

Untarnished Silver

by rainfromheaven

Created from happiness, beacon of light, enemy of darkness and bearer of tidings, Patronuses tell the story of the wizards who cast them—of friendship, love, despair, loyalty and remembrance, even after death. *Contains HPDH spoilers.* [Severus/Lily]

Untarnished Silver

Chapter 1 of 1

Created from happiness, beacon of light, enemy of darkness and bearer of tidings, Patronuses tell the story of the wizards who cast them—of friendship, love, despair, loyalty and remembrance, even after death. *Contains HPDH spoilers.* [Severus/Lily]

Disclaimer: The author is not directly affiliated with J.K. Rowling or any of the publishers of the Harry Potter series. No money is being made and no copyright infringement is intended.

Author's Notes: The first part was taken from HPDH, just to set the tone of this one-shot exploration. ;)

Story Summary: Created from happiness, beacon of light, enemy of darkness and bearer of tidings, Patronuses tell the story of the wizards who cast them...of friendship, love, despair, loyalty and remembrance, even after death. *Contains HPDH spoilers.* [Severus/Lily]

Untarnished Silver

"Severus?"

A little smile twisted Snape's mouth when she said his name.

"Yeah?"

"Tell me about the Dementors again."

"What d'you want to know about them for?"

"If I use magic outside school..."

"They wouldn't give you to the Dementors for that! Dementors are for people who do really bad stuff. They guard the wizard prison, Azkaban. You're not going to end up in Azkaban, you're too..." Flushed, he cut himself off and resorted to shredding leaves on the ground.

"But if you come face to face with them outside Azkaban, can you fight them?" Lily asked, still looking worried.

"Well, there is a charm called the Patronus," Severus said seriously, still picking on the leaves. "I read about that in one of my mum's books."

Her eyes twinkled like green stars. "Wow," she said, obviously impressed. "You really know a lot. Can we study that? Learn it on our own?"

"It's very advanced magic, Lily. I doubt we'll be able to do it before we attend Hogwarts." He saw her face fall, and oh, how he wanted to make her smile again. "But we'll try to work it out as soon as we get there."

That did it; her features lit up once more. "Really?"

"Really."

"If you learn it before I do, will you teach me?"

Severus nodded. "Definitely."

Lily smiled happily. "Promise?"

"I promise."

"Lily, I've done it!" Severus whispered as he slid into the seat next to her in Potions class.

Distracted from the lecture on Shrinking Solution, Lily inclined her head slightly towards him and answered, "Done what?"

"The Patronus."

Her lips parted open in surprise. "The Patronus? The one against the Dementors?"

Severus nodded emphatically, his black eyes glittering with excitement. "A corporeal one."

"What shape does it take?" Lily asked curiously, shifting her attention completely from Professor Slughorn to him.

"A spider," Severus replied, wrinkling his nose slightly. He wasn't exactly pleased with that, as one's Patronus was supposed to tell something about its caster. If he was originally a spider, what did that mean? Did he weave webs of deceit? Was he actually capable of doing so?

Lily didn't seem to see anything wrong with it, however; she was beaming at him, her smile making her already beautiful face more ethereal. "That's terrific! Can you teach me... how to do it?" Her voice faltered when she saw him frown thoughtfully. "I mean, if it isn't any trouble, Severus."

His sallow face cleared at the mention of his name. "Of course it isn't any trouble, Lily. I promised you I'd teach you, didn't I? I was just thinking how and when we could do it."

"Well, we share the same breaks... Or maybe in the afternoons, we could find an empty classroom or try it out on the grounds..."

Severus smiled. "Do you want to start this afternoon?"

Lily nodded. "You bet."

* * * * *

The wind whipped through the trees and ruffled Lily's hair as she and Severus stood by a secluded spot near the lake later that afternoon. Lily was nervous about learning a very complex spell on her own and without any teacher's supervision, but then again, Severus had proven himself to be more than capable than most of their professors. She watched him as he paced the ground, his hands in his robes, his black hair covering his face. What was she supposed to do first?

"Severus..."

"Lily..."

They had spoken at the same time; realising it, they both broke off and smiled embarrassedly at each other.

"You first," Lily prompted.

Severus shook his head. "No, you go first. What were you supposed to say?"

"I wanted to ask what I was supposed to do first."

He smiled a crooked smile as he answered, "Well, I was just about to say what." He stopped walking and looked seriously at her. "You know that Dementors feed on pain and grief; to fight them, therefore, one must use happiness and light."

"Happiness and light," Lily murmured.

"Before you cast the charm, you must focus all your thoughts, your energy, into the happiest memory you can think of and infuse every fibre of your being with its feeling." She was staring at him with those wondrous green eyes, and he couldn't help but wonder what she was thinking now.

"A happy memory," Lily repeated as her mind whirled.

"Close your eyes; perhaps it will help," Severus suggested softly. She closed her eyes and slightly bent her head. She stayed that way for a few moments, her fiery red hair framing her beautiful face. After a while, her eyes snapped open, suddenly filled with a blissful glow that looked as though it came from within. He wanted to ask her what her happiest memory was all about, but decided against it for fear of being disappointed.

"I thought of my family," she shared eagerly, "of all the times we've spent, of all the love I felt whenever I was with them. I think it's the best I've got."

For a second, Severus suddenly felt envious of the kind of life she had at home. But it was difficult to hate Lily Evans when she looked so carefree, so innocent. It was difficult to hate Lily Evans, period. He managed to put his jealousy aside as he said approvingly, "Very good. Concentrate very strongly on it before saying the incantation." He waited for her to obey his instructions, but she just kept still, as though expecting something else.

"Uh, Severus...What's the incantation?"

He looked like he had just been Stunned; after a split second, he burst into laughter...heartfelt, real and uplifting. It felt good to do so, to bask in the buoyancy of being with his best friend. He laughed some more, and she joined him, until they both had none to spare.

"I'm sorry," he said, quite breathless afterwards. "It's *Expecto Patronum*."

"*Expecto Patronum*," Lily repeated, traces of laughter still on her lips. "*Expecto Patronum*..." A silver whoosh streaked out of her wand. Her eyes lit up more brightly, if that

was even possible. "Did you see that?"

"I did. Keep working on that memory, and you'll be able to perform it in no time."

After several tries, however, all Lily had managed to produce was a faint, silvery shadow that almost immediately disappeared after shooting out of her wand. Discouraged, she sat down on the grass and stared morosely at the lake. Severus sat next to her and said, "Don't be disheartened. It took awhile before I got the hang of it too. It gets easier with practice."

Lily bit her lower lip, not looking at him. "It's the first time I have had trouble with a spell." Then she blushed, as though realising how arrogant she sounded. "I mean..."

"I know. It's fine." He paused for a moment as he gazed into the lake as well, mesmerised by the ripple of the clear, blue water and the reflection the setting sun made on its surface. It was such a beautiful world, so why were they bent on practicing defensive magic? "Lily, might I ask why you want to learn the charm?"

She blinked, not expecting the question. "Why, Severus? Isn't the endless thirst for the pursuit of knowledge common for both of us? Isn't it what binds us?" She shrugged, an impish smile on her face now. "Besides, who knows when we might need it? I'd like to think I possess a capable arsenal when... Well, just in case."

Lily tilted her head to one side and considered him. "You know, I think that maybe the memory I'm using isn't strong enough. What did you use to succeed anyway?"

Severus swallowed hard, his lips suddenly dry. An image of a black-haired boy with pale features sitting beside a young redhead filled his mind, and he was so thankful Lily wasn't a Legilimens.

"What did you use?" she asked persistently.

"Friends."

Lily arched her eyebrows. "Not those Slytherin friends..."

"No."

"Well, who then?"

"You." The word was out of his mouth before he realised it.

Lily dropped her wand in surprise. "Me?" she squeaked.

Severus nodded slowly. "Yes," he confirmed. And then, fearing that he might be coming on too strong, he added, "We're best friends, aren't we?"

Her features relaxed into a beatific smile. "Of course, Severus. Best friends...for life." She stood up and brushed dirt off her clothes. "Maybe I could try again?"

"What? Aren't you tired yet? I think you need to rest," Severus countered, getting to his feet too. "We can try again tomorrow."

Lily shook her head forcefully. "No, just one shot. One last." Her mind was miraculously clear as it flashed through memories: the first time she had learned she was a witch, the day she got her letter, her first day at Hogwarts... And then she realised with a jolt that Severus was with her during all those important times, and he was still with her now... The idea filled her with a feeling so raw, and she was shocked to recognise it as happiness.

She pointed her wand into the distance and firmly exclaimed, *'Expecto Patronum!'*

A fully-defined shape issued from her wand; her face dissolved into wonder as she watched the silvery, glowing leopard prance around gracefully in the grass before coming back to her, staring at her with its luminous eyes. Lily reached out to pat its head, and just as she did, it vanished.

Overwhelmed, she turned to Severus, who looked shocked as well. "I did it! Severus, I did it!" She threw her arms around him in an exuberant hug.

He stood still in shock, hardly able to believe what was happening. He patted her back awkwardly and said, "Well done, Lily. I knew you could do it. Did you know, a leopard really suits you."

"It does?"

Yes. Beautiful, strong and yet feminine, and oh so very charming. He could only nod.

Lily disentangled herself from him, her face alight with pride and gratitude. "Thank you, Severus," she said sincerely.

"You did it by yourself...and exceptionally fast, I must say so."

"You helped me do it."

"How?" Severus asked, confused. "I just told you the theory and the incantation..."

Lily took his hand and pressed it between hers. "You gave me the memories."

* * * * *

"James! No, not James!" Lily screamed, already half-sobbing. She and her husband were already surrounded by at least twenty hooded figures, without a face and a soul, feeding on the despair growing inside her. Dementors. The first fearful creatures she had ever learned about. James was on the ground, propped on his elbows as he attempted to stand and fight, but they were getting to him too. He was too weak; he had just summoned his Patronus, an extraordinarily large stag that galloped and attack the Dementors, but there were too many of them. They were too powerful for one Patronus alone.

She had her wand pointed at them, but her arm was shaking. For the life of her, she couldn't think of a single happy memory to help her summon her own Patronus. *The day James told me he loved me. Our wedding. This baby, born out of love...*

'Expecto Patronum!' she shouted with all her might, but it was too late. The Dementors were too close; her brain and her eyes were shutting down.

And then suddenly, out of nowhere, she heard a roar.

"EXPECTO PATRONUM!"

She struggled to open her eyes and saw a giant, silvery spider scuttle along the grounds. It lifted each of its pincers and struck the Dementors down one by one, so that the others fled in defeat and outrage.

A spider.

Severus.

It was her last coherent thought before everything became black.

* * * * *

Severus stared blankly into space inside the confines of his home at Spinner's End, unmindful of the dirt and dust that permeated every surface of the room. He had saved Lily Evans...*no*, *Potter*, he corrected harshly inside his head...but only barely. There was no doubt in his mind now that the child she was carrying was the one the Dark Lord was after.

Oh, how cold she had felt in his arms as he carried her to safety. Cold and beautiful *I would have been good to you*, he had whispered into her ear, aware she wouldn't hear him anyway. He closed his eyes at the memory and massaged his forehead wearily. Why couldn't she produce her Patronus, the one thing he had prided himself on helping her achieve? *Maybe it was due to the situation*, he thought tiredly. Twenty or so Dementors were enough to drive anyone mad.

Through the jagged windows by the door, he thought he saw something silvery pass outside. Unless he had been hallucinating, it could only be one thing.

He rushed to open the door and get the message, but he was shocked by the unfamiliar form of the Patronus facing him.

It was a doe.

And yet its eyes...he could swear he had seen those eyes before.

Before he could start wondering who had sent the message, the doe had spoken.

"You have been good to me. Thank you, Severus."

That sweet voice was the one he always heard in his dreams, the one he agonised over when she had told him she had already chosen her path, a path that diverged from his...

His eyes filled with unshed tears as the doe touched its translucent nose to his hand in tenderness, but before he could stroke its head lovingly, it had turned, galloped away and faded into the night.

She had changed...from a leopard, content with its independence, to a doe, who had to be with a stag, whose life and happiness now revolved around the man she loved...

* * * * *

"The Potters...James and Lily...are dead."

The words Dumbledore had spoken to him reverberated inside his head, but he refused to believe them. Not Lily, not her. Not the woman who was so full of life, of love and laughter and who shared it all with him...

Severus clenched his fists as he stood by the lake, right in the same spot where Lily had first cast her Patronus, had wrapped her arms around him, had held his hand...

"She is not dead!" he bellowed into the dark. "How can she be gone when I love her still?"

And then without thinking, he pulled his wand out of his robes and aimed at a distance. With all the powerful emotions...love, anger, happiness and bitterness...coursing through him, he shouted, "*Expecto Patronum!*"

A doe emerged, queenly and majestic in stance, but its appearance didn't surprise him anymore. *She still lives*. Doe or leopard, she was still his precious Lily, and he was going to take her as she was. Severus knelt before it and caressed its head as it patiently awaited his instructions.

"Tell her I love her."

Author's Notes: Don't you find it strange that Lily's Patronus was a doe while James produced a stag each time? I think Lily's Patronus did change its form when she fell in love with James. And don't you find it weird that the doe stayed with Severus while the stag stayed with Harry, and that Severus was okay with accepting Lily's Patronus as a doe even if it was supposed to be with a stag? Amazing stuff, Patronuses. Now I feel like crying again. *sniff, sniff*