

He had another thing coming.

Scrimgeour paused, as if expecting some other surprise, and then slammed his gavel down, bringing the court to order. Beside him, Percy Weasley was poised to make notes.

“We are gathered here on this day, July seventh, nineteen ninety-six, to conduct the trial of Sirius Orion Black,” he announced. “Black, who was previously sentenced to life in Azkaban for the crime of fourteen counts of murder, and breaking the statute of secrecy, and who escaped Azkaban in July of nineteen ninety-three.” Scrimgeour turned to Sirius, staring at him coldly. “Mr Black, how do you plead?”

“Not guilty,” Sirius replied without hesitation. “Not of murder. I will admit I escaped prison, but I was there unlawfully to begin with.”

Scrimgeour sneered. “So you claim. Madam Bones,” he called, turning to the woman. Harry was glad to see her there, unharmed and keen-eyed. “I believe you have evidence for the defence.”

“I do, Minister.” Amelia stood, gathering a stack of parchments. “May I call the prisoner Peter Pettigrew in for questioning?”

There was a flurry of whispers through the crowd. Then Scrimgeour cleared his throat. Harry was starting to get Umbridge flashbacks. “I’m afraid, Madam Bones, that will not be possible. The man claiming to be Peter Pettigrew was found dead in his cell this morning.”

The chains rattled as Sirius visibly flinched. Harry’s heart sank — how could that be?

His eyes turned to Dumbledore, whose eyes were smug behind his twinkle. Harry scowled; had the headmaster done this?

Luckily, Amelia was unperturbed. “That is unfortunate,” she replied. “But it is a good thing Auror Shacklebolt already provided me with a Veritaserum-confirmed transcript of Pettigrew’s interrogation. If the Wizengamot would please read.” She waved her wand, and parchment appeared on the desk of each member. “In the interrogation, Mr Pettigrew admits to having been the Secret Keeper for the Potter family, and also a servant of the Dark Lord. He confesses to framing Mr Black for his murder, and using his unregistered animagus form to escape, seeking refuge with a wizarding family in the guise of a pet rat.”

Amelia gave everyone time to read, while Scrimgeour sat and scowled, not even looking at his papers. It was clear he’d already made his mind up.

“A fanciful story, to say the least. But as there was no magical confirmation that the man was indeed Mr Pettigrew, it cannot be taken as evidence for Mr Black’s innocence.”

“Not alone, which is why Mr Black has agreed to his own Veritaserum testimony in front of the Wizengamot today.”

“Impossible,” Scrimgeour snapped. “Black has already been found guilty once of this crime; a defendant cannot be placed under Veritaserum twice for the same confession.”