

Trust me if you can

Von viv-heart

Kapitel 1:

Minerva woke up to pounding echoing through her little house at the outskirts of Hogsmeade – somebody was at her door! She didn't even bother to put on her dressing gown, those precious few seconds could save a life at times of war, and rushed down the stairs to her front door.

"Who's there?" she asked and the pounding ceased immediately.

"Sirius, Sirius Black. Please let me in. It's important," Sirius said, desperation clear in his voice.

Minerva checked her wards quickly, making sure that the visitor wasn't using Polyjuice Potion or the Imperius curse, before she opened the door and Sirius rushed in after a last glance over his shoulder.

"What happened?" Minerva asked as she led Sirius into her kitchen. "Are you alright?" Sirius collapsed onto one of the chairs and Minerva finally noticed his red, swollen eyes and the bundle in his arms.

"The Potters are dead," Sirius whispered and cradled the bundle closer to his chest as it moved.

It was a child, Minerva realized with horror.

"This is their son, Harry, my godson," Sirius explained when he saw where she was looking. "He's the only one who survived."

"How?" Minerva asked and sat down as well.

"I have no idea," Sirius sighed. "But there's this weird scar on his forehead."

They fell silent as Minerva processed what he had said. "Why are you here?" she asked finally.

"A lot happened," Sirius said seriously. "Please hear me out before you jump to conclusions."

Minerva nodded carefully. If Sirius Black was serious, a lot of things had to be very very wrong and it had to be important.

"As you surely know, the Potters went into hiding some time ago. Dumbledore suggested them to use the Fidelius Charm and I convinced James to make Peter his secret keeper instead of me," Sirius started, his breath hitching. It was obvious, that it was hard for him to talk about it. "Today, I figured out that Peter was the spy we have suspected within our ranks, but it was too late. He had told Voldemort everything before I found him and we got into a fight. He killed muggles before turning into a rat to make it look like I killed him. He's an animagus, we all are. Well, except Remus, but you know about that," he laughed dryly. "I ran away and went to the Potters to warn them, but it was too late. So I did the first thing I could think of and grabbed Harry before running away once more. I didn't know what to do, so I came to the only

person who always has an answer: you. Please, help me, Minerva! I am Harry's last caregiver! His only family! You know they won't allow Remus to take care of him even though he is listed in the will right after me! And Merlin only knows what will happen to Harry if this isn't solved! Especially as Pettigrew is still out there!"

Minerva pinched the base of her nose. "Why am I not even surprised that you lot are unregistered animagi?"

"It seems our questions haven't been as subtle as we thought," Sirius smiled weakly.

"I believe it was the rot of a Mandrake under your tongue," Minerva replied when a knock echoed through her house – she had enchanted the house to deliver knocks and voices at her door to her wherever she was in the case of an emergency. It proved useful the second time in one day.

Minerva stood up. "It's Albus. He has this unique way of knocking."

Sirius froze at that and she gave him a questioning look.

"He can't find me here!" Sirius said with wide eyes. "I am pretty sure he thinks I am guilty and he will take Harry away!"

Minerva crossed her arms. "He will listen if you try and explain everything to him."

Sirius let out a low laugh. "Sure. Because he didn't suspect Moony and me the most. Because he cared when Regulus disappeared without a trace. Because he likes Blacks so much. Even though I can't exactly blame him for that."

"Fine," Minerva pressed her lips together just as another knock echoed through the kitchen. "Go upstairs and hide there. I'll talk to him and see what his visit is about."

"Thank you."

Minerva watched Sirius walk up the stairs to the first floor of her small house before making her way to the door.

She opened it to Albus Dumbledore standing at her threshold just as she had expected, his right hand risen to knock yet again.

"I am sorry that I woke you up, Minerva," he said with a glance at her sleeping gown.

"But this is urgent."

Minerva let him in and they walked into the kitchen where they sat down. "What happened?"

"The Potters are dead and Voldemort disappeared, but so did the little Harry," Dumbledore sighed. "I suspect Sirius Black abducted and possibly killed him after he killed Peter Pettigrew who confronted him and several unfortunate muggles who got in the way."

Minerva frowned. Sirius had been right, Dumbledore was assuming the worst about him. "And where do you suspect Black is now?"

"I hoped you could help me to figure that out," Dumbledore answered. He looked very tired and Minerva asked herself how long this was already going, considering Sirius hadn't looked any better, probably even worse despite his young age.

"For that, I would need more details and a clearer account of what happened," Minerva ran a hand over her face.

"Black was the Potter's secret keeper," Dumbledore started as Minerva stood up to make some tea. "He must have told Voldemort the location of their house yesterday and Voldemort himself came to kill them. He managed to kill Lily and James, but something went wrong when he attacked Harry and he vanished."

Black had been confronted by Pettigrew in the meanwhile, you remember him, right, and blew up the poor guy together with his surroundings and onlookers. They didn't even find Pettigrew's body, only a finger."

Minerva placed a cup of tea in front of Albus and took one for herself before she sat

down again."

"How do you know that Black was the Potters' secret keeper?" she asked carefully.

"Everybody knew! They were like brothers," Dumbledore replied.

"Wouldn't that be a reason to choose somebody else and let everybody think it was Black?"

"What are you getting at?" Dumbledore frowned.

"I don't think it makes sense for Sirius Black to betray James Potter," Minerva said calmly, deciding to believe Sirius version of the story if Dumbledore didn't offer her any kind of proof soon. That way she could keep Harry safe as well. "You said it yourself: they were like brothers."

"But it's obvious, Minerva! Black killed Pettigrew!" Dumbledore protested.

Minerva pinched the back of her nose. "Let's look at what we know for sure, before jumping to conclusions. Somebody betrayed the Potter's. Pettigrew and Black got into a fight and muggles died while Pettigrew disappeared. The Potters died and Voldemort disappeared. Somebody took Harry. Is there any evidence? Photographs or films?"

Dumbledore pulled out a photograph from his robes and placed it on the table in front of Minerva silently.

She took it and watched carefully as Sirius yelled at Peter before both drew their wands and everything exploded. It was not clear who said the spell and something about the photograph unsettled her. She watched the scene unfold again and again, studying the people in the picture carefully. After she watched it for the sixth time, it hit her. Sirius had said that Peter was an animagus and had transformed during the explosion. And indeed, his shadow was missing in the smoke, but more importantly, one could watch it shrink if one paid enough attention.

"Albus, look at this," Minerva said and pointed out her observation to Albus, who watched the scene unfold for several times before speaking up.

"That's no proof that Pettigrew's alive," he said. "Or that Black is innocent. Pettigrew might be in hiding in fear of Black and hadn't come to us because of it."

"Maybe you should ask Mister Lupin if he has been contacted by Peter Pettigrew then," Minerva said. "And ask him what he thinks has happened here."

"He might not be of any help and be in this together with Black," Dumbledore sighed. "After all, he's..."

"A werewolf. I am aware," Minerva cut him off. "But that doesn't mean he isn't a good man. You wanted my advice and here it is: go and talk to Mister Lupin tomorrow. And when you are done, send him here. I would like to talk to him myself."

"You could come with me," Dumbledore said.

"I am not a member of the Order, Albus. I am going to help you, but I will do it my way and that is getting information over a nice cup of tea and offering consolation to those who need it. Mister Lupin certainly will, as he has lost all of his closest friends in one night."

Dumbledore nodded and drank out his tea. "I will be going then," he said. "It's been a long day and tomorrow will be equally exhausting if not worse."

Minerva accompanied him to the door and made sure he left, before going upstairs to talk to Sirius again.

As soon as she entered the guest room, Sirius, who had been dozing off in an armchair startled awake, almost dropping Harry whom he was still holding. The baby was unfazed by that and continued sleeping peacefully.

"How did it go?" Sirius asked.

"You were right," Minerva sighed and sat down on the edge of the bed. "He really thought the worst of you."

"But you believe me?" Sirius sounded hopeful.

"For now. Albus showed me a photograph that had been taken at the moment of the explosion and it looks like Pettigrew has either disappeared or transformed just like you said. Albus doesn't think that, but he is going to talk to Mister Lupin and will send him over tomorrow."

Sirius nodded and leaned back, the relief clear on his face.

"I am glad," he said.

"What will you do now?" Minerva tilted her head.

"No idea," Sirius confessed. "As I've already said, I came here for advice as I didn't know what to do."

"I need to think," Minerva said after a short pause. "You should stay here for now, get some sleep and take a bath, get something to eat. And we need to get something edible for Harry as well. Do you know how old he is exactly?"

Sirius shot her a grateful smile. "You are the best, Minnie."

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Minerva woke up to a child crying and groaned. While she was used to being woken up at the oddest times in the case of an emergency, it was way too bloody early for this, but she had learned that Sirius had no idea how to care for a child the previous evening. Besides, he wouldn't be feeling very well as the events of the previous day would probably have hit him hard. If she was right, he hadn't fully processed what had happened due to adrenaline and the fact that he had to act. She would be lucky if he got out of bed and didn't go completely berserk and self-destructive. She had witnessed it way too often in people who had lost their loved ones during the past few years.

Minerva stood up and walked over into the guest room, where Harry was lying in a transformed crib. To her surprise, Sirius was already leaning over him, looking at him with a sad expression on his face.

"What's wrong with him?" she asked softly and Sirius looked at her in surprise.

"I think his nappies need to be changed and he is hungry," he replied.

"Take him downstairs and I'll join you in a moment," Minerva said and Sirius nodded.

They took care of Harry together, Sirius listening and watching carefully to everything Minerva said and did in an attempt to learn. Unfortunately, most of it was improvised as Minerva didn't have anything child related at her house, why would she, and was struggling to remember what her mother had taught her once upon a time.

Occasionally, Sirius was falling silent and didn't react to anything Minerva said and her concern for him grew. While he was trying to pull himself together as much as he could, he was clearly everything but fine.

"You should try and get some more rest," she said when she couldn't watch it anymore. "I'll take care of Harry and get you when Remus arrives."

"Thank you," Sirius mumbled, kissed Harry gently on the forehead and went upstairs, leaving Minerva to ponder over what to do.

Sometime around noon, knocks echoed through the house once again and Harry started to cry. She rushed upstairs, to give him into Sirius' care, who wasn't looking like he had slept at all, and went back downstairs. They had agreed that it would be better to see Remus' reaction before telling him that Sirius and Harry were hiding at her place. It would be of no use if he ran to alert Dumbledore.

"Hello, Remus," Minerva tried to smile at him as she opened the door, but her smile

froze on her lips as she took in his appearance. He had dark circles under his eyes and was way too thin to be healthy, not to mention his ragged clothes.

"You wanted to talk to me," he said weakly, his voice raw.

Minerva tried to remember if there had been a full-moon any of the previous nights, her concern growing when she realized that it hadn't.

"Come in," she said. "Do you want a cup of tea or something to eat?"

"Tea would be great," he said as he followed her into her kitchen.

Minerva placed a cup in front of him, accompanied by a plate of small sandwiches before sitting down as well.

"I am sorry for your loss," she said. "And I am sorry, but I have to ask you a few questions, even if this is the worst time to do so."

"Thank you," Remus said, staring into his tea.

"What do you know about yesterday?" she asked and Remus repeated what Dumbledore had told her the previous night and Minerva told him that.

"Well, he told me earlier," Remus shrugged. "I don't know anything for myself, I am sorry. I still can't believe Sirius would do something like that. I trusted him," his voice broke.

"You know quite a lot," Minerva said. "And I don't think Mister Black is guilty."

Remus' head shot up and he looked at her with hope in his eyes. "Excuse me?"

"Your friends all became animagi, didn't they?"

"How do you know about that?" he asked in shock.

"They hadn't been as subtle about it as they thought," Minerva replied. "Isn't it possible that Peter transformed and is hiding in his animal form now? As he is not a registered animagus, nobody is looking for him like that."

"That might be, the photograph... I thought it was wishful thinking!"

"So you have noticed it too, haven't you?" Minerva gave him an encouraging smile.

"But that's not all. Do you know for sure that Sirius was the secret keeper? Couldn't that be just bait?"

Remus fell silent for a moment. "James said that he wanted Sirius to be his secret keeper, but neither has ever confirmed that Sirius was it indeed. For all I know it could have been anybody..." his eyes widened in realization. "You think Peter is the traitor! But why would he do that? But it would be a logical choice... While both Sirius and I have been suspected by Dumbledore throughout the war, he hadn't. Oh my god. Peter betrayed James and Lily. And he's alive. I can't believe it."

"At least that's what Sirius has told me," Minerva replied and Remus' jaw dropped.

"Sirius has told you? Was he here?"

"He still is," she answered. "And so is Harry. I am sure he will be glad to talk to you, but we wanted to make sure you wouldn't run to Dumbledore and the Ministry first thing when you saw him."

Remus nodded in understanding. The caution was understandable, considering one of their best friends had betrayed them just the previous day.

They walked upstairs together and Minerva gently knocked on the door to the guest room before entering.

"You believe I am innocent?" Sirius asked when he saw Remus come in as well.

"I want to hear your side of the story," Remus said before moving to Harry's crib. "Is this...?"

"Yeah, that's Harry," Sirius confirmed.

"May I hold him?"

And like that, Minerva listened to the events of the previous day for the fourth time

and watched the two young men in her guest room carefully.

Sirius was obviously struggling to tell the story while Remus was looking at the small boy in his arms, refusing to look anywhere else.

When Sirius finished talking, Remus asked the obvious. "What are you going to do now?"

"I have no idea," Sirius said once again and looked at Minerva with expectations.

"You should both stay here," she said without thinking. "Being on the run with Harry isn't an option, and he doesn't have any other relatives."

"Technically he has," Remus chipped in. "Lily had a sister, Petunia. She's muggle though."

"The worst muggle you could imagine. The only way she'll rise Harry is over my dead body," Sirius snarled.

"Thn it's settled, you will stay," Minerva stated. "And you should too, Remus. It will be less suspicious that way as I am at Hogwarts during the day."

"I can't accept that, Minerva. I have a flat and..." Remus tried to protest.

"And you are broke and not eating," Sirius muttered. "It's painfully obvious."

Remus glared at him.

"I can understand that you don't want to be a bother, but you'll be of great help if you stay here. I fear for Harry's health if Sirius is his only caregiver through the day. Besides, the Potters wanted you to take care of him in the case anything happened to them, too," Minerva said.

Remus didn't look too happy, but Harry suddenly tugged at his jacket, demanding his attention. When Remus saw his smile, his features relaxed.

"Alright," he said. "I'll stay for Harry. But only till we solve this mess."

"And I will pay you back as soon as I have access to my vaults again," Sirius added.