

Black and Blue

by pokeystar

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

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Chapter 1 of 1

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

A long time later, or maybe no time at all, it came to him that he must exist, must be more than disembodied thought, because he was lying, definitely lying, on some surface.

The surface he was lying on was cold, so cold, and his hand drifted across it of its own volition, seeking warmth... seeking Hermione.

All at once, Draco came together again, his body married to consciousness...shaken from half-dreams, but still slightly discombobulated *What was missing?*

The surface was his bed, the Malfoy ancestral bed, in the master suite of his ancestral home. Malfoy Manor. Hermione... his wife. She must have risen early, must have eaten already, and was now buried in research. *She should have woken him up* He wondered what time it was. But, no. Beyond Hermione, there was something... absent. A companion of long standing; an object taken for granted in the landscape of his existence. He shook off the vague sense of unease tugging at the edges of his mind and got up, brushing his hands against very soft yet icy cold blankets. *Odd, that.* Her warming charms had never failed before.

He quirked a grin and set off to find his wife. He would lay his icy fingers against her nape to make her shriek with shock, and then use guilt to cajole her into snuggling with him in front of the study fireplace.

At twenty-four, Draco Malfoy bore little resemblance to the ferrety spoiled prat that had sneered at her in school, reflected Hermione, as she sat across the desk from him, waiting for the Malfoy heir to speak. For one thing, he had filled out pleasantly. But then, all the boys she knew had, leaving childhood behind to become men. Even Neville was solidly male and had lost his bumbling awkwardness. Malfoy's hair was softer around his face, a little longer at the front, falling over his forehead; not at all slicked back and controlled like it had been at Hogwarts. The biggest change, though, was the expression in his eyes. She remembered them being frosty with disdain and contempt, brimming over with rage, fear and pain. Now, they were assured and confident. A little tired, maybe... and depressed. The pain was still there, but it was muted, accepted a part of him, instead of something he was fighting against.

With a start, she realized she had been staring at him for several minutes, and that he was returning her piercing regard with an air of bemusement.

"Mr. Malfoy, I am sorry for your loss," she murmured awkwardly.

He winced a little and shrugged in acknowledgement of her overture. "The illness was very hard on my father. It was a blessing when he went in his sleep." He paused and

cleared his throat. "Actually, I requested this meeting with you, Miss Granger, because of him... "

"Yes?"

He picked up her nameplate and looked down at it absently. **Hermione Granger, Head of Charitable Growth**. He set it back down on the gleaming mahogany desk and glanced up at her. "I thought you would end up working at the Ministry in Creature Relations, or teaching Transfiguration at Hogwarts. But here you are at St. Mungo's. How did that happen?"

She sighed and said, "I detest the Ministry; even with Shackbolt as Minister, it's still a petty bureaucracy where you need to fill out a parchment in triplicate to get a new quill. And Hogwarts... is full of bad memories for me. I might go back, eventually... but I wanted to help people, to help rebuild and heal our world. I'm very good at planning and organizing things, and St. Mungo's needed so much... "

He nodded in understanding. "As I'm sure you know, my father was here, in the long term ward, for the last month of his life. I noticed it was stretched beyond its intent and capacity. I'd like to rectify that by funding an independent facility for long term spell-damage victims."

She was ... stunned would be putting mildly. Flabbergasted. Dumbfounded. Overwhelmed. "Th That is very generous of you, Malfoy," she stammered, trying to recover.

"Granger, please. You and I both know that it's the least the Malfoys owe the Wizarding world. There's a damn good chance my father was responsible, either directly or indirectly, for the damage inflicted on quite a few of the people in that long term ward" She started to reply and he cut her off. "Besides, I'm convinced the illness my father suffered could be traced back to his activities in the War. Who knows? Perhaps a dedicated facility would have saved his life. Perhaps it will save someone else's in his stead."

As he headed toward the study and Hermione, Draco stopped in his tracks at the thought of his father. The sense of unease tugging at the edges of his mind grew taut, and he focused inward, trying to follow that convoluted tendril as it meandered through his brain. *Father. Illness. Research.*

Hermione and he had investigated his father's illness. He had kept the research findings in a room near the study. *Why couldn't he remember where that room was?* He started walking again. The long hallway now seemed oppressive and chilly. Unwelcoming. His boyhood home suddenly felt forbidding and strange, as if it realized he didn't belong there.

Draco Malfoy! His mother's voice scolded in his head, *Stop that silly nonsense this instant.* He had been a highly imaginative young boy, always scaring himself with shadows as threats. He chuckled and shrugged off his apprehension. Maybe he would pass by the room and recognize it on the way to the study. That, or Hermione would know where it was.

She patted her hair nervously before throwing a pinch of Floo Powder in the fireplace.

"Malfoy Manor foyer," she enunciated carefully.

The Longbottom Memorial Long Term Care and Research Facility was virtually complete, a month ahead of schedule. Draco would be pleased, but Hermione could admit (only to herself) that she felt a little disappointed and bereft.

The project had consumed most of her life for more than twenty-three months: meetings, inspections, agendas, walk-through after walk-through, emergencies, set-backs, obstacles and triumphs, with Draco always present. He helped when needed: smoothing over rough spots, greasing palms when necessary, charming the opposition into submission when grease wouldn't work.

If she were totally honest with herself, she knew it wasn't the project that would leave a gaping hole in her life when it was over. Over nearly two years of close proximity, she had gradually realized that the superfluous differences she observed in Draco Malfoy only hinted at the very deep personal changes he had gone through.

He could still be snarky and maddeningly arrogant. He probably still held the record for championship pouting. But he was also clever and perceptive. Caring and responsible. Ambitious, yes, but now he counted a person's worth in their actions and deeds, rather than their name or blood.

The new facility had required a lot of long hours investigating the latest methods of patient care, both Muggle and Magical, and many site visits to look at efficient and soothing care settings. They had spent a lot of time together working toward their goal, and when they needed a break, they usually spent it talking, getting to know each other and resolving their past.

She would miss him terribly.

She might even love him.

"Hey, Granger."

She jumped a little and turned around to see him leaning against the foyer's grand marble staircase, looking at her with curiosity in his grey eyes.

"For a minute there, I thought you might've been hit with a Medusa Curse."

She giggled nervously and absently brushed Floo ash off her cashmere jumper and dark wool pencil skirt. Flustered, she didn't notice his eyes closely following the path her hands took.

"I know we have work to do, or at least, I have papers to sign, but are you hungry? My last appointment ran late, and I was just about to eat."

"I can't say yes until I know what's on offer," she teased, trying to get her fluttering pulse under control.

He looked nonplussed for a moment. Like a non-food related answer had swam to the tip of his tongue. Then he simply called out, "Kitty!"

"Yes, Master Draco?" The house-elf stood demurely in front of them, dressed in a mint green tea towel embossed with the Malfoy crest.

"What are we having for dinner, Kitty?"

The house-elf smiled indulgently at her young master. "We is having roast beef and Yorkshire pudding, sir."

"That sounds wonderful, Kitty, thank you."

"You is welcome, Master Draco. It is being on the table now, sir." And she popped out of sight.

"We should go eat, Granger, or risk upsetting the staff if the food gets cold," he said and winked at her.

She laughed as he escorted her to the dining room. "I get the impression that if Kitty said jump, you would ask how high."

He rolled his eyes at her. "Well, of course I would. Kitty was my nurse-elf."

"Nurse-elf?"

"I was sick when I was a toddler. My parents acquired Kitty especially to take care of me. I even named her."

"Kitty?" Hermione raised an eyebrow at him.

"Didn't you go through that phase where every creature you see is a kitty?"

"Probably. I'd have to ask my parents." She took a sip of excellent red wine.

"My mother told me I offended several of father's owls and Tiny, our krup, during that phase." He passed her the bowl of roasted parsnips and carrots.

"I can only imagine," she chuckled. "How is your mother, by the way?"

"She seems to be doing better these days. Living in France helps, since being here hurts her too much. Andromeda and Teddy went for a visit last week." He paused to mentally note he was due to visit her as well. "They console each other, I think."

"I hope so. Andromeda had a very rough time of things, right after the War. Taking care of Teddy helped a little, but she was devastated at losing both Ted and Tonks," she reflected sadly.

They shook off their shared melancholy and continued chatting companionably while they ate dinner, then adjourned to the study to go over paperwork.

"Hermione, how long has this been going on?"

The door to the study was ajar, and as loud as it was, the concern in Potter's voice was clearly evident. Hermione's response, on the other hand, was barely above a whisper. He couldn't quite catch it. Longtime Slytherin habits prodded him closer to the slight opening between the door and the jamb, but kept him from announcing his presence.

"What did you say?" Potter was definitely striving to keep a lid on his temper, and disbelief colored his tone.

"Don't talk to me like I'm a child, Harry!" Hermione huffed.

"Then don't act like one. When did you eat last? Or get a good night's sleep?"

"I sleep okay."

"On this thing?" He pointed a finger at the ancient horsehair settee in accusation. "I've sat on it, Hermione. It could be registered as an instrument of torture."

"I sleep okay." The dark circles under her eyes only served to emphasize the lie.

She hadn't slept next to him?

"And have you eaten anything lately?"

"I had toast for breakfast."

"It's four o'clock, Hermione," Harry was furious. "Kitty!"

"Yes, sir?" The house-elf's inquiry was cool.

"Tea, please, Kitty. With scones and sandwiches. Your mistress has not eaten since breakfast."

The house-elf wrung her hands and turned her large moist eyes on Hermione. "You is lying to Kitty, Miss Hermione."

Hermione avoided Kitty's accusatory glare and Harry's concerned frustration. Her eyes filled with tears. Kitty tutted and popped out of sight.

"Hermione, this isn't good for you. Please come live with Ginny and me."

She started crying in earnest. "I...I...c...c...an't Harry. I need to find out why. W...why h...h...he left me."

"Oh, luv." He sat down beside her and pulled her in close. "You've looked everywhere and haven't found a thing. He left because it was too hard for him to stay. You will make yourself sick. Please don't do this to yourself anymore." He rubbed her back until most of her sobs had subsided. She finally pulled away from him and looked into his eyes pleadingly.

"Harry, he wouldn't have left me without a note, at least. I know he wouldn't. I need to find it. Or the pensieve his father left him. He kept memories there sometimes. And people come back all the time, don't they, Harry? I can't leave when he might come back."

"Wait! Some of your top curls came loose when I put that last rosebud in your hair." Ginny flicked her wand, and Hermione's hair settled becomingly.

She sat on her vanity bench and slipped on her shoes. "Thank Merlin I broke these in last week. I want to dance all night, now that the work is all done."

"You are very excited, aren't you?" asked Ginny.

"Of course I am, Gin. I put a lot of work into the facility and this charity event. And I won't be able to thank Draco enough for hosting the ball at his house."

"I bet he could think of something," the young Mrs. Potter muttered.

"Gin." Hermione cut her the look Ron claimed froze his innards. The Weasley men could be so fragile.

"Hermione, it's obvious to me you like Malfoy quite a bit. I just don't want you to get hurt. I can't tell how he feels about you."

Hermione's smile dimmed slightly. "Neither can I, Gin." She hitched her chin up. "But I'm here to enjoy my success and have some fun. If nothing I hope for happens, I'll deal with it later."

They walked out of the guest suite and down the marble staircase arm in arm.

"Merlin. You look gorgeous." The remark floated up to them in stereo. Harry and Draco stood below in their dress robes, gazing at them.

"You do too," was the equally well-timed response.

"Jinx," exclaimed Harry with a twinkle in his eye. "Now neither of you can talk until someone says your name."

Ginny glided up to him and proceeded to kiss her husband to within an inch of his life. He pulled her closer to him, and groaned, "Ginny."

She broke away from him to ask, "Does that count?"

Draco looked at Hermione. "Just so you know, that won't work on me. Though I'm game, if you feel the need to try it."

Six hours later, she was almost ready to try. She was having the time of her life. She'd danced almost every dance, most of them with Draco, and everyone had been by to congratulate her or say hello. But not once had anyone used her name. She was sure Harry and Ginny were to blame for that. She was prepared to give her friends a pass though, since they were getting such a big kick out of it. She never knew it could be so much fun **not** to talk. She snuggled closer to Draco as they danced.

A short time later, Draco pulled away from her, and said, "Let's get some air, okay?"

She nodded, and he escorted her to the patio off the ballroom. Once outside, he faced her and put a hand beneath her chin, encouraging her to look him in the eye.

"I have something to ask you and something to confess. Which do you want to hear first?"

She tilted her head to the left, indicating the confession first.

"I love you. I'm not sure when it happened exactly, but I've felt it for a while now. And I was afraid I wouldn't see you again right away after this, so I needed to tell you tonight. Before I spent the entire Malfoy fortune on St. Mungo's in a pathetic bid to be near you."

There was nothing she could say to that, really. So she kissed him, and he pulled her closer and groaned, "Hermione."

She broke away from him slightly and said, "I thought you said that wouldn't work."

"Slytherin tactics. We invented reverse psychology. Will you marry me?"

"Was that your question?"

"Yes."

"That's your answer."

Deeply unsettled, Draco paced the corridor outside the study.

He had not left her. He couldn't have.

He tried to remember something from before waking up that morning. He found only confusion obscuring and blurring the recent events of his life like the thick grey blanket of a London fog.

Had he left Hermione? If he had, it was unintentional, unavoidable...an interceding compulsion that tore him from her. He paused to listen as she began to cry again, almost hysterical with exhaustion and grief. He wanted to go to her. He felt compelled to cradle her in his arms and assuage her pain. But he had no answers for her, and he knew she would want them.

He resumed pacing. He had to find that room. His personal research was there, the information he had kept from his wife...*why had he kept it from her?*...and the Malfoy pensieve. Back and forth he paced. *He would find the room and show it to her* Back and forth. Reunite with her, make it up to her. He hadn't meant to hurt her. He needed to protect her. He didn't want to worry her. Back and forth. She had worried enough as it was. *He needed to find that room*

A flash of movement in his peripheral vision caught Draco's attention. There was a door in the wall next to the Degas horse sketch his father had treasured. The door had not been there a moment ago.

He had found the room. He murmured the password and grasped the ornate cranberry glass doorknob firmly, giving it a sharp tug. And then another. And then a definitive shake, rattling the door in its frame. It would not open.

She woke up gradually, with a smile on her face, and stretched luxuriously, noting various twinges that were echoes of the previous evening's strenuous activities. Perhaps this time they would be blessed... Although she thought she couldn't possibly be happier than she already was. He was her match, her mate. They complimented each other's strengths and shored up each other's weaknesses. Even when they argued, she was secure in the knowledge that they accepted and supported each other; that they would work through their differences.

"Good morning, Mrs. Malfoy. Happy Anniversary."

"Good morning, Mr. Malfoy. Happy Anniversary to you, too."

She rolled onto her side and placed a hand on his chest, idly stroking the warm bare skin there.

"What would you like to do today?" he inquired in a low gravelly voice, heavy with intent.

Her hand developed purpose. "Oh, I don't have anything particular in mind," she said mock-innocently, widening her eyes for effect. Her hand wandered distractingly lower.

He snorted, rolling her to her back as he covered her, pinning her legs and her devilish hand between them. He pressed the length of his hardness into the cradle of her thighs and whispered, "I have a few ideas," before capturing her lips with his.

A few hours later, they remembered to eat.

After few more hours, they ventured as far as the study for the fire, some wine, and a game or two of wizard's chess.

When Draco bested her for the third time, he declared it a perfect day.

A few days later, the trembling started. They were in Hogsmeade the first time it happened, purchasing a miniature broom for Albus Severus's first birthday at the Quidditch supply shop. Draco had suddenly dropped the Nimbus Mini-Rocket as his legs began vibrating uncontrollably. The shopkeeper Summoned a chair as Hermione fussed over him. The tremors ended abruptly moments later, and he blamed them on a lack of food, meekly acquiescing when his wife insisted on lunch at The Three Broomsticks.

Over the next several weeks, he managed to conceal his ever-increasing tremors from Hermione's razor sharp scrutiny. But when the periods of temporary paralysis and near-catatonic lethargy began to bookend the trembling episodes, he could no longer hide from his wife his fears or his developing certainty.

The wasting illness that had consumed his father was now preying on him.

His mind reeled under the force of a thousand returning memories and feelings. He cringed into a ball beneath the overwhelming weight on the carpeted hallway next to the door with the cranberry glass knob.

The trembling had felt like the reverberations of a particularly strong Cruciatus Curse; tiny pinpricks of abused neurons had raced up and down his spinal column in a jarring demonstration of the Doppler Effect. The bouts of paralysis provided no relief. Instead, they trapped the pinpricks under his skin, concentrating the level of pressure to an unbearably painful point. And the lethargy sapped his strength, inhibiting his will to fight against the inexorable slide into illness. His father had lingered in that horrible limbo for three years, until only a shell was left. At the end, just a spark of love for his family remained.

"Master Draco."

He lifted his head to look at his old nurse-elf.

"Kitty," he croaked, "help me."

"You is not supposed to being here, Master. You is gone away. Missus will be upset. Kitty will help you go now."

"No! Kitty, I need to tell..."

"You is gone away." Kitty flicked a long digit over him and Draco vanished from the hall.

Hermione pushed back from the desk and rolled her shoulders while rotating her neck. Hands descended to her nape from behind, helping to work out the knots of anxiety that had destroyed her concentration.

"Any luck?" Her husband inquired lightly.

She shrugged off his touch and turned around to face him. "Nothing yet," she replied. "Any word from Goyle or Zabini?"

"No. It's odd that they haven't replied. I know we don't talk or see each other often, but they always answer an owl."

"Well, I'd like to finish reading this text tonight before dinner..."

He summoned a weary grin. "I'll leave you to your color-coded master plan, then. I think I'll try owling Zabini's mother and then take a nap."

She squeezed his hand gently as she bent over the enormous book again.

The next day, Florence Zabini sent a reply. Draco's hands shook as he haltingly read it aloud to Hermione.

"Blaise died three weeks ago. The mediwizards and witches never pinpointed the cause of his illness. Mrs. Zabini describes my symptoms exactly." His voice cracked and he swallowed hard. "Gregory Goyle died four months ago of the same disease, she thinks. She's not sure because he died in Scotland, and the Zabinis have lived in Italy for the last six years." He choked in surprise at the next lines, and would not look at Hermione while he read them.

"She feels foolish mentioning this, since she was exhausted the morning Blaise died and thinks her eyes must have been playing tricks on her, but as he passed, she swears she saw his Dark Mark burn vividly black again, in a single pulse that lasted a few seconds. Yet after he was gone, it faded almost completely away and looked as it had since the Final Battle." He stared unseeingly at the parchment clutched in his hand, as he felt his wife gently roll up his sleeve.

"I can barely see it," she breathed.

"According to Mrs. Zabini, you won't see it until I'm gone."

"I won't be seeing it at all, then," she replied, as her hand covered the outline of a yawning skull.

He drew her down on top of him, kissing her passionately as the parchment was crushed between them. "Not at all," he murmured, agreeing with her as he unfastened the buttons lining her dressing gown.

He hovered over Hermione in the early morning light, reluctant to wake her. Although Potter failed to persuade her to stay with him for a while, he had managed to talk her into sleeping on a proper bed in one of the Manor's many guest suites. He had watched over her long after her tears had dried and both Potter and Kitty had found their beds.

His wife was buried under a mound of fluffy blankets, her wild curls barely visible, her arm tucked under the pillow. He didn't want to disturb the only restful slumber she'd had in quite a while, but he needed to say something to her.

"Hermione," he whispered near her ear. She made a mew of acknowledgement. "I love you. I will never leave you."

"D...D---Draco?" She stuttered around a yawn, very close to consciousness.

"I'm here, love. Your answers are in the room across from the study. It's next to the horse sketch, and it's hidden, like that room at Hogwarts."

"Study?" Her voice was very sleepy. Morpheus wasn't giving her up without a fight.

"Yes, sweetheart. Across from the study. Don't forget."

"I... won't." Her breathing evened out as she drifted back into repose.

It felt as if time was running out for him. Running out for them. She wanted to rail at the Gods for cutting her happiness so short, for not at least giving her a piece of him to treasure when...no, if he left her behind. She wondered if she could rightly call the man she lived with her husband. He was secretive and bitter. He would disappear for hours and then suddenly return to clutch at her desperately, without an explanation. This was a version of Malfoy she hadn't seen since her sixth year at Hogwarts. That thought chilled her to the bone. The only things keeping her going were the slim hope of finding a cure and those brief sweet flashes of the Draco she had married.

Draco sat at the desk in the middle of his secret research room surrounded by tomes of Dark Magic and piles of correspondence. His father, Mulciber, Crabbe, Nott,

Parkinson, Zabini, Goyle, the Carrows. And so many more he never knew, but by name. All dead from a wasting illness with no name and no cure. All the Death Eaters strictly accounted for, six feet under the ground. All except for him.

When the shock wore off, he'd read Mrs. Zabini's letter again, and had come to the only probable conclusion. The disease was connected to the Dark Mark. The Dark Mark was born of Dark Magic. Dark Magic was the key. Every response he received to his inquiries had only strengthened that conclusion.

And he could feel that time was running out.

He might be desperate, that was true. But he was not desperate enough to allow the taint of Dark Magic to touch his wife. Unlike his father, he would not lose his way under pressure, and sacrifice his family on the altar of his selfishness. So he built this room with magic, and in secret, to protect his wife from its contents.

He shrugged off his mounting fear and turned his attention once again to the pages he was painstakingly translating from Latin. Unless he was mistaken in his skill, he had found the Curse Voldemort had used to create the Dark Mark on his followers.

He added another few words to the transcribed pages and sat back in horrified awe. The Dark Mark was complex beyond anything he'd thought it to be. It was supposed to be powered through locator spells and perhaps a bit of blood magic, to increase its strength; a clever and useful hybrid designed for an advantage against enemies.

Instead, that monster has instilled a fragment of his soul...*his soul*...in every brand on skin, changing the bearers into vessels for his return to the physical world. The wasting disease wasn't a disease at all, but the bits of that creature's anima drawing the life force out of its hosts, in order that Voldemort could live again.

But then, why did he still breathe? Many of the Death Eaters, long-drained and discarded, had been far more powerful than him.

His mind reeling at the implications, he hurried to complete the translation. Only a few more paragraphs to go...

He was back in front of the room, looking at the cranberry glass doorknob, not entirely sure how he had gotten there.

Had Hermione found the room yet?

He was convinced she had not. He would be there with her, if she had.

If he managed to open it, and kept the door ajar, she would find it and him when she came to the study.

He was once again murmured the password, and focused all of his being on carefully turning the red glass knob.

The door opened unwillingly under his effort.

He almost had it wide enough to walk through.

An outside force immediately whipped the door shut again.

The loud bang echoed down the long hallway, as Draco spun around to confront Kitty. The house-elf was strangely calm on the surface, but Draco could almost feel the force of the anger bubbling underneath.

"You is gone away. You is not for here. You is not Master anymore."

"If I am not Master, Kitty, then who is?" He strived for a neutral tone.

"You is gone away. Kitty obeyed. You is not Master here anymore."

"What do you mean by obeyed, Kitty? Obeyed who?"

"The Master." She flicked her appendages toward him again and he vanished, still struggling to understand.

Natus in virō. The text in this particular section was blurred almost beyond comprehension, so he checked his work again and again. The words never changed. Natus in virō. Born of man. Now he knew why he had been allowed to survive. Maybe even why his father had been taken first.

A bit of a lecture from first year Potions came back to him.

"Great care must be given not only to the selection of ingredients, but also to the equipment used. It must be in good repair. It must be made of the correct alloy, so that it will not react to the various components of the potion you brew. Most importantly, the cauldron you select must be capable of containing the Magic created during potion making."

Somehow, he was the correct cauldron. Ironic that an assumption that would have fed his overweening ego at one time, only made him shudder with fear and disgust now.

He had to stop this. He was the only one who could.

He read over the completed translation again. It was very clear. The ritual called for the last step to be completed in a specific manner. Suicide or a natural death would trigger the transference and conclude the spell. Murder would disturb the balance of Dark Magics and block the transference.

"Kitty!"

He fought against the force pushing him out toward elsewhere. Kitty's magic was powerful, but his will was stronger.

He solidified and became visible again.

"You killed me," he half accused, half asked.

"No. I obeyed Master. You is killing yourself."

But... that was impossible. He was still here.

"Kitty use Muggle spell. You is gone away."

"Kitty... you Confunded me? I killed myself? I'm... dead. But... I'm still me. Voldemort failed. Oh, thank Merlin... The ritual went wrong somehow."

He heard footsteps rushing toward him from behind.

"The Master is Banishing you now," Kitty said.

"Draco?" Her voice rang out clear as a bell.

He spun around to face his wife, his beautiful wife. He reached out an arm to her.

"Hermione," he crooned. Then gasped, staring at her gently rounded stomach.

As her arms came up to rest against the prominent swell, cradling it protectively, proudly, the words of the Dark Mark translation swarmed before his eyes, and reformed slightly.

Natus ē virō. Born from man.

A/N:

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, Than are dreamt of in your philosophy." - Hamlet, Act I, Scene V

"A long time later, or maybe no time at all... definitely lying, on some surface." - page 705, Deathly Hallows US edition.

This story was originally posted to the Live Journal community dmhgfcexchange as a gift for savage_midnight. I dedicate it to her and also to Tiny Kato, my kid in a fur coat. I'll see you again someday, bubba.

Inspirational song is "Black and Blue" by The Counting Crows.

[Black And Blue lyrics](#)

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