi-colored liquids and chopping up other fine ingredients that Harry didn't recognize. "What are you making?"

"Your basic broom protection potion, with a few minor adjustments," Draco said. "I use the same base formula for most brooms, but since he's a special case I have to add just a smidge more wormwood and cut back on the monkshood sap. Here—hold this for me, will you? Make sure it's tipped at a 45-degree

angle and hold it steady until I say so."

Harry took the light purple infusion and balanced it to what he thought was the right angle, adjusting as Draco instructed. "You work so fast," he marveled. He couldn't help admiring the intensity to how Draco worked; there was just something impressive about how carefully he handled each of the vials with long, elegant hands, or how his brow furrowed and the way a lock of blond hair fell over his eyes when he was bent over his desk just so—Harry shook his head, embarrassed at the unbidden thoughts that came after. "Even Hermione's usually got to follow a book to make a potion."

"Doesn't surprise me. She'd probably marry a book if she could—only she'd likely be polygamous." Draco wrinkled his nose. "That's the last thing I want to think about; thanks for putting that thought in my head, Potter. Anyway, you don't get the luxury of time with some potions. If you wait too long reading the instructions, you could miss the best time to add the next ingredient. You've shifted the vial three degrees to the right. Pay attention."

"Sorry," Harry said, readjusting his hold. "So how do you know what you've done will work?"

"Because I do," was all Draco said. "Potions isn't about a step-by-step instruction guide. It's about knowing the ingredients, what they're capable of doing, and how to best coax those properties out of them."

"Yeah, but there's got to be a million possible things you can put in a cauldron."

"Only a few hundred for anything related to flight," Draco said. "That's why wizards choose to specialize. You can tip that to 85 degrees now, thanks."

Harry guessed at the angle he needed. "Like this?"

"No, no, Wood's never going to fly if you keep it at that," Draco said, tipping the vial to his desired position. The corner of his mouth quirked the smallest bit. "There."

"Wait a minute. You're making this up!" Harry exclaimed. "Aren't you!"

Draco snorted, grabbing the vial from Harry's hands and tipping it into his brew. "Of course not," he said, all too glibly. "This is very important bottle-tipping work you just did, Potter."

"I was terrified I'd cramp up and everything," Harry muttered, crossing his arms and giving Draco his best unimpressed look. "Anything else you want to pretend I need to do?"

"Lighten up; it was funny," Draco said. "Nothing specific right now, really. I just need to wrap up this potion and it'll have to simmer for a few hours, but I plan to use that time for more brainstorming."

"What's the missing part, exactly?" Harry couldn't help asking. He'd always thought wizards just sort of picked up a random branch and, by virtue of their innate magical ability, made it fly, but apparently there were tree selections and potions-making involved as well.

"We need something that'll stabilize the broom when Wood's magic won't," Draco said. "A constant, almost. There are a few known elements that we could probably use, but they're either extremely rare or extremely expensive."

"I can—if need be, I can get those things," Harry offered. "Where can we find them?"

"Don't be rash; I didn't say we'd know for sure if they would work," Draco said. "There's no sense spending thousands of Galleons just to test out a few theories."

"I guess I thought you could just charm a stick to fly whenever you wanted it to, and that would be that," Harry sighed. "Didn't realize just how much stuff went into it."

"Oh you can use any old broom if you wanted, but magic's a lot more complicated and intricate than

that, especially if you want to maximize its effects."

"Sort of like wands," Harry mused. "You gotta have it choose you, Ollivander used to say. Had to use Hermione's wand for a while, actually. Don't think I'd ever wish that on anyone else—erm. What's wrong?"

Draco's eyes had widened, and his face had sort of contorted into this strange arrangement that made him look—for lack of a better word—comical. "Wands," he whispered. "The right wand and the core and that's it! Merlin's tits, Harry—"

Whatever he was about to say Harry never got to find out, because at that moment Draco grabbed him by the shoulders and planted a big wet snog on his lips.

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In theory, creating a broom that was half an extension of one's own wand in order to make it more attuned to one's magical ability sounded simple enough. The magical attributes of the broom would already have been proven to work well with the user. It was so unbelievably basic that Draco was surprised he—well, Harry, really—had been the first to put two and two together.

The problem, though, came not in making the connection as it did to getting the necessary materials. The yew of Oliver Wood's wand was easy enough to procure, but the dragon heartstring that made up its core was another matter entirely.

"Ollivander, of course, knew which dragon breed it was, and where in the highlands it was nesting when they found it, but that's as far we could get," Draco said. "I told Harry as much even before he went and cornered Ollivander, but he just wouldn't listen."

Pansy placed her hand on his arm and squeezed it. "Is that it, then?" she asked. "No broom for Oliver?"

Draco shrugged. "There are other things I could try, but none as close as we got with that idea," he said, frowning as he pushed his sketching quills around. He'd been trying to come up with something else, something possible, but his mind was drawing a blank.

"I'm sorry," Pansy said. "How did Harry take that news? He's seemed pretty involved."

Draco rolled his eyes. "Wouldn't go the bloody hell away and leave me to work," he said. Since the breakthrough—possibly since the kiss, really, though that had really been just a spur of the moment kind of thing that he'd not expected to keep thinking about, certainly not when there were more important and pressing things to concern himself with other than Harry's lips for Salazar's sake—since the breakthrough, Harry had showed up unannounced more frequently, eager to help Draco out no matter if he was concocting more potions or attempting to find a similarly aged yew tree from which to make Oliver's new broom. Once, he even tested a frail-looking branch and nearly broke his leg when it snapped under his weight, and if not for Draco's quick wand work, he very well could have.

It was an admirable effort—sweet, even, if Draco were forced to admit it; Harry had been so earnest and determined and actually quite adora—well. It had been an admirable effort. After the visit to Ollivander's, however, and the crushing news that came with it— "I haven't seen him since."

"Is that why you've gone mopey on me?" Pansy asked, a little too pointedly.

"I beg your pardon?"

Pansy shrugged. "You miss him," she said. "It's not a crime to admit it."

"Excuse me?" Draco sputtered. "I do not!"

Pansy smirked. "Suit yourself," was all she said.

"I don't miss him," Draco repeated, and certainly—certainly—while he'd admittedly grown accustomed to Harry's presence in the shop, with his mop of hair and that stupid habit of always waiting until the very last moment before he pushed his glasses back up the bridge of his nose because he was so intently looking over Draco's shoulder watching him work, well. He'd just gotten used to having that other person around, just like he'd gotten used to Wilma after she'd been assisting him a few months. "It's just quieter around without his moronic comments and uneducated questions."

Pansy, bless her soul, only nodded. "I think it's time for you to take a little break anyway," she declared. "You've spent far too much of your time toiling in this shop. Blaise and I are taking a weekend trip to Hubby Number Seven's Grecian villa—his mother's told us it's fine—and you're more than welcome to join us."

"Appreciate the offer, Pans, but a weekend getaway with you and Blaise is hardly my idea of—" A loud clattering from the shop floor cut him off. Draco frowned, on his feet in seconds; Pansy wasn't far behind when he poked his head in. "Wilma, what's going on?"

"Draco." For as often as she had come up in conversation, this was actually the first time that Draco had come face to face with Hermione Granger. She looked as bedraggled and haggard as ever, of course, hair strewn wild in all directions and an almost manic look on her face. "Harry's gone."

Draco frowned. "He hasn't been here for days. How should I know where he went?"

"No, I mean—" Hermione shook her head. "He was talking about wands and cores and I think—no, I know he definitely did—"

"Did what?"

"He's gone to find a dragon."

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It wasn't as though he hadn't done it before. Yeah, it may have been a little less difficult, and it had been, for the most part, in a confined area, but at the same time he'd also been all of fourteen and he'd managed to escape mostly unscathed, so the way Harry saw it, it wasn't quite the task of incredible impossibility that Draco had painted it to be.

Okay, so he wasn't sure where the heartstring was in relation to the dragon's head, and he wasn't planning on slaying a dragon either. But dragon heartstring was a popular wand core, so clearly there had to be a simpler way to acquire it.

Ollivander had been helpful once he became convinced Harry wasn't about to set up a rival wand shop—why on earth would he?—and really, the trek since had been a breeze.

Sort of.

So maybe Swedish Short-Snouts weren't that easy to find; they usually hid in the mountains and didn't venture out that often, apparently, but Harry searched high and low and found a few nesting grounds eventually.

Finding a dying one was no picnic in the park, either. But that's how most dragon parts were found—or at least, that's what Ollivander told him—and it wasn't as though he'd need to stray very far.

And fine. Being discovered by an angry family of Short-Snouts as he was finishing up—Merlin, he hoped he got heartstring, and not something else—wasn't at all part of any of his plans.

But he was still alive, wasn't he? Sure, perhaps a little black and blue in places and maybe his singed hair smelled strange, but he got Draco his heartstring. Draco had looked so crushed when they realized what it was going to take, had moped around like a child and nothing Harry tried—helping out with potions, finding the right tree, even volunteering to research alternatives—could get him quite in the same frame

of mind as he'd been when he was so sure he could make Oliver a broom.

Well, Harry had gotten the heartstring, and maybe then this meant Draco would get Oliver his broom after all. That was the important bit, in the end. That was why he had to do it, so Oliver could fly again.

And maybe, just maybe, a small part of him also wanted—

He almost stumbled off his broom when he arrived at the shop, the first place he headed towards as soon as he got off the international Floo. He'd paid no attention to the looks he got at the Floo station, but upon seeing the way Wilma froze behind the counter, eyes wide and jaw open, he suddenly felt a little self-conscious.

"That bad?" he asked, brushing the soot off his shirt and desperately trying to smooth his hair. He didn't want to scare anyone. Not at all. Especially not anyone who was always so better-dressed, no matter the occasion. "Better?"

"There's still a smudge on your cheek," Wilma said, handing him a damp piece of cloth.

"Thanks," Harry said. In the back of his mind he wondered why he was even bothering; it was the heartstring that was important, not how presentable he looked when Draco saw him.

"You're turning red," Wilma said. "Are you all right? Is it something from the dragon? Did you really go and slay one?"

"Probably an allergy," Harry mumbled, feeling his cheeks burn even more now that Wilma pointed it out. "Didn't slay one, that's not—hang on. You know?"

"Hermione Granger came by. They've been trying to figure out what to do since the other day," Wilma told him. "It's a good thing you returned so soon; it sounds like they would have gone after you."

"What. Are they mad? They'd have gotten ki—oh," Harry said, smiling sheepishly. "Is he in there?"

"They both are." Wilma reached out and ruffled his hair. "I think he prefers it that way," she whispered, winking before she cocked her head towards the door.

"That wasn't what I—" Harry started to protest, but as soon as he stepped into Draco's work room he was assailed by a flurry of frizzy brown and pale blond.

"Harry!"

"You idiot!"

"What were you thinking?"

"But I'm fine," Harry said, lifting the pouch that he'd been clinging to for the entire journey back. "And I got the heartstring."

Hermione's eyes widened. "Harry, you didn't."

"It's fine, I swear, it was a newly dead dragon—I didn't kill it!" Harry insisted.

"But you look—"

"His family came after me," Harry admitted. "But I'm fine! Still alive, yeah? Stop—"

"Oh, Harry," Hermione sighed, using that tone that Harry was positive she'd picked up from Molly.

"You slayed a dragon," Draco murmured, glancing at Harry with a look that made Harry swallow the protest he wanted to make.

"Yeah," he said instead, and he'd be damned if he didn't inadvertently try to puff his chest out at all. "Maybe a little bit. I mean, you needed the heartstring."

"I did," Draco said, taking a small step towards him.

Harry's heart, still pumping wild from the adrenaline rush of his earlier adventure, went into overdrive. He swallowed hard, licking his lips with anticipation. "For you," he added, almost hopefully. Merlin, he hoped Hermione's eyes hadn't rolled out of their sockets yet. Merlin, Hermione was still in the room. What if they—

But Draco's hand had already found his, and he was leaning close and the corner of his lips quirked up, and that made Harry smile. He closed the distance between their lips, tentative at first, but growing bolder once Draco parted his lips.

THWACK.

"Ow!" There was a stinging pain on the side of his head and Harry pulled away, stunned. On one hand Draco was holding the pouch containing the heartstring—Harry must have let go sometime during the kiss—and on the other, a thick roll of parchment.

"You're still an idiot," Draco told him.

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The St Mungo's Short-Snouts' inaugural game was to take place in an unnamed forest deep in the Cotswolds next Sunday. They were scheduled to take on the Kent Facilities Kestrels, and despite the fact that the game featured just two hospitals' amateur teams, it seemed many wizards were interested in attending, as coordinators from both St Mungo's and Kent reported a large volume of inquiries. It didn't hurt that money from the ticket sales would be going to the hospitals, or that rumors had also been running rampant that Harry Potter would be in attendance and that Oliver Wood, who would have been England's Keeper had he stayed healthy, would be taking to the skies for the first time since his career had gotten derailed.

Draco wasn't entirely sure how the match had gone past a simple friendly between two rag-tag teams and turned a corner into World Cup Lite territory, but all he knew was that one day he agreed to host it in his backyard, so to speak, and now he was watching a team of seven wizards as they built stands and erected goal posts.

"Hey," Harry said, smiling as he walked over. "Thanks again for letting us do this. The Ministry has such strict rules about where we can play, and then this kind of just exploded—"

"It's good publicity, isn't it?" Draco asked, putting on a bright smile for Harry's benefit. Though he was aware that was why he'd agreed to the arrangement in the first place, he was beginning to second guess just how good any sort of publicity would be, if it was attached to his name in the end.

Harry frowned. "Listen—"

"Harry?"

Draco turned around and found Oliver Wood with a few other men behind him. The Short-Snouts were scheduled to practice that afternoon, he remembered, something about testing the weather conditions and making sure the pitch was good enough.

"Oi!" Harry greeted. "Everyone ready?"

The men nodded, and Draco cocked his head when they spread out, their hands closely wrapped around the top end of their brooms.

"What's this?" he asked Harry.

"We had one more favor to ask," Harry said, as each man loosened their hold on their broom to reveal a small, black logo of a broom mid-flight—just like the one on his shop window—and MALFOY written clear as day beneath it where the whorl of air used to be.

"You're as much part of this as we are, and we'd like to show it," Oliver explained. "I was just going to carve it in, but Harry was worried it would mess with the aerodynamics or something."

Draco laughed. He hadn't realized just how much Harry had picked up on from his ramblings. "It shouldn't affect it gravely," he said, taking Oliver's broom and examining it. "Not if I carve it on this side instead of the other."

"So you'll do it?" Harry asked.

"I suppose," Draco said. "But you'll have to hold it up for me."

"At forty-five degrees or eighty-five?"

Draco smirked. "No questions, Potter. You'll do what you're told in Malfoy Brooms."