

But Not For Me

by Fairfield

Pansy returns to school.

Chapter 1 of 1

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"What was that again?"

"I was asking, sir, if I transgressed, would you catch me and assign me detention of dueling with you?"

"That's roundabout. Why not ask for a duel, not that I would agree since you're a student and I'm an instructor."

"That way doesn't include the transgression," said Pansy.

Professor Alfred Busch, recently graduated from Los Angeles College of Sorcery, was wondering if weird students were part of The Curse, the hex that someone unmentionable was supposed to have placed on the Dark Arts position. No wonder they couldn't find a Brit for the slot. At first, he thought the curse was the cold and damp, but all the professors suffered that.

"I doubt if I can do any such thing, but let me think about it," he said.

"Oh, thank you, thank you, sir," said Pansy. "I was so afraid you'd be angry or laugh at me."

Alfred didn't know what the local customs were and thought he should ask Filius and Horace.

"Drinking," said Horace. "Pansy vanishes Friday evening and reappears Saturday, the worse for wear. Sunday morning, she's recovered and returned to her studies."

"So that's her transgression," said Alfred. "No one catches her?"

"No one tries very hard," said Filius.

Alfred pieced together the story as they talked. He concluded that Pansy and her family were on the losing side, very much so, and everyone was surprised when she returned. He learned that the rebel forces, although that was not how Filius and Horace referred to them, controlled the school for a year, and during that time, academics were sacrificed in favor of a purification program.

"Did she decide to work hard, pass her exams, and establish her own life instead of living in semi-exile with her parents?" asked Alfred.

"That's what we thought at first," said Horace, "and she's an excellent student, but she's hasn't responded to any of the agencies interested in her. Pity, I could have placed her well, placed her very well for both of us."

For Alfred, it was only a matter of assuming Pansy was both intelligent enough to plan ahead and aristocratic enough to demand help from the house-elves. The next Wednesday, he caught her carrying strong-drink from the kitchen to her secret hide-a-way.

He pounced. "Busted!"

She screamed and dropped the carton. He barely levitated it in time to keep the bottles from breaking.

"I hope you're having fun," she said. "Sir."

"Wands at twilight this Friday. Filius and Horace want to play, too," he said. "And be sober, or be sorry."

"Play?" she asked.

That Friday evening, Busch declared they would be samurai, and the skirmishes would be a mix of honor and duels and betrayal and ambushes as the spirit moved them. They would form teams of two.

"I'll take Professor Flitwick," said Pansy.

Professor Slughorn, hiding his hurt feelings pretty well, saluted with his wand and joined Professor Busch. Before Pansy could blink, Busch and Slughorn had vanished, and Flitwick was pulling her behind a big rock.

The combatants were hidden, but flashes of light could be seen from the school towers. Several students ran to fetch McGonagall.

"It's just the migration of giant fireflies," she said.

Wizards never grow up, she thought, and I could give better game than that chit, Pansy.

Pansy thought her youth and spryness would give her an advantage, but she couldn't keep up with Flitwick who was leaping on, over, and around boulders, nor could she avoid the stinging hexes flung by Slughorn and Busch. She was ready for the evening to end when Busch mounted a knoll and roared an honorable challenge. One might think he was a Gryffie. Rejuvenated by the possibility of revenge, Pansy joined Flitwick in advancing on him, but fling spells as they might, nothing made it through his defenses. Luckily for them, Slughorn was clumsy, and they heard the rustle in the bushes behind them. Flitwick rolled for cover, but Pansy was flung socks over hairdo down the slope.

The three wizards picked her up, dusted her off, and took her to a strange restaurant where they ordered warm Saki. She choked on her first sip. After several cups, they ordered shrimp tempura and noodle soup.

Feeling relaxed, Pansy addressed the Dark Arts' instructor.

"You're very skilled, sir," she said, "but is there a special reason the school picked you?"

"They dropped me by parachute in the middle of Forbidden Forest. When I appeared at the school gate a week later, they hired me."

Her eyes widened, then they narrowed. "It's not nice to tease schoolgirls, sir."

"I'm not teasing," he said.

Flitwick and Slughorn nodded agreement.

Wankers, the lot of them, thought Pansy, and an innocent girl isn't safe amongst them.

Wankers or not, Flitwick and Slughorn escorted the exhausted girl to her dorm. She suppressed her disappointment that Professor Busch wasn't equally chivalrous.

The next day, Pansy woke mid-morning when an elf brought her tea and oranges and more healing potion. She soaked in a hot tub until lunch and then found herself at a loss. She felt fine. She had never faced a Saturday afternoon not hung over.

Four days later, Alfred's brain had gone numb reading student essays, and he was walking through the halls when he met Pansy hurrying to class.

"What brings you to the trophy hall, professor?" she asked.

"I was just wandering aimlessly, but now that I notice them, some of these statues are interesting," he said, pointing at a figure on a broom reaching for a flying golf ball.

Pansy considered it a moment and said, "It's the aspiration of youth trying to rise unfettered and bring the hopes of mankind with him, but alas, the pull of the masses impede his attempt to snatch the golden opportunity although it is this struggle itself that uplifts our spirits and allows us to go forward even though what he is seeking may forever be out of reach."

Of course, and this one?" he asked, pointing randomly at another statue a flying figure with windblown hair charging three hoops with a soccer ball tucked under his arm.

Pansy's brow furrowed before she said, "Behind the misleading façade of a triumphant athlete having his choice of which receptacle in which to insert his life force, there lurks a subversive refutation of the hope of duality with its simple solution of synthesis since our protagonist must choose one of many goals and, as the winds of fate buffet him mercilessly, his choice depends more upon circumstances than his own wishes."

She smiled at him. "How clever of you to have chosen such opposing works of art, sir."

Whereupon, our lady of interpretation said she had to hurry to class. *I'll parachute him into the middle of Forbidden Forest. Just give me a chance.*

Alfred was thinking he might have to rethink this Pansy thing. *Insert his life-force, indeed.*

Pansy grew tired of being physically outclassed by people she considered over-the-hill and began her own exercise program of climbing the school stairs even at the expense of study time. After several weeks, her routine consisted of climbing from the deepest dungeons (creepy) to the highest towers (scary). The other students were asking what she had done to deserve such punishment at the hands of three professors.

The Hufflepuffs knew. She had Defied Authority. The Hufflepuff's favorite theory was that, in each of the three professors' classes, Pansy had crossed her legs knickerless. Wise heads nodded. It fitted the opinions everyone held about Pansy.

The autumn term climbed into the Holidays, and they climbed into the spring term until the day arrived that a fit Pansy ducked, rolled, and scored a direct hit on Professor Busch's groin. That evening, there was much lifting of the Saki cups in celebration.

Emboldened by her new-found prowess, Pansy dared approach the best professor she had ever known.

"You're the most potent practitioner I've ever known, sir," she said. "You could be an inspiration to others."

"Are you saying that I'm failing to inspire any of my students?" he asked.

"No, no, the opposite," she said. "I apologize for stating it poorly. I mean there are others, people who aren't students, who are looking for a leader, sir."

"My observation, my dear Pansy, and excuse me for being cynical, is that most people are looking for a leader, and I say, 'May the gods have mercy on them when they find one.'"

"But you could be one, sir. I checked, and you're an orphan, too."

Alfred Busch was initially taken aback by this revelation, but he reflected that, although out of favor, Pansy's family had connections and they could have obtained access to confidential records. Insight struck, and he recalled conversations with the other professors. The two major protagonists of the last civil disturbance had been orphans, and he concluded that, in Pansy's mind, being an orphan gave one a talent for power. From compensation, he assumed.

Pansy was prattling on. "I wouldn't have to leave England. I mean, I and my family and the other purebloods would have a rallying point. We could hold our heads up again. I wouldn't be ashamed. I could stay here."

"I don't think that's for me," he said.

"We would appreciate you so much, so much. And think of the power that could be yours, sir."

"It's better to serve in Los Angeles than to reign in Great Britain."

"What does that mean?" she asked. "Sir."

"It's a literary reference."

"I see, sir."

Comprehension dawned. She turned and walked away.

Professors Flitwick and Slughorn insisted they and Pansy continue the Friday evening bouts, knowing that, otherwise, the lady, who believed she had been misled and her most secret desire betrayed, would fall into an unrecoverable slump.

Finals week was a nightmare that completed her mission.

Pansy took her last ride on the train, said goodbye to nothing, and left England.