

Trust

by cmwinters

Harry Potter plunges headlong into a Pensieve, and in the process discovers the shocking reason exactly why Albus Dumbledore trusted Severus Snape.

The Pensieve

Chapter 1 of 4

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Harry plunged his head into the Pensieve. He couldn't believe it had taken him all this time to look through his old memories, as much as his parents meant to him. As many times as he'd been in a Pensieve, with and without permission, it should have been foremost on his mind. He felt the familiar sensation of falling into blackness and suddenly found himself in the living room of a small cottage, which looked oddly familiar.

Lily Evans Potter sat in a rocking chair next to a fireplace, gazing adoringly down at her son as she nursed him and crooning to him under her breath. Harry felt slightly uncomfortable at first, as if he were intruding on an intimate and inappropriate scene, but it was his own memory, after all.

When the squirming of the toddler made it evident he was less interested in nursing than playing, his mother disengaged him, snuggled her breast back into her shirt, and propped her son on her hip, leaving him to gaze around the room. His green eyes passed right over his adult self, leaving the elder Harry distinctly disconcerted.

"James, honey, it's late. I'm going to go put Harry down."

"Alright, babe," rasped a very hoarse James Potter, leaning over to give his wife and son a kiss and hug. He coughed almost soundlessly as Lily spun around, and they drifted off.

15 month-old Harry Potter extricated his chubby fist from his mouth and opened and clenched his fingers in turn. "Bah-buh da-ee!"

"Good-night, Harry," James whispered.

"James, will you drink some more of that tea with honey and lemon, please? It will help your laryngitis. Trust me on this... Muggles DO know some things, you know!" she said, in a tone that bordered on indignant.

Yes, *dear*, James mouthed in mock aggravation, winking playfully at his wife and blowing her a kiss.

As Lily unsuspectingly carried her toddler son up the steps, her son who survived the later events of that night followed her, gazing longingly at the portraits that lined the walls. He knew he would come back and view these many times. At the top of the steps, Lily turned into a small, brightly decorated nursery, and laid the toddler on a changing table while she changed his diaper. Just as she finished, Lily's head turned sharply and her eyes narrowed at a sharp rap on the front door.

That's odd; they weren't expecting any visitors, but it was probably Remus or Peter or Sirius anyway. She shrugged and put the toddler in a crib. "Now let's get you ready for bed, hmm?"

Harry began playing with some soft stuffed toys in his crib as his mother turned her attentions on getting a matched set of pajamas for him and enough clothing for the cold weather of the late English autumn. Suddenly, the door flew open, and a body the elder Harry could not see flew through the door, then whipped an Invisibility Cloak off.

The newcomer was obviously not James, but had his back to Harry, and Harry couldn't tell who he was, though he thought the man looked vaguely familiar. Frozen in place by shock, Harry didn't see the other man's face, and didn't immediately recognize the frazzled, black, shoulder-length hair or the slender build. The voice, too, sounded familiar, but he couldn't quite place it. Then he remembered - he'd heard it in his Dementor induced losses of consciousness his third year at Hogwarts.

"Lily! You have to get out of here! Now! Right away! The Dark Lord is outside; he's come to kill you, kill your son!" the man whispered hysterically.

"What?!" Lily demanded of the newcomer. Harry was confused; they were apparently on a first-name basis.

Harry saw the reflected differing lights of the curses downstairs coming through the door.

The man turned back to Harry's mother. "Black... he revealed the secret to the Dark Lord directly. I heard him. He's downstairs! Get out of here!"

DAMN! Harry thought... that wasn't right. Sirius had never been the Secret Keeper! But then again, everyone had thought it was until fairly recently...

Both adults jumped and gasped at the unmistakable "thump" of a body hitting the floor below. James had just fallen.

The strange man whipped the cloak back over his head and whispered hoarsely to Lily, "He can't duel me if he can't see me, Lily. Take Harry and GO! It's him! Go! Run; I'll hold him off."

But it was too late; Voldemort burst in the door, with a short, dumpy Death Eater Harry did not recognize behind the mask.

"Stand aside. Stand aside, girl..." Voldemort commanded in that hateful hiss of his.

The cloaked man fired a few hexes at Voldemort as the latter advanced. Voldemort looked confused, and looked around, unable to tell where this new threat was coming from. He paused slightly in his advance and glanced around.

"Not Harry! Not Harry! Please-- I'll do anything!" Lily pled for her son.

The cloaked man fired another curse, stronger this time, but missed, and in so doing, gave his position away. Voldemort turned his wand in the direction from whence the red light had shot out of the wand that was covered by the Invisibility Cloak, and hissed threateningly "I'll deal with you LATER. *Petrificus Totalus!*" Harry noticed that Voldemort's abnormally serpentine complexion was highlighted by an even more unusually pasty patch of skin on the ring finger of his wand hand, as if the man had just removed a wedding band. Yuck... had Voldemort been married? What had happened to his wife?

"Stand aside, you silly girl... stand aside, now...."

"Not Harry, please no, take me, kill me instead --"

"*AVADA KEDAVRA!*" Voldemort roared, and Harry watched breathlessly as he watched Lily jump in front of the curse aimed at her son, and saw her body fall. Unbelieving, he heard Voldemort roar the second curse, saw the flash of the green light and saw it hit his toddler self smack in the head. Then, as he'd been told so many times since hearing he was a wizard for the first time, the green light of the curse rebounded into Voldemort and blasted him away, sending him into uncertain exile for nearly 14 years. The cloaked Death Eater picked Voldemort's wand out of the pile of robes left in his place and disappeared.

Harry heard the sound of disconsolate sobbing and knew it came from the cloaked man. But what wrenched his heart worse was to hear his younger self crying in confusion. He wanted to reach out to himself but knew that was not possible. He watched helplessly as the newcomer with the black hair shook his head as if to clear it and looked confusedly around, blinking owlishly. With the debris and dust still in the air, Harry still didn't get a good look at his face.

He watched as the other man stood unsteadily and walked to the crib.

"Mummy!?"

"No, I am sorry, Harry... Your mother is gone..." Adult Harry winced at the anguish evident in this man's voice and watched in wonder as the man waved his wand almost imperceptibly, and Lily's body disappeared underneath what he recognized as a Disillusionment Spell.

"Da-ee!" the toddler demanded.

"No... your father is gone as well."

"Sea-wuz?" the toddler questioned, sounding hurt and confused.

"Sirius is not here. Nor do I know where Lupin... Remus, is." The hateful sneer in the man's voice gave the elder Harry a start. He **recognized that** voice...but...no...it couldn't be. It couldn't *possibly* be...

The toddler pointed down at the man's left arm. "Pier!"

"Hm? No... I am not Peter... I do not know where Peter is either."

"Pier!" the toddler said, jabbing the man's forearm insistently. The man looked down at his arm and groaned in what could only be described as despair.

The dust had mostly settled when the man gathered the Invisibility Cloak back to himself, and picked the toddler up awkwardly with a promise to deliver him to someone who would care for him, and prepared to Side-Along Apparate the young boy out of the ruined house. As he turned to start the Apparation, Harry saw the other man's face for the first time, and gasped aloud.

It was, undoubtedly, Severus Snape.

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Harry sat up sharply in his seat, eyes wide open. Hermione and Ron looked on at him with alarm at his blanched face.

"Are you alright, mate?" asked Ron, highly concerned.

"That must have been awful, seeing your parents murdered," Hermione said sympathetically.

Harry looked back and forth between the two of them. "Yeah... it was..." he said, rather belatedly. "Uhm, hang on, I need to look at something else, too," he said, and extracting another memory, placed it into the Pensieve.

"You want one, or both of us, to go with you, mate?" Ron offered.

"NO!" Harry snapped, then relented at the shocked look on his friends' faces. "Sorry... something... surprised me, and I need to try to make sense of it. I'd rather not have

anyone else see until I figure this out."

"Alright..." Ron said reluctantly as Hermione looked on with suspicious eyes.

As Harry disappeared into the Pensieve once again, Ron said, "Great, bloody git. He just saw his mum and dad murdered and says it surprised him!? Well of course it surprised him. That mess would surprise anyone!" Ron shook his head and rolled his eyes.

"I don't think that's it, Ron. It's something else..." speculated Hermione.

"What, then?"

"I don't know," she said, but turned to look at Dumbledore's portrait suspiciously.

Far from feigning sleep, the portrait was looking back at her intently. She turned back to her friend.

Explanations

Chapter 2 of 4

Reeling from what he saw in the Pensieve, Harry Potter questions Albus Dumbledore, and comes up with a plan.

Harry couldn't believe it. He'd gone through each memory in the Pensieve five times, except for the first one, which he'd gone through six times. Each time, he took a different angle, and the result was always the same. Severus Snape had gone to his parent's house at Godric's Hollow to warn his parents of the impending attack, insisting that Sirius had betrayed them. Snape had veritably pled with his father to leave. He'd offered to hold Voldemort off for his father, at certain peril to his own life, and his father, knowing that Sirius couldn't have betrayed them even if he'd wanted to, being as Sirius wasn't the Secret Keeper, had refused to listen to his old classmate, even when Snape had shown him his Dark Mark.

When James had realised it was too late, he'd sent Snape upstairs to escort Lily and Harry to a safe place, but Lily had also refused to listen, and so Snape had tried to take Voldemort down from under cover. It hadn't worked, of course, but it was Snape who took Harry to Dumbledore, and Dumbledore had taken him back to Godric's Hollow so that Hagrid could "find" him.

Snape had tried his level best to save his parent's lives, his parents had ignored him, and instead of trying to escape with his own life, he defended them until the end.

How wrong...how utterly, incomprehensibly, wrong, Harry had been about Snape. All this time.

How wrong was he still, he wondered.

Resolved, he looked at his two friends for a few moments, who'd been watching in concerned silence as his face stormed through many emotions while he tried to work things out in his mind. "Do you two mind leaving me alone for just a few minutes?" Harry asked politely.

"Sure," Hermione said, standing, and levelling another glance at Dumbledore's portrait. The old wizard's eyes twinkled.

"C'mon, Ron," Hermione said, "we'll be just downstairs, Harry," she informed him, pulling the door shut securely behind her.

Harry looked at the portrait of Albus Dumbledore. "How did he know where the house was, if he wasn't the Secret Keeper?" In his tumultuous emotions, he neglected to clarify who "he" was.

No matter, Dumbledore knew.

"He overheard, who he thought was Sirius Black, telling Voldemort. He was hidden under the invisibility cloak and nobody knew he was eavesdropping on that meeting. Having heard the address directly from who we now know to be Peter's mouth, he Apparated directly there to try to warn your parents off."

"Why did Voldemort offer to spare my mum, then?" Harry wanted to know next.

"Severus insisted that the Sirius had asked for your mother as a reward for revealing your parents' whereabouts. Apparently, the impression was that your mother would find herself grateful to he who had asked for her, effectively sparing her life, and would thus willingly bind herself to him and be his wife."

"That's a lie! Sirius would never try to get between my mum and dad, or to take her away from him! He would never enslave my mother in such a way!" Harry yelled indignantly.

Dumbledore sighed in exasperation. "Harry. Once again, you are allowing your bad feeling about Severus, which you have earned, I might add, to colour your good judgement. What Sirius Black would or would not have done is immaterial. As we all know now, Sirius Black was neither a Death Eater OR the Secret Keeper, and thus was not in any position to ask Voldemort for her."

"Oh... right," Harry said, considering that for a moment. Then he suddenly looked up at Dumbledore's portrait and recoiled as if burned. "EW!"

"Hm. Indeed."

"Would Voldemort really have spared a Muggleborn as a prize, if a Pureblood had asked him to?"

Dumbledore regarded him with an odd expression. "I think I will have to defer to Severus' greater knowledge of Tom since he'd left school, but yes, Severus did seem to think that he would do so. I myself wouldn't find such behaviour terribly unusual. In fact, it's quite common behaviour for dictators and sociopaths. Remember, Tom himself had a habit of collecting trophies. However, Harry...Peter Pettigrew is not a Pureblood. Like your mother and Miss Granger, he is Muggleborn."

"WHAT?! I thought only pure-bloods could be Death Eaters?!"

"Now Harry, you know that is not true; you know full well Severus Snape is a half-blood."

"I...uh...well, yeah, I'd forgotten about that, but..."

"As is Tom himself. But yes, it is quite unusual for anyone to join a movement that advocates the wide-spread and painful death of what they themselves are."

"So who was the other Death Eater?"

"Well... knowing what I know now, I believe it was probably Peter Pettigrew. At the time, none of us knew who it was, since, at the time, of course, none of us knew Peter was a Death Eater, and the man in that scene is clearly not Sirius Black. But if you view the memory again, you see a small bit of hair that matches Peter's that comes untucked from the mask and cloak, and the man bends down to retrieve Tom's wand before disappearing. You yourself witnessed Pettigrew giving Tom his wand back. Initially, and understandably, I think the conclusion is that he Disapparated, but if you watch carefully, it could also be a transfiguration from human to animal. Again, none of us, at the time, knew that Peter was an Animagus, except Sirius Black, whom nobody was prepared to believe, and so he never even mentioned it. Remus Lupin knew, of course, but as the entire Wizarding World, including Remus, believed Sirius to be the Secret Keeper, and Peter to be dead, it appeared to be a moot point."

"I don't think Severus ever paused to consider that the rest of us were right about Sirius Black, because that would mean Peter Pettigrew had been a Death Eater. Severus never had any reason whatsoever to believe that a Muggle-born had joined the ranks until he saw Peter in the cemetery with the other Death Eaters after Voldemort's resurrection. By that point, of course, and in fact long before that, the damage to the relationship between Severus and Sirius, had already been done."

"Was Voldemort ever married?"

"An astute observation, Harry... you noticed that Voldemort appeared to have taken a off?"

"I did."

"Severus also caught that, although it took him several replays of the memory before he noticed it. Severus, however, knew that Voldemort traditionally wore a ring on his right hand, and was in a better position to describe it. Although to answer your question, no, I don't believe Tom ever married."

"Which ring did he take off?" Harry said, growing suspicious.

"That one," Dumbledore said, pointing to the table on which the Peverell heirloom ring lay.

"Let's move on. What was in that potion in the basin?" he demanded next.

"Hm. Well I am not actually the person to answer that, having not been the one that made it...but suffice it to say, it was, slowly and quite painfully, killing me. As was the curse on the ring."

Harry looked back and forth across Dumbledore's portrait, considering this, and crossed his arms and feet in thought as he leaned back in the chair. He tapped his right foot relentlessly. "Were you pleading for your life?" he asked next.

"I would never plead for my life, Harry...but especially not when a long and very assuredly painful and inevitable death awaited me, even if my dying wouldn't have assured my key spy's place in the movement."

"All right."

"Be careful, Harry...what you say, and what you do. It would be best if you not share this with anyone, I believe."

"I will be careful, and I won't tell anyone, not even Ron and Hermione," the younger man said. Pausing to reconsider, he said "well...at least, not anyone who doesn't already know," and with a determined look, swept from the office.

"Hermione, do you know anything about how to put only part of a memory into a Pensieve? So that nothing else can be observed?"

"No, but we can go to the library and find out..." she offered.

"Please, that would be very helpful. Ron...once we're done with that, can I borrow Pig?"

"Sure, mate."

Correspondence

Chapter 3 of 4

Harry Potter pens a letter to Severus Snape. Will he reply? Will he comply?

Severus Snape's head snapped up at the hysterical pattering of an owl's beak on his window. The smallest owl he'd ever seen was twittering madly about his office window. He opened the window to allow the animal entrance. He could easily close his fist around the thing, and it would still have room to breathe. How it was carrying its bundle, he had no idea.

He removed said bundle from the leg of the owl and absently tossed it some owl treats. He wondered if the excitable little being would be able to swallow them, and looked up in alarm as it hacked dangerously, apparently having swallowed a big piece too fast. He pointed his wand and diced the treats so the stupid animal wouldn't kill itself trying to attend to a basic bodily function.

A very small tube was encased in a piece of parchment.

Odd... that *looked* like a memory... but what was wrong with it... why was it so small?

Frowning, he locked his door, pulled out his Pensieve, and dumped the memory into it. He tried to watch it from his current vantage point, but it was blurry and indistinct. He'd have to go into the Pensieve.

It was an exceedingly short trip. All he saw when he put his face into the silvery substance was a pale, bared left arm with an ugly, fading brand on it, and a chubby, toddler's fist jabbing him and insisting, "Pier!"

His arm. His Dark Mark. Harry Potter's chubby toddler fist, insisting that Peter Pettigrew was similarly marked.

A fact he'd not known the night of that incident.

He blanched as he sat up straight in his chair.

He'd never shown that memory to anyone... not even to Albus! As far as he knew, there were only two people alive with that recollection of the evening... himself, and one other, who was undoubtedly out for his blood.

Alarmed, he turned his attention to the parchment.

It was an equally short letter.

HBP -

You have answers. I have questions.

Let's meet to talk.

Same time. Same place as when this happened.

- HJP

Cryptic, but effective. He snickered at the use of his old moniker... but very few people knew it, so it was as reasonably as secure as it could be.

The request itself was out of the question, of course. Great Scott, he was in more danger now that the boy had done that than ever in his life, since James Potter's stupid son couldn't block emotion out to save his own life. He certainly couldn't block out emotion in order to save the life of someone he detested.

He looked up at the owl. "Do you know who sent this letter?" He winced as the owl twittered around madly. Merlin's beard, the thing had more energy in five minutes than he had in his life. "Yes or no will be fine. Are you up for another long trip?" The owl hooted happily, so Snape grabbed a piece of parchment and scrawled across it carelessly.

Out of the question.

Close your mind!

He tied this to the owl's feet and tossed it out the window, and, putting the incident entirely out of his mind, went back to work.

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A few weeks later, another owl he didn't recognize came tapping at his window. He allowed the owl entrance and removed the parchment. Apparently the animal had been instructed to not wait for reply, as it took off immediately through the window he'd not yet closed.

He recognized the handwriting, of course; how could he not, after having taught the boy for six years?

He was sending different owls, though... that was good.

Like the other letter, this one was succinct.

It is. Feel free to check.

Offer stands.

Hope to see you there.

Dare he?

This would bear some consideration.

Conversation

Chapter 4 of 4

Harry and Snape meet for a chat.

Severus Snape stood in Godric's Hollow, concealed deeply in shadow. He was a fool for coming here, but something drew him.

Presently, he heard the tell-tale *crack!* of another wizard Apparating. He watched as Harry Potter strode confidently towards the ruins of the house... the house that had once belonged to his parents.

Potter walked deferentially to what remained of the front porch, and looked around. He called softly into the black night "I'm alone..."

Snape took that as his cue and stepped into the light. "As am I."

They raised their wands simultaneously; Snape casting a Disillusionment Charm and Harry *Muffliato*, a reaction which caused both of them to raise their eyebrows at the other.

"It's not safe for you here," Harry said finally.

"Nowhere in England is safe for me. However, nobody knows I am here, unless you told them."

"I have not... but I don't believe we should stand out in the open, chatting."

"Nor do I."

"Have any place in mind?"

"You should not leave the country, Mister Potter, but I cannot take you any place that I am privy to, as I am not the Secret Keeper, and even if I were, it would not be safe for you... for either of us. I know that 12 Grimmauld Place was destroyed. It would be foolish of me to attempt to take you to the school, and stupid of us to try to meet in Hogsmeade. There is only one place I can think of... and I will need to check it to ensure it is safe. Would you please excuse me for a few moments?"

Harry nodded.

"I will return shortly." Snape disappeared in silence.

A few moments later, he reappeared silently. "You can Apparate silently?" Harry asked.

"**All** of us can," Snape replied evenly.

"Us?" Harry asked.

"The Death Eaters," Snape elaborated darkly, lest the foolish boy forget whom he was meeting with, as unlikely as that possibility was. "They do not always do so, occasionally preferring to announce their presence, but they can."

"Hm. Useful skill to have."

"Indeed it is."

Harry eyed Snape for a few moments, seeming to size him up, as the older man looked on calmly. "Can you teach me?"

Snape snickered. "Are you now planning on becoming a Death Eater, Mister Potter?" he queried with a raised eyebrow.

It was Harry's turn to snicker. "Well... you know... I thought, if you can't beat 'em, join 'em, and all that."

Snape snorted. "I must admit, Mister Potter, that having had six years of what I deem to be poor success in instructing you, I am reluctant to enter into such an agreement again, particularly given that such a skill is typically used for such *dark reasons*. Perhaps, then, I should just scribble the instructions in the margins of an old textbook... ?"

Harry stifled a laugh, as what his old professor said really wasn't funny, but the other man did have a point. "Yes, that did seem to work well, didn't it?"

Snape didn't reply, he just raised his eyebrows.

"So... your 'place'... is it safe?"

"It is... but I will have to Side-Along Apparate you."

"That's fine," Harry said, meeting his eyes. There was no fear there whatsoever. "You've done it before."

Snape snorted in spite of himself. "You were... considerably smaller, then."

"Yes... well, somehow, I don't think it's a skill you'd have forgotten with time."

"I must warn you... when I... left... Hogwarts, I asked some... 'old friends'... to raze the place, to throw the Ministry off my trail. It is in quite poor condition, now; don't be alarmed."

"All right."

Snape tilted his head, and held out his arm. "I have been to your home... will you now accompany me to mine?"

Harry nodded, and grasped Snape's arm.