

## For Good

Hermione Granger-Lupin stood at the top of the Astronomy Tower, staring up at the stars. It seemed wrong that they still shone as bright as ever, when so much had been taken from her.

She'd cried for three days, and would probably cry more at the funeral tomorrow, but this moment seemed beyond tears. Her eyes were dry, her throat was clear, and she breathed easily. A preternatural calm had settled over her.

"I wonder why that is," she said aloud to herself.

"Well, I suppose it could be because you're not really here," said a voice behind her.

The calm stayed with her, allowing her to turn slowly, to take in the face of the boy standing behind her without screaming or breaking down. She knew him. She'd spent most of her life with him. He was her touchstone, her anchor, her twin brother.

And he was dead.

The killer had told her the news himself, before leaving her helpless for her family to find later.

It was impossible for Draco Black to be standing at the top of the Astronomy Tower with her. But here he was.

A possible explanation came to Hermione, and she stamped her foot. The stone underneath recoiled slightly, like taut fabric. "A dream, then," she said.

Draco nodded. "A dream. I'm sorry I couldn't come any other time, but..." He spread his hands and began to sing, in the lyric tenor that had captivated the hearts of half the girls in school when he'd played Joseph.

*I'm limited*

*Just look at me—I'm limited*

*And just look at you—*

*You can do all I couldn't do*

He smiled and slipped her pet name, the one only he was allowed to use, into the song.

*Neenie*

Stepping closer to her, he took her hands in his.

*So now it's up to you*

"For both of us," he said before repeating the phrase.

*Now it's up to you...*

Hermione had been weaving the appropriate music into the background while her brother sang, giving it woodwinds, strings, a harp for poignancy. Now she took the melody, singing what was in her heart, what she'd been denied the opportunity to tell her twin of three years and her brother of twelve before he was taken from her.

*I've heard it said*

*That people come into our lives for a reason*

Her gesture called up memories of their shared childhood in London.

*Bringing something we must learn*

A tiny Draco flinching away from equally tiny Hermione's hug.

*And we are led*

*To those who help us most to grow*

*If we let them*

Slightly older Draco, hugging Hermione back with enthusiasm.

*And we help them in return*

Hermione squeezed her twin's hands.

*Well, I don't know if I believe that's true*

Hermione, still tiny, sitting next to Draco and reading to him.

*But I know I'm who I am today*

*Because I knew you...*

Walking into the Great Hall on the first day of school, together.

*Like a comet pulled from orbit*

*As it passes a sun*

A ten-year-old Draco zooming past her on a broomstick, laughing.

*Like a stream that meets a boulder*

*Halfway through the wood*

Neenie the calico cat chasing Snow Fox through a wooded grove.

*Who can say if I've been changed for the better?*

Dancing together at the Yule Ball.

*But because I knew you*

Flying together on Buckbeak, laughing, as they sped away from the Shrieking Shack.

*I have been changed for good...*

Draco smiled and took over the tune, and the pictures, opening with their combined Patronus—the silver werewolf, tongue lolling, tail wagging.

*It well may be*

*That we will never meet again*

*In this lifetime*

Holding each other close in Hogsmeade, just a few months ago, knowing it might be the last time.

*So let me say before we part*

A picture he must have lifted from her mind—her kneeling in the dirt, cradling the message he'd left for her.

*So much of me*

*Is made of what I learned from you*

Her coaching him through a piece of the Animagus spells.

*You'll be with me*

*Like a handprint on my heart*

Den-night, sleeping in each other's arms.

*And now whatever way our stories end*

Ron waving and laughing at them, and Luna regarding them with her usual grave smile.

*I know you have re-written mine*

*By being my friend...*

“And so much more,” Draco said aloud, pressing Hermione’s hands back.

*Like a ship blown from its mooring*

*By a wind off the sea*

Her singing in the Quidditch stands as he flew by in his red robes.

*Like a seed dropped by a skybird*

*In a distant wood*

Him rushing to her as she slid off Mare-Letha’s back in the yard of the Den.

*Who can say if I’ve been changed for the better?*

An image out of his dreams, where he’d seen the person he might have been without the Pack.

*But because I knew you...*

His hand invited her to sing, and she took it up.

*Because I knew you...*

They sang together, and together built the image of them both cheering the Quidditch Cup in third year.

*I have been changed for good...*

Draco smiled ruefully.

*And just to clear the air*

*I ask forgiveness*

*For the things I’ve done you blame me for*

Hermione laughed at his image of her seven-year-old self indignantly confronting his over some tiny slight, and took the melody from him.

*But then I guess we know there’s blame to share*

She added her own image of both of them being scolded by Moony. Draco nodded, and they sang together again, their lives swirling around them as if they traveled by Portkey.

*And none of it seems to matter anymore*

They each reprised their lines, and their pictures, from earlier, singing over each other and creating harmonies Hermione had never imagined, until she was nothing but those sounds and those memories. Finally, they sang in unison again.

*Who can say if I’ve been changed for the better?*

Two thirteen-year-olds confronting dementors, both their hands on one wand.

*I do believe I have been changed for the better*

Taking their final bows during *Joseph*.

Hermione took a deep breath.

*And because I knew you...*

The first moment they’d met, when he was only four and she not even that.

Draco took over.

*Because I knew you...*

Her busily explaining to him how to play with a sockball.

Hermione joined in to sing with him, throwing her voice into the higher register.

*Because I knew you...*

Him opening his eyes in the hospital wing, after her voice had kept him from madness under a curse.

*I have been changed...*

Hermione closed her eyes to sing the last two words.

*For good.*

Her eyes opened. She stood alone on the top of the Astronomy Tower, her hands outstretched. Her only companion was the wind.

“Love you, Neenie,” it whispered in her twin’s voice. “Now and always.”

Hermione brushed her hand down her cheek, intercepting a tear, then kissed her fingertips, tasting the salt on her lips. “Love you, Draco,” she whispered back. “Now and always.”

The music ended.