

# Back in Black

by ubiquirk

The Dark Lord has fallen, but an even more terrible force has arisen to take over the Ministry of Magic – the Pink Lord. Ruling with an abundance of ruffles and terrifyingly sharp stiletto heels, Umbridge's Think Pink Brigade terrorizes a populace grown weary of decrees designed to enforce sweetness. Unexpectedly, Hermione Granger joins the resistance, the sarcastically snarky Back in Black. Award winner.

## Pale-Pink #1

Chapter 1 of 11

The Dark Lord has fallen, but an even more terrible force has arisen to take over the Ministry of Magic – the Pink Lord. Ruling with an abundance of ruffles and terrifyingly sharp stiletto heels, Umbridge's Think Pink Brigade terrorizes a populace grown weary of decrees designed to enforce sweetness. Unexpectedly, Hermione Granger joins the resistance, the sarcastically snarky Back in Black. Award winner.

*Potter Place Prompt: The Dark Lord has fallen, but the Ministry of Magic runs Britain like a Stalinistic country. Freedoms are taken; people are killed. Hermione, the last of the trio, joins a resistance group ... by accident. Who should she find but ...*

*Disclaimer: Not mine; no money.*

*This story has won an award (thanks everyone!). It can be seen on this page: <http://ubiquirk.livejournal.com/124883.html>*

*Thanks go to my beta, Southern Witch 69, and to Mollilicious, who made me the following wonderful banner.*



### Pale-Pink #1

April 1st, 2:37 pm

"Oh, bugger," I murmur under my breath as the Seriously Serious Siren wails.

If hot pink made a sound, it would be this an irritatingly high-pitched squeal that permeates every crevice, leaving ears ringing and mind numb.

The obnoxious, and obnoxiously loud, noise cuts off to be replaced by the Announcement Witch's sickeningly-sweet voice. "This is a Serious Warning. All citizens are to remain where you are. Anti-Apparition Charms have been raised over the entire of London. Do not, I repeat, do not attempt to Apparate, as splinching is guaranteed." She clears her throat, and the amplified Sonorous Charm sends a deafening "hem, hem" crashing over all of magical London, quickly followed once more by the siren.

A flurry of pastel-clad bodies rushes past in every direction no one wants to be caught on Knockturn Alley during a Ministry crackdown. A tall man in a light-green cloak almost knocks me over when he hits my left shoulder from behind, sending me spinning. He doesn't even turn his head to see if I remained upright instead of being trampled.

Another person, a sweet-looking old lady in Pink #2, elbows me hard in the ribs, her Proper Smile never lapsing all the while.

A small child screams while struggling in its mother's arms as she pushes past me on the right a swirling mass of Pale Pink #1 able to mimic the Seriously Serious Siren's pitch effortlessly.

Everyone's face is frozen into a rictus of the Proper Smile lips drawn back maniacally in fear.

*Calm, calm, calm, Granger. Keep Smiling you don't want to be picked up for Mis-Behavior. You can do this.*

I fight my way across the pavement to take shelter in a doorway. Dinger's Dinnerware, the door reads. Dinger himself appears in the window and starts yelling, "Shoo, shoo," while emphatically gesturing me away. He looks as though he would be someone's dear grandfather if it weren't for the fact that his face is distorted by rage thinly covering fear his Proper Smile twisted into a death's head grimace.

As soon as the crowd thins a bit, I'm able to take a better look around to see what options there are for a hiding place. Strangely, yet fortunately, there don't appear to be any Watch Witch poster-portraits in the vicinity. Every other part of magical London is covered with the things all showing the Proper Witch she's pretty, she's blond, and she's wearing nothing but pink and not just pink, but pink with lace, ruffles, and flowers on every available surface.

And she Watches constantly, only turning away briefly to report to someone just out of frame every few minutes or so. Even then, her Proper Smile never wavers by a millimeter.

Even without a Watch Witch poster around, I still feel anxious. I really don't want to be caught with the powdered asphodel I have hidden in an inner pocket. Contraceptive Potion ingredients are a life sentence. On the other hand, I'm reluctant to *Evanesco* it out of existence it's taken three months to arrange today's purchase.

*I'll do anything to be able to make that potion.*

Yet none of the shops will let me in like Dinger, they're too scared of the possibility of being arrested for such. I'm at a loss until, in a dark side alley across the way, a small yellow sign with black lettering seems to wink into existence. Libre Libri. A book shop? Public records?

*How did I never notice it before?*

The shopkeeper behind me taps the glass, and I turn to see him brandishing his now-to-hand wand. "Off with you shoo!" he yells.

I give him a sarcastic little wave complete with saccharine-sweet Smile before plunging across the street. There are fewer people about, so I'm only jostled three times and each of them is rather mild, as this set of people move with speedy determination instead of the blind panic of the earlier lot.

The sign hangs above a dark wooden door sunk deeply into the wall of the alley. There are no windows gracing the dirty brick, and the small one set into the door is so dust covered that I can't even see if there's light within.

*How in the world has the proprietor evaded arrest for Improper Cleanliness?*

Silence suddenly reigns, the siren fallen quiet. Yet the sound that takes its place is all the more terrifying the sound of a multitude of boots stamping in unison.

The high-heeled, patent-leather sound of Umbridge's Think Pink Brigade.

*Circe!*

Heart pounding, I fumble at the door handle, which doesn't turn at first, so I give it a vicious twist. When it gives suddenly, I stumble into the shop, righting myself against the bookcase that stands only three feet from the doorway.

The door slams shut behind me, and turning to see who closed it, I find it gone.

The scuff of a footstep to my left I spin quickly, wand in hand, the first syllable of a Shielding Spell just passing my lips. "*Pro*"

A shout of "*Stupefy*" rings in the air as I'm hit in the back. Every sense rips to black.

~~~

I swim back into consciousness on a stream of garbled speech. Keeping my eyes closed, I attempt to maintain lax muscles and slow breathing. I'm lying on my back on a hard surface the feel the grain of wood beneath slightly flexed fingertips a table.

The voices slowly grow clear two men standing behind me on either side.

"... how the bloody hell do you explain it, then? It's not as if "

" we've ever seen this effing happen before. And you can't say "

" that we did it on purpose, if we don't even know how it was done."

*I know those voices!*

A rustle of cloth sounds from below my feet there's at least a third person in the room.

"Really, we promise "

" we haven't told anyone, you wanker, not even "

" our mum. It's like we said: the door materialized "

" and we waited, thinking Lee was going to come through "

*Fred and George! And they're swearing lots!*

" when she showed instead. All right, so we had hid "

" thinking we'd get the tosser with a Tarantallegra "

" to keep him on his toes, as it were "

The sound of snickering in stereo.

" and then "

"Silence!" The deep voice emanates from the bottom of the table, resounding in what sounds like a small space.

I was able to keep my eyes closed, but I'm fairly sure I just flinched a bit. What I'm not so sure of is whether anyone saw me do so.

"I was not enquiring as to whether you two chose to waste your time and energy playing juvenile pranks on your comrades. I instead had a desire to learn exactly what spell you incapacitated Ms. Granger with so that I would have some idea as to how long she would be indisposed."

*Snape!*

"But I see that your blathering has served a purpose, nonetheless." His voice grows closer on my left. "For my interruption of said blathering has proven to me that Ms. Granger has already joined us.

"Is that not so?" This last was said in a quieter voice a quieter voice I hear very clearly because its source has grown close.

When I open my eyes, I'm gazing directly into those of Severus Snape.

Struggling upwards, my stunned limbs heavy and recalcitrant, I wet overly dry lips with an only slightly moister tongue before rasping, "The Think Pink Brigade is "

With left hand pressing me to the table, he replies, "Relax, Ms. Granger, you are safe here."

I look around the small, softly lit room. Heavy, dark wood furniture fills the shadows, and the walls are a forbidden deep wine color. There are no decorations anywhere, and this is shockingly beautiful. "Here being?"

"The headquarters of the resistance." He pauses to smirk. "Congratulations, Ms. Granger. You've just joined Back in Black."

*AN: In canon, it's Anti-Apparition Jinx, but propaganda specialists have determined that jinx sounds too negative for something the Pink Party applies to its own populace with regularity.*

*Please review it'll save me from Thinking Pink!*

## Pale-Pink #2

*Chapter 2 of 11*

The Dark Lord has fallen, but an even more terrible force has arisen to take over the Ministry of Magic – the Pink Lord. Ruling with an abundance of ruffles and terrifyingly sharp stiletto heels, Umbridge's Think Pink Brigade terrorizes a populace grown weary of decrees designed to enforce sweetness. Unexpectedly, Hermione Granger joins the resistance, the sarcastically snarky Back in Black.

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*Thanks go to my wonderful beta, Southern Witch 69.*

**Pale-Pink #2**

*April 1st, 3:09 pm*

*Back in Black?*

"What?" It slips out of me almost unconsciously.

I continue to stare at his face, which is only a foot or so above mine – it's been three years, and he looks exactly the same. Exactly. Wizarding magic is finally triumphing – he looks better than his age for the first time in his adult life.

He watches me with sardonic amusement, one side of his mouth curved upwards in an expression I haven't seen on anyone for years – even in the mirror.

I clear my throat and start again. "What is Back in BI–"

The door flies open and Lee Jordan stumbles in. He pants and grabs hold of the edge of the table to steady himself. "It's as we thought. They're out with Decree Number 307 to 309 – a day early, but nothing we weren't expecting."

Snape straightens. "What has she targeted specifically this time?" His tone is once again grave.

"307 regulates the appropriate strength of grip to be used for the Two-Minute Handshake – it seems some complained that their comrades weren't expressing enough enthusiasm."

Snape snorts and nods. "Go on."

"Then, 308 dictates that charcoal grey is no longer acceptable, as it has been found to be too 'depressing.' In fact, it declares grey a special case – since it lacks appropriately cheery coloration, nothing darker than dove grey is allowed, and all forms of grey are now forbidden for women." He smirks at that, and Snape joins him.

"But 309 – 309 is the one we heard was coming – it corrects the inconsistencies found in Decrees 114, 157, 261, and 299." Lee pauses to pull a piece of Pale Pink #1 parchment from his pocket.

"Come on, you wanker –"

"– bloody out with it already."

"Hem, hem," he begins in perfect imitation of the Announcement Witch, looking up to shoot a mischievous smile at the room, "Behavioral Decree 307: Careful study by a team of trained specialists has determined that Proper Smiles are to have the following characteristics. The minimum allowed difference between the normal height of the edges of the lips when at rest and their height when Smiling is 1 cm, the maximum 1.5 cm. The maximum allowed deviancy in the height of the left edge versus the right is 0.25 cm. If the lips are parted, the maximum height of the gap permitted is 0.5 cm, but parted lips are not suggested for day-to-day Proper Smiles and should be saved for special occasions. For children between the ages of five and eleven, the above numbers are to be halved. Infants remain exempt.

"In order to facilitate Proper Smiling, the Ministry of Magic will be issuing stencils for each citizen to use in practicing in front of a mirror. By next Monday, April 5th, all citizens will be expected to display Proper Smiles meeting the new criteria upon all public occasions.

"So perk up those lips citizens, and know that your effort will be rewarded by an equally Proper Smile from everyone around you."

As Lee's voice fades, I shudder.

*Circe! As if it weren't already difficult enough to **not** be picked up for Mis-Behavior!*

*And everyone knows what the Behavioral Reconditioning Camps are like!*

I shudder again as I picture what people look like after they've been 'Pinked': vacuous-eyed creatures shambling to and fro, grinning inanely, and repeatedly bowing and saying, "No, after you – I insist!" while swathed head-to-toe in Pale Pink #3.

Lee's voice cuts through my thoughts. "Hold up! What's she doing here?"

"Ms. Granger has only recently joined our cause."

"What?" I sit up quickly. "No, I haven't – how can you keep saying that? I've joined nothing. Nothing!"

"Oh, but I beg to differ. Simply the fact that you found and entered the front door of this establishment indicates that you desired to become a member of Back in Black. And so you have."

"Ridiculous! How –"

"Allow me to explain. The doorway is charmed so that only those who believe in our cause of subverting this travesty of a government may enter. Indeed, you would not have even seen said doorway if you did not have a certain desire and capacity for revolt."

"Well, of course I hate the government – I'm not mental – anyone in their right mind hates the government." I stop to draw breath. "But that doesn't mean ..."

The twins walk forward to enter my view – George on my left, Fred, right. I'm now faced with four rather sober-looking individuals, who are all staring at me fixedly.

After a few moments, Snape asks, "Was there a sign, Ms. Granger?"

"A sign? First you tell me I've joined your little boys' club, and now you're asking if I saw a portent or omen?"

He sighs. "No, Ms. Granger. Was there a sign above the door – a somewhat small one perhaps?"

"Well, of course there was a sign! Why would y–"

He interrupts again. "And what did it say?"

I look at him for a bit.

*Is that some strange form of trick question?*

"It said Libre Libri, as you very well know," I reply tartly.

He looks slightly shocked – or at least I think it's shocked – his eyes widen slightly, and his mouth opens a bit.

But before he can say anything, the twins cut in. "Oi, now – that's what it said –"

"– for you Snape! I thought it was never–"

"– to say the same bloody thing twice."

"Indeed, I did not think it possible that two people could ever see the same message." He watches me now with a look of such frank contemplation that it's a little unsettling in its intensity.

"What ..."

*Circe, that stunner left my mouth dry!*

"What does that mean exactly?"

His smirk returns. "It means that we have quite a bit more in common than I ever realized, Ms. Granger. Quite a bit indeed."

*AN: Forgive me for potentially poor Latin, but I'm hoping that Libre Libri roughly translates as 'free from difficulty' + 'books/public records,' which I'm using to imply 'freedom through written knowledge.'*

*Please review – it'll save me from Thinking Pink!*

# Pale-Pink #3

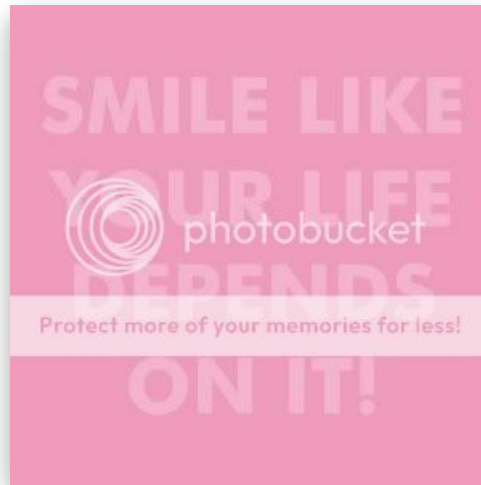
Chapter 3 of 11

The Dark Lord has fallen, but an even more terrible force has arisen to take over the Ministry of Magic – the Pink Lord. Ruling with an abundance of ruffles and terrifyingly sharp stiletto heels, Umbridge's Think Pink Brigade terrorizes a populace grown weary of decrees designed to enforce sweetness. Unexpectedly, Hermione Granger joins the resistance, the sarcastically snarky Back in Black.

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*Thanks go to my beta, Southern Witch 69.*

*And look at the wonderful banner LettyBIRD made for me! I just love the slogan, and the Pink on Pink is perfect for the story! Thank you LettyBIRD!*



## Pale-Pink #3

April 1st, 3:26 pm

*Quite a bit in common? Whatever does that mean?*

His eyes continue to bore into mine. I'm almost concerned that he's become so skilled at Legilimency that I might not even be aware of his intrusion.

Lee clears his throat, and Snape looks over before saying, "Yes, well, back to the matter at hand. This may very well be the event we have been waiting for. Decree 309 is so exceedingly restrictive about Proper Smiles that even the pink-draped, sheep-like beings parading the streets outside will have to take notice."

"Eh, Snape, that's what –"

"– you think, you wanker. We still say that –"

"– it's going to take something bloody big –"

"– something showy to get their attention."

Snape turns to me. "And what do you think, Ms. Granger?"

"Me? Why should you care what I think?"

"Because, as I have already informed you, you are now a part of this organization."

"But, but ..."

He cocks an eyebrow at me, but I'm at a loss for words since my hither-to-now protests have gone ignored.

I've spent the last three years fighting to suppress my constant inclination to speak my mind freely. I never thought it would actually turn into difficult conditioning to break.

The twins join in. "Yeah, Mione, how about it?"

"What do you think?"

"You always were a smart one."

"Now Snape here, he's bloody clever, but –"

"– two swots are better than one, just –"

"– as long as we don't have to be –"

"– in class with you or shag you."

*Goddess – they're constantly using Inappropriate Language – that was banned with Decree 5!*

Snorting loudly, Snape replies, "I can guarantee that I will never lower my standards to such an extent that sexual relations with either of you could ever be a possibility."

He turns to me and smirks. "As a fellow 'swot,' as it were, would you agree with me, Ms. Granger?"

*Is he flirting with me?*

Then he winks.

*He is flirting!*

I'm gobsmacked. No one has flirted with me in over two years. Such is Mis-Behavior of the highest sort. Any interactions that could be construed as vaguely sexual are sure to get one sent straight to the camps. The Decrees about such are numerous: Number 23 – no public kissing, 31 no public hugging, 47 – no public hand-holding, 49 – no public touching of any sort that conveys affection, 54 –

"If you will allow me to explain." Snape interrupts my mental list making. "Within these walls, we are Back in Black. This is more than a mere fashion statement."

Lee, having just come from outside, wears the darkest medium brown allowed for men, but both twins are dressed in a green so dark as to almost appear black – a hue disallowed since Decree 124 went into effect thirteen months ago.

"We make every conscious attempt to break and subvert all Behavioral Decrees made by that pastel menace who happens to presume to rule us all.

"By winking at you in a suggestive manner, I have just violated Decrees 54, no public winking, and 57, no flirtatious behavior of any sort." He smirks. "I must admit, they are two I have been unable to violate hither to now. We are, as you have so aptly noted, unfortunately something of a boys' club."

"Hey, now – don't forget Ginny!"

"Our sister is definitely worth flirting with –"

"– even if we'd hex you blind if you –"

"– ever attempted to do so!"

Snape turns back to me. "I rest my case, Ms. Granger. You are the first female I've come into contact with within these walls that I've felt free to enter into a flirtation with. Forgive me if my attempts are therefore somewhat clumsy – it is not a skill that I ever valued, or thought I would ever value, until Umbridge outlawed it that is."

Lee chimes in. "Snape here, see, he keeps a list of the Decrees and is trying to break them all. Me, I go about it with a different approach – I've picked my favorites and try to break them as often as possible. I mean, the very color of my skin is too dark according to the Pink Lord!"

"Us, too," says George.

"Yeah, we've got our favorites –"

"– right, and we stick with them, such as –"

"Inappropriate Language – we've been –"

"– effing breaking that one since the first week."

"And Lee here, the tosser, he's been practicing –"

"– and he's bloody excellent at saying normal things –"

"– in a tone that makes them sounds as –"

"– effing dirty as possible!"

More snickers.

*I've had enough of this!*

"Why are you doing this?" My voice sounds cold and disapproving, even to my own ears. "People out there are miserable, and you're making rude jokes. Is this all just a lark?"

Facial expressions around me sober.

Snape is the first to respond. "My motives are admittedly selfish, Ms. Granger. You see, I am the antithesis of everything the Pink Lord deems appropriate, whether it be matters of behavior, dress, facial expressions, etc. There is no place for me in such a society. I was forced into hiding the very first week."

"The twins and I are walking advertisements for Mis-Behavior if we let ourselves go," explains Lee. "We'd have been shipped off to the camps within the first year if we hadn't found old Snape here and a way to have hope."

"And for us, it's become much more personal –"

"– than that. Percy may have been a wanker –"

"– of the highest sort, but bloody hell, he was still –"

"– our brother, and she had him Pinked as soon as –"

"– he did the smallest effing thing wrong."

When they released him, Molly and Arthur took him back to the Burrow, where he shambled around mumbling "Good day" and repeatedly opened doors for imagined guests. But Percy was Pinked using a new procedure that had yet to be perfected. He went into convulsions and died a week later.

It turns out that blood splattered on Pale Pink #1 stands out in gruesome, color-coordinating contrast.

The Morgue Wizard who came to collect the body almost reported Molly for failing to maintain her Proper Smile, but Arthur was able to persuade him otherwise.

*And since that day, I've never seen her Smile slip – not even once. But her eyes ...*

I look back up to find them watching me.

"So, will you join us, Ms. Granger?"

"I ... I'll think about it."

Snape watches my face for a moment. "Reasonable enough under the circumstances. After all, you're intelligent enough to know that merely admitting you'd spoken to us would get you sent to the camps as well. Reporting us would be folly of the highest sort, and you are not a foolish person, Ms. Granger."

"Trust me when I say that we are deadly earnest about bringing down the Pink Lord."

Lee and the twins nod, serious expressions still in place.

"However," Snape continues, "I will not divulge anything further unless you choose to become a member."

Pulling a lace doily from his pocket, he waves his wand over it. "*Portus*." Handing it to me, he explains, "We use their own items against them, Ms. Granger. Not only do they not suspect anything covered in gewgaws and lace, I also find it brings me a certain amount of amusement."

I meet his smirk with one of my own. I think it's the first time I've smiled in years and meant it.

It has the added benefit of being nowhere near a Proper Smile.

*AN: Please review – it'll save me from Thinking Pink!*

## Pale-Pink #4

*Chapter 4 of 11*

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### **Pale-Pink #4**

*April 1st, 5:57 pm*

Letting myself into my flat, I allow my face to relax. The muscles no longer ache from the strain of holding a Proper Smile all day they grew used to it a year ago.

I almost hesitate to say *Lumos* upon entering the sitting room. The candles light, throwing the room into brightness, and I shudder.

Every surface is covered with kitsch. Puppies romping on plates hang on one entire wall I refuse to reduce cats to such indignity. Friends wave at me from overly decorated picture frames on a doily-draped mantel. At least the seashells from Brighton aren't too bad for Harry and Ron's they deserve some small measure of dignity after dying to save us all from Voldemort. It's not as if the current administration gives them such.

My sofa is a swirling mass of pastel floral blooms that leaves me nauseous if I look at it for long. In fact, I'm beginning to suspect that such patterns have been purposefully crafted to keep the populace unsettled and unthinking. I've tried to hide as much of it as I can under the pile of lace-edged pillows that grows as the months pass.

Fairly soon, I will have to begin gifting my friends with the efforts of my Community Service before I'm completely bowled under.

*I wonder if Ginny's finished more plates? We could arrange another exchange. I seem to once again have innumerable heart-shaped ones, and she finds those funniest.*

I snort. That's what I must keep doing finding humor in the hideousness that has become my home. Anything else leads to insanity.

Closing the lavender curtains for a bit of privacy, I move to take off my cloak. The pop from the Mandatory Visiting Area gives me pause.

"There you are, deary!" trills an artificially high voice. "I was beginning to wonder about you. Out for a bit of a stroll, were you?"

Suppressing a sigh, I paste on what I hope is the newly re-regulated Proper Smile and turn to face tonight's Watch Witch it's Fiona Marple one of the worst.

*She's reported more people for Mis-Behavior than any other two Watch Witches or Wizards combined!*

Her entire being exudes Pink Party Propriety. From her Pink #2 cloak to her patent-pink boots, she oozes ruffles from every pore. A rather thin woman, Watcher Marple seethes as a rotund mass of flounces at every move, and I see she's wearing her special blouse tonight the one with crocheted roses attached. The clash of three different shades of pink is excruciating.

I'm glad that she never moves overly quickly, or I'd be in constant danger of sicking up my lunch.

"Good evening, Watcher Marple. May I offer you a cup of tea?"

"Oh, no, deary. When I popped 'round earlier and didn't find you, I went to those lovely Smythes next building over. They put on a right lovely tea for me."

*I'll just bet they did! You sent her brother to be Pinked only a week ago the poor dear must be terrified!*

Maintaining my smile is an effort. "That sounds lovely."

"Oh, it was, it was." She moves into my sitting room and perches on the edge of the sofa after moving a pile of pillows to the side. "Now, what were you about for so long then?"

"A bit of shopping." I seat myself on the wooden chair to my desk it's rather austere, so it's covered with a pink ruffle-edged seat cover.

"Well, I don't see you carrying much. Have it all Reduced still, do you?"

"Quite a lot of it was window shopping actually, though I did manage to find some lovely sequins I was considering applying to something add a bit of sparkle, as it were." I pull a bag of pink pearlescent sequins from the inner pocket of my cloak I'd made sure to pick them up before the asphodel for just such a ruse.

"As you can see," I gesture towards my sofa with my free hand, "I've been on the Pretty Pillow Committee for well over a year now. I was thinking of showing my support for the Pink Party by expanding into other areas. Perhaps Arty Appliqué or Decorative Decoupage."

I hang my head and try to look remorseful, all while not allowing my Proper Smile to slip they really Watch for such things. "I didn't have much luck with Perky Plates last time."

"No worries, deary. Doing Arty Appliqué is a capital idea just splendid. And may I suggest you also consider Radiant Ruffles or Elegant Embroidery?"

I look up to see her beaming at me, and the tension in my shoulders starts to release.

*She believed me!*

"Your wardrobe could do with a bit of sprucing up! Why just look at you everything as plain as can be with nary a bit of lace or a ruffle in sight. It's a disgrace, it is."

I look down. My blouse and skirt are plain and in the one of the darkest colors allowed for women Purple Pink #3 it's actually a fairly attractive reddish violet that I'd love if I weren't forced to wear it as the least evil choice available.

*Damn it's only a matter of time before it too is considered too dark!*

"Oh, I know, Watcher Marple!" I cry with feigned consternation. "I've just been so horrible with a Needle Charm up until now. It's so embarrassing. Here I was earning top marks at school for all of these subjects that I now see are so ... so unimportant!" I can only hope the manic gleam in my eye is interpreted as fervor for the Party. "I never did take the time to really learn how to do Proper Woman's Charms I mean, I knitted a bit, but ..."

"There, there, deary. All in good time. You're a bright one, and we're Watching you specially to make sure you put that brilliance to good use. You just pick a new Crafts Committee, and I'll push through the paperwork in a jiff. Why, you'll only have to wait a fortnight or so to make the change!" She beams at me.

*I think her Proper Smile is now larger than the new regulations allow I wonder if I should report her? Would it seem patriotic and get them off my back a bit or only make them more paranoid if I turn in their top Watcher?*

*It could go either way look at Percy.*

She stands. "Well, then, I'll be off."

"Will I see you tomorrow?"

"Oh, you never know, deary. It could be tomorrow or the next week. Or perhaps one of the other Watch Witches will want to see you. Why, only last week Watcher Rugobode and I were talking about you."

*Circe! I must not be blending in as well as I'd imagined.*

"Now don't you fret."

*As if I could help it, you old bat!*

"We were simply discussing your clothing. But your news tonight goes a long way towards rectifying that, yes, it does." She gropes futilely under her cloak the ruffles of her blouse catching on her large rings every second or so.

I wish she'd get them so caught that she'd rip off a layer or two of decoration it would be a vast improvement.

"Now where did I? ... Oh, yes ... here we go!" Finally emerging, one begemmed hand stretches towards me holding a piece of pale-pink plastic. "This is your Proper Smile Stencil it's the correct size for your face."

I look at it and debate saying anything it's absolutely huge.

"No, no wait. That's the one for Mrs. Bigglesworth next block over poor dear has a rather wide face for a woman most unfeminine, but I suppose it can't be helped. At least not yet."

*Yet? Goddess are those Cosmetic Surgery Charm rumors actually true?*

My mind's eye fills with the vision of an endless multitude of women all wearing pink, of course but even more scarily, all wearing exactly the same face, the one belonging to the Watch Witch from the posters heart shaped, wide eyed, pixie nosed, kewpie-doll mouthed. Umbridge's ideal of the perfect woman expressed over and over until we're all interchangeable pieces to plug into the hole labeled 'Female.'

"Here you are, deary." She's holding out a smaller stencil this time. "You just practice with this regularly so that by Monday your Smile is a Proper Smile. Ta ta."

I barely register her pop of Disapparition, though I've been careful to maintain my Smile the entire time.

*I can't live like this any longer!*

The pink plastic falls from my hand as I reach for my wand. Grabbing the doily from my cloak, I tap it and feel the tug at my navel.

Snape rises from his desk and looks surprised to see me once again his eyes open marginally wider than is customary. He's down to shirtsleeves and trousers, and an amused part of my mind notices that even his shirts are solid black these days.

"Ms. Granger, to what do I owe the pleasure?"

"I'll do it, Snape. I'll join. I want to do whatever it takes to bring down the Pink Lord," I say with a certain amount of fervor I'm imagining ripping the ruffles off Watcher Marple personally.

I imagine my grin is rather feral.

*AN: Please review it'll save me from Thinking Pink!*



## Purple-Pink #5

Chapter 5 of 11

The Dark Lord has fallen, but an even more terrible force has arisen to take over the Ministry of Magic – the Pink Lord. Ruling with an abundance of ruffles and terrifyingly sharp stiletto heels, Umbridge's Think Pink Brigade terrorizes a populace grown weary of decrees designed to enforce sweetness. Unexpectedly, Hermione Granger joins the resistance, the sarcastically snarky Back in Black.

*Disclaimer: Not mine; no money.*

*Thanks go to my beta, Southern Witch 69.*

*sshg316 made me a wonderful Watch Witch poster! It's perfect! Thank you sshg316!*



### Purple-Pink #5

*April 7th, 4:43 pm*

I'm cataloging the last of the books I'll have to pull from the shelves tomorrow. With fewer and fewer texts considered to be Appropriate Reading, whether in terms of behavior discussed or language used, the British Magical Museum's Library is fairly quiet. There's little point in people visiting it anymore.

The eerily complete silence is broken by a rather breathless voice. "Hermione, could I trouble you for a second?"

"Certainly, Marion. What is it?"

The pale blond before me twists her hands together and looks around – she's trying to be surreptitious about it, but her head jerks far too much for the attempt to be successful. Her Proper Smile appears somewhat strained.

*Poor Marion, Hufflepuff to the core.*

There's a Watch Witch poster just behind us to the left. It actually doesn't even matter whether anyone else is about as long as that hangs on the wall.

*You'd think she'd realize that by now.*

"Actually, Marion, I'm a bit behind in my shelving. Would it be all right if we talked while I put these back?" I gesture to the books stacked on the edge of my desk.

A rather paltry stack of books compared to what it should be.

"That ... that would be smashing, Hermione. Just smashing!" The positive side of a lack of duplicity is that her entire face comes alive when she's happy.

Unfortunately, that's equally dangerous.

I stand quickly and place myself between Marion and the Watch Witch poster.

*Let the sodding bint read the back of my bushy head!*

Motioning for Marion to precede me, I gather the books to my chest with my left arm and follow her into the library proper.

The bookshelves would normally hide us from view immediately, but most are half empty – great gaping holes reminding me of the empty leer of a skull's eye sockets. Book banning appears to be Umbridge's third greatest passion in life, falling right after correcting so-called Mis-Behavior and imprudently splattering Pink across anything and everything that will hold still for it – and even some things that won't.

I almost snort, but I catch myself and change it into a strangled cough. The empty shelves also mean that sound carries farther than it should.

Marion's hand hovers above my arm, but she draws it back – she's at least learned to suppress her tendency for Inappropriate Affection. "All right, Hermione?"

I fix my Proper Smile firmly in place. "Yes, thanks. These books mostly go down here towards the end."

Leading us as far from the Watch Witch poster as possible, I finally stop and pretend to have difficulty reading a book's spine while whispering, "What is it Marion?"

"Have you ... have you got it yet?" She's back to wringing her hands.

"No. No, I haven't."

Her expression falls, and if it stays like that, I'll have to remind her about her Proper Smile before we walk back to the desk.

"But," I continue after shelving a book, "I was able to get one of the banned ingredients last week. The problem is that I'm being Watched constantly at home now. I can't seem to find either the right time or place for brewing."

She lets out a breath. "Oh, I know you're doing everything you can, Hermione. It's just ... well, it's just that Simon and I ... well ... We just love each other so much ... and we can't ... well, you know ... and ..."

Glancing around to make sure no one can see us, I quickly pat her hand before picking up another volume. "It's all right, Marion. I'll try as soon as I can, I promise. And in the mean time, you and Simon can ... do other things, right?"

Her blush is very pretty, and her smile returns. "Oh, yes. There are other things, but ..."

*But not being able to make love to your husband because the Mediwitches told you you'd die if you ever got pregnant, and it's illegal to have a contraceptive potion, even for situations such as this ... yes, that would be difficult.*

*And how many Marions are there?*

I make sure to fumble another book onto the shelf in front of me. It's Eudice Erkenmeyer's *A Young Lady's Guide to Proper Etiquette*, and I've put it in the wrong location. But then, this one is filled with entire chapters on 'Proper Nods' and 'How Deep to Curtsey' – it deserves to be misplaced.

"All right," I whisper, "ask me something safe that we can talk about the whole way back."

At her panicked look, I offer, "Community Service."

A relieved look graces her face, and she says heartily, "So, how's your Community Service going?"

*There may be hope for her yet.*

"Oh, did I not mention? I asked to switch last week." I cross to the next aisle and walk slowly up it towards the desk, pausing to place a book here and there.

"Really? What to?"

"Well, I'd finally made enough lacey pillows that I'm trusting in my Needle Charms much more so now. So I asked to be moved from Pretty Pillows to Elegant Embroidery."

Marion makes an approving umm noise.

"Yes. It's high time I began to think about decorating my clothing, and that seemed a wonderful place to start!"

*Circe, I sound chipper enough to be the Announcement Witch!*

*How utterly revolting.*

"Oh, yes! I've never had the skill for it myself, but my mum is a dab hand at embroidery. She's the one who makes me all of these lovely blouses."

I umm in approval this time and set the last volume in its place in the bookshelf nearest the desk. Her blouse is actually fairly nice for this day and age – it has only the smallest trim of lace, and the embroidered pattern on the front was done in only one color of thread, exactly matching the material itself. It's too bad that the color happens to be Pink #3, but that can't really be helped.

I turn to place myself between her and the Watch Witch poster again just in case her expression slips once more. "Well, Marion, I'm afraid I really must run. I worked late yesterday and missed the Two-Minute Handshake – I'd really rather catch it today."

*And I'll be reported if I miss it two days running.*

"Of course, of course. Well, I'll see you in the morning."

"Yes. Good day."

"Good day."

As she moves towards her desk on the far side of the room, I make one last pass at straightening the papers on my desk before picking up my cloak. Glancing around one last time, I'm again struck by the thought that in a different life I may have liked this job.

*If I hadn't been forced into it as a career that's Appropriately Feminine.*

*And if there were anygood books left.*

~~~

The press of pastel-covered bodies on all sides is a little overwhelming, especially since the petite woman in front of me is wearing a hat decorated with long, dyed pink feathers that are exceptionally fluffy. Every three steps or so I miscalculate her trajectory and end up with a nose full of sneeze-inducing fuzz.

The quick blat of a deafening "hem, hem" saves me, and the Announcement Witch's syrupy voice follows. "Attention citizens. It is now time for the Two-Minute Handshake. Please stop where you are and proceed to share cordial greetings with your fellow citizens."

"And don't forget, citizens, an enthusiastic handshake is a Proper Handshake."

The Smiling man to my left turns, and he's obviously taken last week's Decree 307 to heart because he grinds my bones together as he pumps my hand in his zealous grip.

*Umbridge is going to regret that she ever laid eyes on Pink.*

My Proper Smile never wavers.

AN: Please review – it'll save me from Thinking Pink!

## Purple-Pink #6

Chapter 6 of 11

The Dark Lord has fallen, but an even more terrible force has arisen to take over the Ministry of Magic – the Pink Lord. Ruling with an abundance of ruffles and terrifyingly sharp stiletto heels, Umbridge's Think Pink Brigade terrorizes a populace grown weary of decrees designed to enforce sweetness. Unexpectedly, Hermione Granger joins the resistance, the sarcastically snarky Back in Black.

*Disclaimer: Not mine; no money.*

*Thanks go to my beta, Southern Witch 69.*

### Purple-Pink #6

*April 7th, 5:28 pm*

"Well, Ms. Granger, as you can see, every bit of resistance we have been able to accomplish up to this date has merely functioned as a minor annoyance to the Pink Party."

My laughter prevents me from answering him.

*Goddess – Fred and George were the two 'headless' streakers at Umbridge's May Day speech last year! The Engorgement Charms they must have used – they were HUGE! And they had dyed their pubic hair as well – I distinctly remember it being black. Oh – of course – Back in Black!*

I start laughing even harder, doubling over and holding my stomach.

*And the look on her face! Like she'd swallowed a vat of bubotuber pus! I'm still in shock that the Think Pink Brigade didn't try to arrest her for not having a Proper Smile for a full five minutes.*

Tears are beginning to leak from my eyes, and I'm gasping for breath. I can't remember the last time I've laughed like this.

"If you feel ready to proceed, I would like to discuss long-term strategy with you, Ms. Granger." His expression is almost the full sneer I remember from my student days.

I wave at him weakly and gulp for air. "Of course ... just ... another minute." I blot my eyes with a lace-covered handkerchief – one of Molly's Community Service projects – and try to stop remembering the way their engaged members bounced and swayed.

Just that thought alone is enough to reignite my amusement, but at least the duration is shorter this time.

Finally, I'm able to straighten up. I know my cheeks must be flushed, and I can't get the wide grin to go away, but I find I don't care.

Snape is watching me intently again. In fact, if I didn't know how much he hated the Pink Party, I'd be convinced that he's a Watch Wizard. Every time I'm near him, his eyes follow me carefully, as if recording my every action, my every expression.

"If you're quite through, may we continue?" he drawls sardonically.

I nod and take a few more breaths. "Really, Snape, I'm sure your addition of a lust potion to the water this past November was just as effective, if not more so, than the twins' efforts on May Day." Unsuccessfully, I attempt to swallow another chuckle. "I distinctly remember that on November 5th the Think Pink Brigade was overwhelmed and had to leave off arresting couples for Inappropriate Affection in the streets. And Lee, crooning love songs using the Sonorus Charm, didn't hurt either."

He looks somewhat mollified as the sneer changes to his now habitual smirk. It's a surprisingly good look on him.

"But that does leave me with one question," I say.

"Go on."

"What was Ginny's project?"

It's Snape's turn to chuckle. "If you hadn't guessed, it was actually her who masterminded the entire stunt Fred and George pulled at the May Day speech last year. She mapped out their route, performed the Levitation Charm that lifted them so that the maximum number of spectators would get an 'eye full,' as she so charmingly put it, and arranged the Portkeys that brought them safely back here at the end. She's quite a deft hand at Charms."

"Yes, she's wonderful."

*And the Levitation Charm was absolutely brilliant – 'eye full,' indeed!*

I try to suppress my chuckle. "And on that note, I put in my request to be changed to Ginny's Elegant Embroidery Committee. We should be able to have more contact that way, or at least we won't have Community Service on alternating nights any longer."

"Excellent. I will have to see if some of my contacts in the Ministry can facilitate matters." Seeing my surprised expression, he smirks and replies, "Why, yes, Ms. Granger, there are other, somewhat informal members of Back in Black who prefer to remain anonymous at this time. While not active in our larger campaigns, they nonetheless provide myriad smaller services that make much of what we do possible."

*One of them obviously must be Arthur.*

Snape pulls out his pocket watch, flips it open, and hmms quietly. "Now, if you will excuse me for a moment, Ms. Granger, there's something I need to attend to."

"Of course. May I be of any assistance?"

His smirk actually resembles a small smile as he replies, "Indeed, you may. If you'll follow me."

We leave the sitting room via the door at the far end of the room. I knew Snape lived at headquarters, but I hadn't given much thought as to the arrangements before now.

The laboratory is small yet well equipped. Three cauldrons simmer gently over the lowest of flames on the central bench. One is perfectly clear and colorless, another is an almost blood red, and the third is a murky pale blue.

Snape moves to the right and gestures me forward. "So, Ms. Granger, can you identify these?"

I turn my face to him. "The first is Veritaserum, and the second is a lust potion, though I'm not precisely sure which one – they weren't exactly taught, now were they?"

His smirk is firmly in place, and his eyes are intense. "It is Libidinosus Potion, Ms. Granger. Are you familiar with its properties?" His voice seems even deeper than usual as he says this last bit.

"If I remember correctly, Libidinosus Potion amplifies the pleasure of touch without a concomitant increase in unpleasant sensations."

"Precisely." He's much closer now. I imagine the breath of his response stirring my hair.

Looking quickly back to the cauldrons, I focus on the furthest.

*It can't be, can it?*

*Goddess, it is!*

"And the third ... the third is Strigo Conceptus Potion, the most effective Contraceptive Potion known!" I can feel myself beaming as I face him.

"You seem awfully enthusiastic about a Contraceptive Potion, Ms. Granger." His voice is cold and distant once more. "Is there someone you're hoping to test it with?"

"Yes!"

He glowers.

"I mean, no!"

Now his eyebrow quirks.

"I mean, yes, I need some of it, but no, it's not for me."

Sneer fading, he maintains the one highly arched eyebrow.

"I can't tell you a name without the person's permission, but it's for someone I know, someone who really needs it. Would it be possible for me to have a vial? I'd be willing to help you with brewing. Or do you sell it?"

His smirk of amusement returns, but he offers no further answer.

"Of course, you sell it! That's how you fund the resistance, isn't it?"

"Yes, Ms. Granger. It turns out that there are a number of women who believe they have the right to control their fertility." His expression grows somewhat smug. "And I am *the* black-market Potions maker for all of London."

*B. I. B. Potions – of course. He does all of that himself! Amazing.*

He appears faintly pleased at my appreciative grin and reaches out to run a finger down my forearm and along the back of my hand.

Fire burns across my skin.

*Circe!*

Smirking fully, he explains in a low voice, "Decree 49 – no public touching that conveys affection."

I swallow and say a little breathlessly, "But we aren't in public."

"Then I suppose I shall have to do it again."

*AN: Please review – it'll save me from Thinking Pink!*

## Purple-Pink #7

*Chapter 7 of 11*

The Dark Lord has fallen, but an even more terrible force has arisen to take over the Ministry of Magic – the Pink Lord. Ruling with an abundance of ruffles and terrifyingly sharp stiletto heels, Umbridge's Think Pink Brigade terrorizes a populace grown weary of decrees designed to enforce sweetness. Unexpectedly, Hermione Granger joins the resistance, the sarcastically snarky Back in Black.

*Disclaimer: Not mine; no money.*

*Thanks go to my beta, Southern Witch 69.*

## **Purple-Pink #7**

*April 15th, 5:14 pm*

The after-work crowd is a dense mass of pastel confusion, as per usual. It's one of the reasons that the Two-Minute Handshake is held at this time of day it actually fits into people's schedules fairly easily, preventing them from feeling overly inconvenienced.

There's about a minute left, and I haven't spotted Marion yet.

*Where **is** she?*

She's wanted this for months or probably even longer since I'm sure it took her some time to work up the courage to approach me about it.

*She'll be here. Nothing has happened to her. She'll be here.*

The vial of Strigo Conceptus Potion seems to burn my hand as I play with it in my pocket. Amazing to think that such a tiny thing is grounds for immediate arrest for Mis-Behavior. I could be Pinked within the hour. Such thoughts speed my already racing heart, and my stomach clenches uncomfortably. I probably would feel a bit less anxious if my nerves weren't already stretched due to a week of sleepless nights.

*But the plan! It's worth everything I can do if it works.*

Finally, with only seconds to spare, a breathless "Hello" sounds from behind my right shoulder. I keep walking, assuming she'll follow.

The Announcement Witch's voice rings out over the crowd. As she admonishes us to feel an unreasonable fervor for Proper Handshakes in her overly sweet voice, I turn to face Marion.

She actually doesn't look as anxious as I feel. Although, of course, I hope I don't appear nervous either.

It's a shame it was too risky to give her the vial at the library, but even more books have been banned in the last week, and the shelves offer no protection whatsoever from the Watch Witch poster.

Leaving us with this.

As the Two-Minute Handshake officially begins, I remove my hand from my pocket while palming the vial. Keeping our hands low, Marion grasps my hand strongly and holds on.

This is the tricky bit, but the crowd around us helps to conceal our hands from view.

On the surface, we continue to flash each other Proper Smiles while doing a Proper Handshake. In actuality, we're maneuvering so that it is her palm and fingers that will cup and hide the vial as we separate.

*Goddess, is that man watching us? Oh, no wait. He's looking at the woman on my right he's just gone up to her oh, thank Circe!*

Letting out one relieved breath, I then feel my heart skip a beat when I realize that everyone around us has already changed partners. We've held the Handshake longer than is officially Proper. I give Marion's hand one last squeeze and begin to disengage, moving my body in front of hers so no one will see her slip the vial into her pocket. I meet her eyes one last time and turn quickly to my right as she turns to hers.

It goes completely smoothly my careful preparation paying off.

*Perhaps that means my master plan is also a good one?*

Reaching for the hand of a pale-blue-clad young man in front of me, I make sure to grip with appropriate enthusiasm. I repeat the scenario for three more people: an elderly woman with Pale Pink #1 hair, which is a recent trend, a middle-aged man in beige who's Proper Smile is too lopsided, and a young woman who's covered in Pink #3 lace from the tip of her pointed hat to the tip of her dangerously pointed boot.

It's when I'm finishing my Proper Handshake with an elderly man in bone-colored robes that the Announcement Witch simpers, "And now citizens the Two-Minute Handshake may be over, but move from the middle of the way and remain where you are."

The hot pink squeal of the Seriously Serious Siren sounds briefly before cutting out to be replaced by the marching sound of Umbridge's Think Pink Brigade.

*Goddess! We've been reported!*

The press of bodies around me grows denser, and I'm pushed along with the crowd to one side of the lane. I'm unable to move more than a few inches in any direction, and my breath comes in quick, shallow pants. My heart speeds to synchronize with the sound of rapid footfalls.

The stomping grows louder and is joined by a second noise. Overall, it's a strange combination of the quick thud of boots one can't take long strides in coupled with the squeak of stiff leather that never seems to break-in because doing so would sacrifice shape.

As they stomp/squeak into view, I'm torn between the desire to flee in terror or laugh hysterically. It leaves me feeling a bit light-headed.

At some point in time, someone, perhaps Umbridge herself, had the idea that a police force would look more commanding in leather. But to disguise the fact that it was a militaristic unit, they decided the leather should be Pink Pink #5 to be exact. When that still didn't pass muster, the leather was changed to patent leather.

Every footfall is synchronized, every arm swing in harmony. From far enough away, they look like the inevitable flood of an alien river a river on a technicolor world that most likely exists in an alternate dimension where the laws of physics as we know them are regularly violated.

*Circe, I watched too much strange telly as a child!*

Suppressing my desire to giggle hysterically, I affix a Proper Smile firmly to my face. I can feel the thud of my heartbeat in my chest it keeps time with the marching.

The first ranks reach where I am. I hold my breath, waiting for them to stop and turn in my direction. My stomach twists and plunges as if I'm falling.

*Keep going, effing keep going!*

I'm fairly sure my Proper Smile resembles a skull's grimace by now and that I'm baring too much enamel. But I can't seem to relax the muscles of my face.

As the pink tide keeps flowing past, I breathe a little easier, and my heart slows to where I can no longer feel it banging against my ribs.

The squeaking is louder up close. It's now a combination of the boots and the creak of bizarre leather robes that look an awfully lot like Muggle trench coats complete with

belts drawn tight to emphasize waists. In addition, the marching itself grows ever more unreal the longer it's observed the stiletto heels make their steps short and mincing, yet the most thunderous noise arises with every footfall. A charm obviously, but one with an effect that disconnects perception from known reality.

Ruffles emerge from the patent leather at every point possible like stuffing erupting from an overly squeezed plush toy. Pink #5 patent leather, pointed hats drip lace in such abundance that another charm has been used to keep the masses of it from hindering the sight of the following rows of Think Pinkers.

But perhaps the most disturbing thing about the Think Pink Brigade is the expression on their eerily similar faces. Proper Smiles have never looked so Proper or so plastic. A crack team of Muggle scientists would be hard pressed to find even a millimeter's variance amongst their Smiles in any dimension. Similarly, their eyes share an empty expression even though surrounded by the crinkles of forced joviality it's not meanness or hatred or any emotion it's an empathy-less void.

*Is there anyone in there? Anyone at all?*

I shiver as the last of the ranks stomp/squeak past.

*It's no matter the Pink Party can be fooled; my plan will work that's all I need know.*

~~~

I Apparate into my Mandatory Visiting Area and jump a bit when Watcher Marple's voice emerges from my left.

"There you are, deary. I was just beginning to wonder about you. 'Where's she got herself off to this time,' I was just saying not two seconds before you arrived."

I shouldn't be so surprised. Decree 37 gave the Pink Party complete access to everyone's home when it dictated Apparition admittance.

She's in Pale Pink #3 and appears to have taken the lace and appliqué route to hideousness as an alternative to her normal ruffled look. The large Pink #5 blooms added to her blouse resemble some strange flesh-eating plant, and I'm almost certain that the stamens in the middle of them are capable of performing some sort of surveillance all on their own.

"Watcher Marple, what a pleasant surprise. Why, I stopped for the Two-Minute Handshake, as I like to do."

"Oh, was it that time?"

*I don't believe your innocent routine, you interfering cow, so out with it already!*

I can feel my Proper Smile start to harden, so I quickly ask, "Was there something specific I can do for you, Watcher Marple?"

"Actually, deary, it's something I can do for you." Her Proper Smile shades into slyness, and I wonder if she's hoping I'll grovel.

*Not bloody likely!*

After I don't reply, she continues, "I've never seen the like, but your Community Service transfer went through in a trice. You join the Elegant Embroidery Committee tonight."

*Snape! He did it.*

*And I'll get to see Ginny regularly. That speeds things along nicely.*

"That's wonderful news, Watcher Marple! I can't wait to make my clothes more decorative and pretty just like yours."

*I wonder if a Proper Smile plus sarcasm equals a smirk.*

*AN: Pink #5 used to be referred to as hot pink before the highly improved and much more accurate Pink Scale was created and implemented by a team of top researchers.*

*Please review it'll save me from Thinking Pink!*

## Purple-Pink #8

### Chapter 8 of 11

The Dark Lord has fallen, but an even more terrible force has arisen to take over the Ministry of Magic – the Pink Lord. Ruling with an abundance of ruffles and terrifyingly sharp stiletto heels, Umbridge's Think Pink Brigade terrorizes a populace grown weary of decrees designed to enforce sweetness. Unexpectedly, Hermione Granger joins the resistance, the sarcastically snarky Back in Black.

*Disclaimer: Not mine; no money.*

*Thanks go to my beta, Southern Witch 69.*

### Purple-Pink #8

*April 15th, 8:09 pm*

Ginny and I Portkey directly into the headquarters of Back in Black.

As I shove the lace doily into a pocket, I suddenly realize that this may be the only domicile in all of Wizarding England that has a fully functioning Anti-Apparition Charm in place that *blocks* the Pink Party.

*Although that's also because the Party doesn't know it exists. I'd still love to know how Snape managed that. I'm starting to think he may actually be even more intelligent*

than I'd previously realized.

And I always considered him bloody brilliant.

"Hello?" When there's no response, she turns to me and says, "See I told you Snape is usually out this time of evening delivering potions. It gives us time to chat."

I sink onto the closest chair and groan. "Goddess, Ginny, I don't know how you do it! I thought Pretty Pillows was bad, but Elegant Embroidery! The members are just so ... so ..."

"Proper?"

"Yes, Proper! I nearly cracked when Ms. Ellowby began crying over botching her rose. And she was Smiling all the while! It was so sad that she takes it so seriously, and yet ..."

"You can't help wanting to laugh." She takes the seat next to me.

I sigh out a "yes" and look at her. "It's so good to see you, Ginny, to be able to actually talk to you."

"If I'd known you were going to join Back in Black, I'd have told you to switch absolutely ages ago. But it was easier to pretend without anyone I knew around." She turns her smile on me, her real smile it's always been too large to be Proper. "But you're here now!"

"Yes, finally!"

We laugh for a bit, and I reach over to hug her.

*When was the last time I hugged anyone? Circe it may have been the day Percy died. I found Molly in the kitchen at the Burrow, and with no one else around at that moment to report us, I hugged her.*

*I'm not sure which of us needed it more.*

As we separate, her smile grows positively mischievous. "Fred and George told me you saw the same phrase on the sign as Snape."

"Yes, Libre Libri, but no one will tell me what it means."

"Well, freedom through books, I'd think." She smirks.

"I sussed as much." I give her a stern mock glare that quickly slips into a grin. "Seriously, what does it mean that Snape and I got the same message?"

"It's something to do with compatibility. Fred and George's sayings were quite close, as you might imagine: Fred had Libre Chaos and George Libre Exlegis. But mine was fairly different, even though we're siblings; I got Libre Feminae. And Lee, he's their best mate, right, but his was Libre Vox."

"And all of that means "

"It means, Ms. Granger," Snape's voice says from the laboratory doorway as we startle slightly and look towards him, "that you and I share an exact conception of what is the most important freedom allowed to humanity. For two such swots, as I believe we were deemed, access to knowledge, and specifically written knowledge, is our most precious right."

His eyes seem to bore into mine as he continues. "Such goes beyond mere ideas of compatibility."

My heart races, and I pray I'm not blushing, though I do feel a bit warm.

*What am I to say to that? He still hasn't fully explained what it means.*

As I continue to watch him, he lifts one eyebrow in challenge, but I maintain my silence, waiting for him to continue.

Ginny shifts restlessly in her seat, and I glance towards her, breaking the tension.

When I face him once more, Snape decides to change topics. "And your assignation today how did that fare?"

"Things went well. The Two-Minute Handshake provided the perfect opportunity. Thank you again for suggesting it."

"It is not me you should be thanking. It was Ms. Weasley who conceived of such a method for the exchange of materials."

I turn to Ginny. "You came up with that? It's brilliant! What do you use it for?"

She grins. "Who do you think dispenses most of the Contraceptive Potion for the resistance? That's actually why I rotate my other community Service Committees so often. I keep Elegant Embroidery for the appearance of stability, but I cycle through all of the others regularly, making contacts with as many women as I can."

"And that works?" My voice expresses the surprise I can feel my face showing. "I'd have thought you'd have been nicked by now!"

"Well, I'm good at reading people." Her smile morphs into a full on smirk. "And I make good use of the variation on Veritas serum Snape came up with. Has he told you about it?"

I nod, looking over to see him smirking and watching me. "Yes just last week when he showed me his laboratory."

*And how absolutely amazing it is a variation that compels people to speak the truth without direct questions one that works when absorbed through the skin!*

"Using it," Ginny continues, "I can usually find one person per Committee, and typically they have like-minded friends."

*I never knew she was this devious! How wonderful!*

My gobsmacked expression must be amusing because she laughs and says, "You see I've always been able to get away with more than the twins. People don't suspect me because I'm a 'girl.'" The last is said with a note of scorn.

"Indeed, Ms. Weasley is our most successful operative." He pauses to allow his smirk to grow to full force. "Although, one could say that her numbers are artificially inflated due to the fact that she seems to use a fair amount of it personally ever since Mr. Jordan entered the picture."

I give a surprised bark of laughter and notice Ginny fingering her wand somewhat purposefully.

Shifting his attention to me, Snape offers, "In fact, you may very well be as successful some day."

"Not very likely," I reply. "I don't think I'll ever be as good at interacting with people as Ginny's always been."

*Do it, Granger!*

"Having said that, I do realize that I have talents in other areas." I take a breath and continue. "I'd like to go ahead and tell everyone my plan."

His eyebrow cocks again, but he gives a small nod. "Very well, if you will allow me one half hour, I will gather the more troublesome members."

I watch him as he swoops out of the room, black robes aflutter.

When I turn to her, Ginny looks as if she's about to say something, so I speak quickly. "All right, Ginny, you've got to tell me absolutely everything you do for Back in Black! And what's this about you and Lee?"

She blushes prettily, and her smile is blinding. "Well, he's got to practice that voice of his on someone, now doesn't he?"

~~~

Lee Portkeys in and joins Ginny at the table, giving her a kiss on the cheek and whispering something into her ear that causes her laugh to ring out and fill the room.

The twins' protesting "Oi" is quickly silenced by a particularly fierce glare from Ginny.

As the noise of their bantering conversation fills the room, Snape must have come from his laboratory because suddenly he's behind me. His hand pulls my hair back away from my right shoulder, lingering to trace my upper back, and he leans in towards my newly exposed ear. "Do you consider that this qualifies as breaking Decree 49, Ms. Granger?"

*Goddess!*

I nod as I feel a tingling warmth rush through me.

After a brief moment, he continues past me to stand at the head of the table, his profile affording me a view of one side of his lips they're quirked.

And I'm staring at his hands, his legs, his shoulders my awareness of his physicality as a man suddenly activated electricity running through a circuit left dormant for years.

My whole body hums with energy.

*Focus, Granger there's no time for this now!*

George chooses that moment to begin the meeting in his own particular way. "Oi, now, Snape, you wanker. What's the hurry?"

"Why'd you effing call us all in on a sodding "

" off day. We had Voluntary Extra Community Service "

" we did. Pretty Parks. We were to plant some more "

" bloody bushes roses, of course Pink ones."

"Yeah, Snape," adds Lee in his rich rumble, "we had another hour to go tonight, and all of us using the Puking Pastilles at once looks dodgy. You know the Extra Service is supposed to be our main way of avoiding suspicion, not adding to it. What's worth compromising that?"

Snape says nothing, merely raising an eyebrow and stepping away from the head of the table to take a seat.

*All right the speech has been memorized for two days show time.*

I move forward to take his place. "He didn't do it for himself he did it for me. And I hope you all agree that what I have to say is important enough for me to have called this emergency meeting." I pause to take a deep breath. "It's been over two years since the Pink Lord rose to power due to the Final Battle deaths sustained by the upper ranks of the Ministry. Who would have ever guessed at that time that Scrimgeour and the rest joining in would be a negative, eh?"

Everyone chuckles a bit, but it's a bitter sound.

"The twins have been saying that something drastic has to occur in order to rouse the populace to action. As we all saw, Decree 309 failed to inspire the hoped-for public resistance. Therefore I agree with them."

I pause to make eye contact with every person, and all restless fidgeting stops.

"You see ... over the last two weeks, I've heard your stories, been reminded of your strengths, and I've spent the last week putting it all together." I flick my wand to reveal three large charts that diagram the plot that's been forming in my mind and keeping me up nights. "I won't lie to you timing on this is going to be very tight. But I have a plan." I pause and catch their eyes again. "A major plan."

They all watch me intently.

"I know how we can bring down the Pink Lord."

*AN: What does all that Latin mean? Well, chaos is the same as in English, exlegis = lawlessness, feminae = women, and vox = voice.*

*Please review it'll save me from Thinking Pink!*

## Dove-Grey #9

*Chapter 9 of 11*

The Dark Lord has fallen, but an even more terrible force has arisen to take over the Ministry of Magic – the Pink Lord. Ruling with an abundance of ruffles and terrifyingly sharp stiletto heels, Umbridge's Think Pink Brigade terrorizes a



populace grown weary of decrees designed to enforce sweetness. Unexpectedly, Hermione Granger joins the resistance, the sarcastically snarky Back in Black.

*Disclaimer: Not mine; no money.*

*Thanks go to my beta, Southern Witch 69.*

*wsandrs went to a humongous amount of trouble to make these wonderful Pink Scales for everyone to goggle at (and shudder over)! Thank you, wsandrs!*



## Dove-Grey #9

*May 1st, 9:12 am*

"Budge over a bit, deary. There's a good girl."

I grind my teeth and keep my Proper Smile firmly in place as Watcher Marple settles into the seat on my right.

She wouldn't need so much space if her Pink #5 clothing weren't excessively wider than she is. But it's Umbridge's May Day Speech, so the Watch Witch has pulled out all the stops: ruffles, lace, embroidery, and appliqué with some sequins and feathers thrown in.

I make sure to unfocus my eyes whenever I look in her general direction.

Not that I can say I look much better. My outfit today is a hasty conglomeration of my new skill at Elegant Embroidery coupled with Ginny's Artful Appliqués and Molly's Lovely Lace. Leafy embroidery runs along the button placket of my blouse, with matching needlework on the cuffs and collar, and lace trims its edges. To make up for such austerity, however, Ginny applied an abundance of pansies, complaining that at least for one day I needed look the part of a dedicated Pink Party member. At least it's all in Purple Pink #1-3.

Watcher Marple flutters a handkerchief dripping in lace as I cast another glance in her direction. Her single arm movement sets up a sickening undulation in all her extra layers and additions they seem to heave with a life of their own.

I take it back I can definitively say I do look much better.

"I'm just so proud, I am. Why, I was saying to Watcher Rugobode just the other day, 'Our Hermione's really come into her own.'" She gestures again, and I look away before my stomach lurches. "And to think, I'm here as your sponsor!"

*Which is the real reason you're so pleased, you cow.*

"Thank you again, for nominating me for a 'Most Improved Attitude Award,'" I simper. Two full weeks of absolutely nauseating obsequiousness towards her, combined with strings pulled by Snape's Ministry connection, made sure I was one of the ten citizens chosen to win.

All of which means I'm sitting on the stage that flanks the main one on the right. It's raised enough to allow me a relatively unhindered view of the crowd even though I still have to look up, of course, to see Umbridge.

And what a homogeneous crowd it is. Not only is everyone Smiling and wearing pastels, with Pink abounding, but every single being present is human. It really isn't until an event like this that I'm fully reminded of the fate of all other magical beings under the Pink Party. Except for the goblins, who are barely tolerated due to their control of Wizarding finances, all others have been hunted to the brink of extinction or turned into slaves. And none are allowed to come to public events.

Yet if the crowd appears eerily similar, it's nothing compared to the systematic uniformity of the Think Pink Brigade, the majority of which is lined up in ranks in front of the central stage. Even though they stand preternaturally still, the mass of Pink #5 patent leather they present appears to seethe if stared at for long. They look intimidating and undefeatable, but I remember my speech of two weeks ago the speech I repeated to myself ad nauseam, permanently imprinting it upon my brain.

*"The Pink Party's biggest mistake is that it assumes it's prevented anyone from working together, from forming a group such as this. The Think Pink Brigade is prepared to defend Umbridge, and it's prepared to handle small, easily contained disturbances. But it's not prepared to face a coordinated attack from multiple fronts its leaders don't even see it as a possibility.*

*"We will exploit this weakness."*

Looking out over the crowd, I'm only able to spot the locations of most of the members of Back in Black because I know exactly where they're supposed to be after all, I put them there. The twins flank the main crowd one on each back corner. Towards the front of the crowd, Lee is on the left side of the central stage, and Snape is on the right almost directly in front of me. Ginny's position is located in the center back of the crowd. That area is somewhat obscured by the May Pole, which is located directly in front of Umbridge's stage and the Think Pink Brigade, so I can only make her out every five minutes or so.

All of the resistance members move slowly, never completely still yet never drifting far from their designated positions.

No one notices them.

*"You shall each appear as one of the Pinked. It has numerous advantages: firstly, the Think Pink Brigade tends to ignore the Pinked as harmless; secondly, regular citizens actively avoid the Pinked, made uncomfortable by the reminder they could be next; and thirdly, if anyone does happen to recognize you, they will simply assume you have been Pinked and they failed to hear of it. You will hide, as it were, in plain sight."*

Even so, we made all three redheads into less-noticeable blonds using smuggled-in Muggle products. That allowed them access through the Polyjuice and Glamour Sensors everyone must pass through upon entering the park Anti-Apparition Charms are, of course, in place.

But the most interesting change is the one Snape underwent he refused to alter his distinctive hair color, even though a potion could restore it immediately, arguing that Black isn't quite as noticeable as ginger. Instead, he applied a potion this morning that caused him to sprout a beard. He looks interesting rather rakish actually.

If he weren't shuffling around in Pale Pink #1, that is.

I can feel my Proper Smile edge towards the unplastic as I watch him.

Drifting closer to the stage in one of his seemingly random tangents, I get a good look at him. I don't think I've ever seen him in anything but Black, unless the bits of white

that used to peek from cuffs and collar count. If I were to choose the worst color possible to dress Severus Snape in, Pink would have to win. It certainly does nothing to brighten his complexion. And it's not just any Pink he's wearing either it's the Pale Pink #1, which is worn only by infants and the Pinked.

Not only is the color unusual, but also the cut of the clothing itself I don't think I've ever seen him in something so unstructured before. The Pinked are dressed in baggy tunic tops and loose drawstring trousers of light-weight cotton, resulting in them resembling patients mental patients.

*Goddess, I wonder what Harry and Ron would say if they could see this!*

*Then again, we should all be grateful that Snape's never cared much for damaging others' perceptions of him if it serves a cause.*

The training he obtained from his years as a spy continues to serve him well his facial expression is eerily exact in terms of matching the vacant pleasantness of the Pinked. He drifts by an elderly woman with his Smile as Proper as any I've seen on the Think Pinkers or the Watch Witch poster. Then he catches my eye, quickly pulling his lips pull back into a feral grin before returning to vapidness once more.

His awkward, shuffling steps are perfect as if he no longer has the presence of mind to pick up his feet fully yet is guided by some animal instinct to keep moving forward. Adding to this puppet-with-strings-cut impression, his arms hang loosely at his sides, fingers open and lax. Even when a young boy accidentally backs into him, Snape doesn't tense his shoulders or curl his fingers neither does his Proper Smile waiver when the boy looks up over his little shoulder in horror.

*Well, it's not as if he's never elicited such an expression before. Just think of poor Neville!*

As if he's just ricocheted off the young lad, he turns and shambles back into his designated area, making it look as if the move were completely random. Approaching a young man in soft green, Snape bobs his head in a nod of hello. I can't hear him due to the distance, but I see his lips move in the catch phrase he's chosen for his act: "Yes, yes. Good day. Top of the morning to you. Good day." Then he turns and repeats the litany for an empty pocket of air.

Suddenly, Watcher Marple shifts beside me, her lace and sequins scratching against the back of my hand as she half leans over me, craning her neck to see something already in her line of sight. "Seems to be winding down a bit, eh?"

I follow her gaze to look at the May Pole, which I'm supposed to have been watching this entire time. "Yes, it does look as if the ribbons are almost completely wrapped."

"Pretty little things, aren't they?"

I umm in what I hope she'll think is agreement.

In actuality, each of little girls participating wears a Pale-Pink #3 ensemble fashioned along the lines of the one Watcher Marple has on. But beyond the hideously overdone clothing and plastically perfect miniature Proper Smiles, it's their movements that are odd. As they move around the May Pole, wrapping Pink #3 ribbons in a complex pattern on its shaft, they do so with mechanical precision. Every step is deliberate, every bob and weave obviously rehearsed. If during my childhood, the dancing girls resembled a joyful flourish of beautiful wild flowers, under Umbridge's regime, they're instead overly gilt lilies ones so gilded their natural mobility is lost.

How apt that they come to a dead halt.

"Well, that's done then. Now on to speech." Fingering her excessively large rings in excitement, the Watch Witch leans back this time, attempting to see around me to the main stage.

The crowd surges forward and in to fill the now available central area. The members of Back in Black move a bit more slowly than the rest in order to remain on the outer edges.

Once people have settled, Umbridge rises from her seat and steps forward to the podium.

And there she stands before me in the flesh for the first time in a year. The Pink Lord. For all that I never liked her that year long ago at Hogwarts, it's nothing compared to the visceral hate she inspires in me today.

*The sodding cow!*

It's actually hard to tell what shape Umbridge is anymore. She currently sports so many layers of ruffles and flounces that she looks like an obscenely large ball of Pink #5 candy floss brought to jiggling life. I now know on whom Watcher Marple bases her recent style choices.

Umbridge's fingers, even from a distance, gleam as though every bit of exposed skin has been encrusted with gems. I doubt she's able to move them from their claw-like shape.

Over the years her hair has turned grey, which Decree 308 disallowed for women, meaning that this year her hair is Pale-Pink #3. It only reinforces the candy-floss imagery as if her brain has been spun out into fine strands of sugar her ideas initially sweet on the surface but soon cloying of no nutritional value and sure to rot the teeth of your mind.

My Proper Smile must contain a manic edge I can feel my teeth grinding. But for once, I do nothing to quell it. Instead, I embrace the thrum of anger surging through my body, channeling it for action.

A quick Sonorous later and the original "hem, hem" is washing over the crowd at ear-splitting volume.

"Citizens of Wizarding Britain, welcome to the annual May Day Celebration. As we gather here today to bask in the bounties of Spring, I wish to remind you of all the wonderful improvements the last year has brought us. First, there are the clarified Proper Smile specifications. No longer will you fear that your fellow citizen will fail to provide the Proper amount of enthusiasm in greeting you. In fact ..."

Ignoring her artificially sweet voice, I withdraw my lace-coated handkerchief from my pocket and flourish it before pretending to dab at my face, all the time using it to hide my wand. Placing my hand in my lap, I vocalize *Obscuro Nebula* internally and point my still-covered wand towards the air above the crowd.

*"At the signal from me, I will begin casting a large-scale Glamour from the stage. Its only effect will be to make everyone see nothing but clear air. At that time, all five of you will begin to spray an atomized form of Snape's Veritas serum variant from your wands. I calculated your positions and the vectors of dispersal in order to affect the largest number of people without wasteful overlap. But you may need to increase the speed of your movements slightly to cover more territory."*

I watch the Think Pink Brigade anxiously, heart pounding now that things have finally begun.

*"It will take five minutes for you to dispense the potion and then three more for it to be absorbed we'll say ten total from the time I give the signal to be on the safe side."*

*"Then things are going to get really interesting."*

*AN: More bad Latin! Obscuro Nebula hopefully means 'obscure the mist.' For fellow Yanks, candy floss = cotton candy.*

*Please review it'll save me from Thinking Pink!*

# Charcoal-Grey #10

Chapter 10 of 11

The Dark Lord has fallen, but an even more terrible force has arisen to take over the Ministry of Magic – the Pink Lord. Ruling with an abundance of ruffles and terrifyingly sharp stiletto heels, Umbridge's Think Pink Brigade terrorizes a populace grown weary of decrees designed to enforce sweetness. Unexpectedly, Hermione Granger joins the resistance, the sarcastically snarky Back in Black.

*Disclaimer: Not mine; no money.*

*Thanks go to my beta, Southern Witch 69.*

## Charcoal-Grey #10

*May 1st, 9:37 am*

The ten minutes are up, and the last of the mist will have dispersed. I breathe a sigh of relief and cast a nonverbal *Finite Incantatem* to cancel the *Obscuro Nebula*. Fortunately, the Think Pink Brigade remains unmoving.

Umbridge's syrupy tones continue to assault the gathering. "... because as we all know a Proper Smile is the most crucial element of any social system built upon the principles of Proper Behavior and ..."

*Circe! She's been waffling on about Proper Smiles for over ten minutes now!*

*It's a good thing it won't be for much longer.*

The crowd begins to shift a bit restlessly, and I can see that the Proper Smiles of the people directly in front of the stage I'm on start to falter.

It's time for the next step.

Sliding my wand surreptitiously up my sleeve, I flourish my handkerchief again.

*"All right, Ginny. All that practice you've been putting in to learn how to wield two wands simultaneously? Well, it's time to put it to use. This year, you'll Levitate Fred and George again, but you'll do so with them on opposite sides of the crowd. If all goes well, the Think Pink Brigade should divide into two smaller units to deal with them."*

As Ginny, a wand in each hand, Levitates the twins so that they each rise above the heads of the people in their respective corners, the Think Pink Brigade reacts almost immediately, splitting in two and marching away from the central stage along the outer edges of the crowd.

The sound of the Brigade's stomp/squeak begins to rival Umbridge's voice as she continues with her speech as if nothing were occurring.

Pink #5 patent leather glinting in the sunlight, arms rising and falling in perfect time, the two groups move with eerie simultaneity. Nervously Smiling people dart anxiously out of their way, pushing towards the center and then forward to fill the now vacated space. Lee and Snape both let themselves be carried close to the central stage.

The movement of the crowd has the added benefit of clearing the path between the advancing Think Pinkers and the Levitating twins.

*"If crowd dynamics go as I predict, Fred and George will have a clear shot at their respective units of the Brigade. But even if there are citizens in the way, it shouldn't matter, because we're going to rely on that Weasley ingenuity of yours to create a special jinx that should only affect the Think Pinkers."*

Using that special bond the twins have, they act synchronously, brandishing their wands in a complex swirl and yelling: "*Congelo Scortea!*"

Brilliant orange light flies from the tips of their wands and rushes to engulf the Think Pinkers.

They freeze in mid-step, poised on one thin stiletto heel apiece, all of their right arms caught at the top of a swinging arc the patent leather of their robes and boots becoming as stiff and immobile as the hard plastic it resembles.

At the same time that their marching stomp/squeak stops abruptly, Umbridge's voice also falls silent, allowing the triumphant whoops of Fred and George to ring over the assembly. It's the most joyous sound yet of this entire celebration.

Finally alerted that something untoward is occurring, Watcher Marple looks forward, gasps, and begins to rise.

*Oh, no you don't!*

One sharp elbow jab to her sternum well, it would have been a sharp jab if she weren't wearing so many layers of ruffles, but it appears to be sharp enough and the Watch Witch doubles over, gasping for breath. A nonverbal *Stupefy* later and she crumples bonelessly beside me.

Everyone else on my platform stares in such gobsmacked wonder at the spectacle before them that they don't even blink as I hit them with Stunners.

But Umbridge appears to have got over her shock and is yelling at the Pink Party members on the central stage to "Get them ... Get those Mis-Behaving freaks" while waving her clawed hands in dizzying flashes of glitter.

*Time for part two.*

Jumping up, I wave my left hand wildly overhead while pointing my wand into the air above the crowd.

Ginny immediately lets the twins down, and all three of them similarly point their wands. Soon after, Snape and Lee mimic our pose.

*"We'll need to create another spell in addition to the one designed to plasticize patent leather. We need to do something showy, something to jar the people from their*

*complacency. We need to provide them with a visual symbol that Umbridge is being overthrown."*

I raise my left fist one, two, three times and on the third count yell, *Coloro Optatus!* A beam of dark purple energy shoots from the end of my wand at the same time that five other streams of magic erupt from the other members of Back in Black.

It takes us a few seconds to correct our aims, but soon all of the beams meet at one point over the center of the mass of people. A ball of swirling dark purple forms and slowly begins to grow.

*"This spell is going to take an amazing amount of power if we're to affect hundreds of people at once. It is not something any one of us could do alone it will take a combined effort. Right before Umbridge banned all non-Ministry research, Cleverly Huxton published an article on how to create a combined spell powered by multiple casters. Although the article itself was also immediately banned, I memorized the theory. Forcing me into that library job in order to crush my morale is going to prove one of the biggest mistakes Umbridge ever made."*

My arm shakes from the strain of holding a spell for such a long time. If it weren't for the added boost of Ginny's second wand and the raw power of the thick beam emanating from Snape, I'm not sure any of this would be possible.

The dark ball of energy grows, and as it does so, it begins to spin ever faster, shooting off small bolts of lightning in varying colors.

*Come on, come on, this has to work!*

Sweat runs down my face, bringing the flavor of salt to my mouth as my lips pull back in a desperate grimace of effort. My right shoulder throbs in pain, and my hand muscles begin to cramp.

Suddenly there's an explosion that's so loud it's felt within my internal organs instead of being heard with my ears.

Colors innumerable, heart-wrenchingly beautiful colors flow over me, joining to create a wave of Black.

When I come to a few seconds later, I'm on my back. Rolling onto my left side, I push up on that arm, leaving my wand hand poised and ready.

And the arm lifting my wand is incased in sage-green silk, my thighs sheathed by a black skirt, which a flick of my wand turns into ever more practical trousers. A similar alteration changes tottering heels to thick-soled boots. Then, purely for vanity's sake, I whisk away the ruffles, lace, and appliqués.

I'm dressed as me for the first time in absolute ages!

And that's exactly the feeling I'm hoping we've created in almost everyone here today.

I stand quickly to look out over a felled crowd that, while still all human, no longer appears homogenous. A rainbow of colors decorates the people here a young woman in heart-stopping red, there an elderly man in Albus's favorite deep purple, next a middle-aged man in warm chocolate brown, then a little girl in brilliant canary yellow. The variety goes on and on.

Searching in his general vicinity, I spot Snape. He's one of the first standing.

And he's Back in Black.

I grin, and when he catches my eye, he raises an eyebrow before casually flicking his beard away with a quick wand movement.

We're both smirking.

But something brushes my ankle, and I look down to see a befuddled Watcher Marple stirring feebly. If everyone who happens to be in front of me wears clothing in a variety of colors, seeing her reminds me of the one other facet we'd built into the spell.

*"While almost everyone's clothes will change to the color of their desire, if we apply the correct intent while casting, the spell will also show us exactly who is actually loyal to the Party. They will, as you may expect, be clothed in Pink."*

Casting another *Stupefy* followed by an *Incarcerous* on her Pink #5 clad form, I turn towards the stage.

About two thirds of the people thereon, around a dozen say, still don varying shades of Pink. While the ones wearing other colors scramble down the stairs and run forwards to disappear into the crowd, the loyal Party members form a circle around Umbridge. For once, the Anti-Apparition Charm works in *our* favor.

*"Everyone is going to be confused at first, even our enemies. Since they should all be wearing Pink, we'll move to Stun them as quickly as possible. Ginny, you and the twins will work your way forwards from the back. Any of the Think Pink Brigade who are loyal will still be held by the leather-hardening spell, so concentrate on the crowd. Lee, Snape, and I will rush the stages. Lee, as soon as you have the left-hand stage subdued, you will make an announcement to the people I leave the exact wording up to you. Snape and I will handle the central stage and Umbridge."*

After casting *Incarcerous* on three more Pink-clad people on my stage, I catch Snape's eye again and flick my head sideways towards where Umbridge awaits.

He nods and moves forward to join me, cutting through the confused and milling people easily, wearing his preferred frock coat and trousers.

*He looks good.*

*What do I mean he looks good? He looks like himself.*

*Well, then, his self looks good.*

*You've got to focus, Granger.*

My eyes flicker to the assemblage behind him. More and more people are slowly getting to their feet. Many appear dazed.

None Smile Properly.

Not that there aren't expressions of joy there are only they're true ones. I see one woman look down at her dark-green dress and grin happily; a little boy runs by in deep blue, whooping and jumping; a laughing man reaches down to pet yes, pet his dark-brown shoes.

And instead of the stultifying silence of a well-behaved crowd, the sound of tens of voices begins to swell, adding new notes as the Veritaserum compels more and more people to vocalize their real thoughts.

And underneath the sounds of joy, there hums a growing buzz of anger.

*Perfect!*

*As long as Lee can keep them from lynching anyone, that is.*

Snape reaches me, and I turn my attention from the crowd. Quickly mounting the stairs side-by-side with him, I find my heart racing even before the first bolt of red flies towards me. I immediately begin firing nonverbal hexes into the mass of Pink surrounding Umbridge.

While Snape knows a variety of spells, as I can tell from the differing colors flying from his wand, I keep mine simple. Even if we're not saying them out loud, there's still a time difference in thinking six or seven syllables versus three.

As a witch on the left is thrown back by a jinx from Snape, one on my right screams, *Crucio!* while pointing her wand at me.

My heart gives a start, and my stomach clenches, as I barely have time to take the breath necessary to shout out a *Protego!*

She falls to the platform writhing in agony when the bounced spell hits her squarely on her lace-covered chest.

There's no time to cancel the spell affecting her as an approaching wizard steps around her writhing form and makes a slashing motion towards my head with his wand.

Ducking quickly, I lunge forward to come up under his out-flung arm and jam my wand into his stomach while shouting, *Impedimenta!* No use keeping that one silent he wasn't about to be able to block it.

As he flies backwards to crash into three people behind him, I cast a quick *ncarcerous* to ensure he won't cause any more problems anytime soon. Three quick Stunners take care of the somewhat dazed Pink Party members he knocked over, but I'm panting now from a potent combination of adrenaline and exertion. My hands vibrate.

I glance up to see only three more people guarding Umbridge. Then there's a flash of blue and a short scream sounds from one before they fall to the platform completely silent. Make it two.

But those two are Mayona Counterblossom the Commander of the Think Pink Brigade and one of the best duelers known and Dietrick Malmentis, who runs the Behavioral Reconditioning Camps and is single-handedly responsible for creating the Pinking Process quite the nasty piece of work, he is.

Colors flashing to my left indicate Snape is exchanging hexes with Counterblossom at a lightning pace.

Barely deflecting an *Incendio* from Malmentis, I fire off a nonverbal *Stupefy*, but he blocks it.

My intestines give another lurch, and a sick feeling washes outwards over me, temporarily weakening my limbs.

*I can't outfight him.*

*Well, then, Granger, don't play his game!*

The first syllable of *Crucio!* is just crossing his lips when I dive to my right. The hard impact with the platform sends pain shooting from my right elbow, and the air hisses out of my lungs.

Even though he turns to track my movement, he doesn't lower his wand enough to account for my new lack of height, and the Unforgivable hisses through the air above my left hip.

*Come on do it!*

Remaining on my right side, I rear back my left leg and kick him as strongly as possible on the kneecap. The grotesque pop of it dislocating is almost drowned out by his scream as he falls and clutches at the damaged appendage.

Unfortunately, touching it makes it hurt even worse. He actually hits the note of the Seriously Serious Siren for a moment, and I wonder if the crowd cringes in conditioned response.

Then I realize that the overwhelming wall of sound coming from the crowd will drown out any noise Malmentis could make before it reaches six feet.

I lay panting for three quick breaths, rolling off my injured arm and flexing it a few times to determine that it still works. Lifting my left hand, I wipe away the sweat that's just beginning to sting my eyes.

Then I Stun him.

*Goddess I'm glad I read that Muggle self-defense book even if I didn't get the chance to use much of it during the Final Battle, knowledge always proves out in the end.*

Scrambling to my feet, I realize there's no one standing but me and Umbridge, who appears frozen in shock.

I smirk.

*Just like her Brigade!*

A quick glance to the left shows Snape half lying, half sitting on the platform, still conscious and using *ncarcerous* to bind the fallen Party members. He flicks his head towards Umbridge and nods.

But I remain still, spellbound, because Lee's voice suddenly resounds from the left stage. "People of the Wizarding World, the members of Back in Black bid you joy on this momentous occasion!" There's no note of seduction in this voice our purpose today is to lead. Instead, he conveys a compelling mixture of warmth and determination. "Because today, we can change the tide of history. Today, we can overthrow a tyrannical leader and make sure none of her stooges takes her place. Today, we can rise up and let it be known that we have had enough!" Each point is punctuated by him throwing his left arm up and forward with hand open instead of closed into a fist.

The approving roar from the crowd is deafening after years of enforced silence.

As the rumble gradually fades, Lee gestures to the people that he'd like to begin the next section. Right as he chooses to do so, a loud screech of anger from nearby draws me back to my immediate surroundings.

*Umbridge appears to have realized things might not be going her way.*

"You!" Umbridge squeals in a voice made even more irritatingly high-pitched than usual. "You can't do this! I'll have you arrested for Mis-Behavior. I'll have you Pinked! Do you know who I am?"

*Or maybe she hasn't. Circe! She doesn't even have her wand out.*

"Why, yes, I do." I'm sure my smirk rivals Snape's in sheer sardoniness. Finally facing her, I'm completely calm my heart beat and breathing normal, my hands steady. "You're a sad individual who should never have been given power."

I take a step towards her, and she flinches.

"Any kind of power."

With my next step, she raises her empty bejeweled hands to push at the air in front of her.

"Ever."

Her tiny eyes seem to shrink further as I raise my wand. It's as if the Pink clothing and the Pink hair and the Pink world she created would always be enough to keep her safe.

But it isn't.

Not from me.

Not from Back in Black.

"*Fusco Incarcerous!*"

As the ropes leap from my wand to wrap her tightly, I laugh at the look on her face when she sees the results of my spell variation. She has every right to be horrified. As disgusting as she appears in Pink, she actually does look worse in Black.

*AN: More bad Latin! Congelo Scorteia = harden leather garment, Coloro Optatus = color desired, and Fusco = blackened.*

*Only one more chapter remaining.*

*Please review it'll save me from Thinking Pink!*

## Back in Black #11

*Chapter 11 of 11*

The Dark Lord has fallen, but an even more terrible force has arisen to take over the Ministry of Magic – the Pink Lord. Ruling with an abundance of ruffles and terrifyingly sharp stiletto heels, Umbridge's Think Pink Brigade terrorizes a populace grown weary of decrees designed to enforce sweetness. Unexpectedly, Hermione Granger joins the resistance, the sarcastically snarky Back in Black.

*Disclaimer: Not mine; no money.*

*Thanks go to my beta, Southern Witch 69. And Crinna made me this amazing banner that's a Back in Black poster to paste over all the Watch Witch ones! Thank you, Crinna!*



### Back in Black #11

*May 1st, 10:38 pm*

"You should have seen it, Hermione!" Ginny laughs with glee. "Even before Lee started his speech, people were joining in and helping. There was this one older Witch well, she took out her wand and started jinxing this young man wearing Pink robes with boils and blindness and a few other things I'd never even heard of! Turns out he'd been her Watch Wizard, and he'd made her life miserable by Apparating into her house at all hours of the night for the last two years."

I laugh. "And no one stopped her?"

She looks at me with an incredulous expression on her face. "Stop her? People wanted to join her!" Grinning mischievously, she continues, "But when she finally wound down, I did *Stupefy* him just to stop him whinging."

We're still laughing when Lee and the twins wander back from the drinks cabinet.

"Here, now what's this? Fun without us?" Lee asks as he sets two firewhiskeys on the table in order to wrap his arms around Ginny from behind.

Fred hands me my glass and says, "Oi none of that!"

"Sod off!" Ginny smirks. "You two are just envious because Kath and Suze are working tonight."

"What?" I say, looking back and forth between the twins. "You two are seeing someone ... er ... someones? And they're working at this time of night?"

"Yeah, well, until they get the bloody mess sorted "

" the Aurors are the only sodding thing besides Dad "

" that's really functioning at the Ministry right now."

"And only about a third of the Aurors "

" hadn't been turned by the effing Pink Party "

" so Susan and Katherine are going to be busy "

" for an effing long while."

"Wait I can't get my head 'round this yet just who are you seeing?"

Lee laughs and casts a playfully disparaging look at Fred and George. "It'll take these two forever, and believe me, you don't want to hear some of what they have to say."

Blushing brightly, which is really something to see on a Weasley, the twins look slightly abashed for about three seconds before grinning hugely.

"Go on, then, mate," prompts George.

"It was about two weeks after last year's May Day Speech, if I remember correctly and I should remember correctly, as I've heard the story repeatedly and in great detail." Laughing, he slides one hand from Ginny to pick up and sip at his drink. "Two members of the Think Pink Brigade caught up with our boys here on the far end of Knockturn Alley. They handcuffed the troublesome two and Apparated them to an old abandoned building somewhere in Muggle London. The Think Pinkers then proceeded with questioning. After about seven hours, ginger fortitude caved, and these two admitted they'd pulled the stunt on May Day."

I look over to see the twins still grinning.

"Then, instead of taking them to the Ministry to turn them in, they ..." Lee's deep voice breaks into laughter, and his arm convulsively tightens around Ginny.

"They asked Fred and George," Ginny continues, but she's gasping out the words between bouts of hiccupping chuckles, "if they still knew ... how to do ... the Engorgement Charm!"

The laughter that erupts from me is shocking in its suddenness and intensity. My whole body shakes, and my eyes begin to water as I struggle to catch my breath.

*Goddess! I'm glad I hadn't just taken a drink! I either would have sprayed it over everyone or aspirated it!*

Once we've all calmed somewhat, a still grinning Fred adds, "And they didn't take the handcuffs off for a while "

" a long while. It was bloody brilliant!" seconds George.

Smiling hugely, the two look at one another, jittering anxiously. After a few moments, Fred flicks his head towards the door, and George nods in agreement before turning back to the rest of us to say, "Well, they might not be working "

" quite this late. So we'll just be off."

The chorus of farewells is a quick one they appear to be in a bit of a hurry.

"I think that's our cue as well," Lee says, looking at Ginny with heat in his eyes.

She matches his gaze, grinning widely. "You may be right about that." Then she turns to me. "How about you, Hermione? You going to be okay?"

"Me? I'll be fine. Off with you, now." I make shooing hand gestures. "I'll just tell Snape we're all going, and then I'm off to bed myself."

Her grin, if anything, becomes even more mischievous. As I hug her goodbye, she says quietly enough that Lee can't hear, "I'll just bet you are."

*Circe! Am I that obvious?*

*And is he even truly interested?*

"Evil woman," I whisper back, and she chuckles.

Then I'm standing in the middle of what I've been thinking of as headquarters for the past month, but which suddenly morphs in my mind into Snape's sitting room.

Perhaps noticing the sudden silence, he emerges from his laboratory, where he'd gone to write up detailed notes on the effect of dispensing an aerosol form of his Veritaserum variant.

He's back to trousers and shirtsleeves again, everything in Black.

I feel the thrum of awareness run through me as strongly as it last did two weeks ago: his presence, his body.

His increasingly intense gaze.

Although I'm able to keep my breathing steady, my heart races.

"Ms. Granger, I was hoping to speak to you alone."

*Oh, really?*

He walks farther into the room. "While I can understand the celebratory mood you and the others are experiencing today, I feel that you are able to hear something more serious at this time."

The icy sensation of disappointment crashes over me.

*Oh ... so he really was just flirting to break the Decrees.*

Nodding, I set down the glass I've been toying with. The ice has melted enough to dilute the Ogden's to watery tastelessness anyways.

"We face a difficult time, Ms. Granger. The Wizengamot must be reinstated; the top-half of the Ministry re-staffed; the Auror division brought up to full strength. And all of this can only be accomplished if we have the right Minister someone with the intelligence and determination to rebuild our world.

"For it is never enough to simply dispose of a despot one must place a positive leader in their stead."

"So ... you're going to be Minister." My voice conveys the sinking sensation of my stomach.

*Was this all just some hungry grab for power?*

He snorts. "Hardly. Even if my true loyalties were revealed in the Final Battle, I will always be known as Dumbledore's killer.

"No, Ms. Granger, what the people will need to recover their sense of self after this mind-numbing tragedy of an administration is a Minister they trust, admire, and like implicitly." He pauses to quirk an eyebrow before dropping his voice. "Such as a War Hero."

*War Hero? Besides Snape, there's only Arthur left alive of the older generation he's been helping Back in Black all along, but ?*

"A War Hero," he continues, "whom the masses observed personally defeat the Pink Lord."

"Me?" It comes out as a squeak of shock.

"Do you know anyone else to whom I could be referring?"

I shake my head briefly.

*So he plans to use me, does he?*

I snort.

*Not bloody likely!*

I feel my facial expression harden and the pulse of anger run through my veins. "So you expect to be the power behind the Minister?"

He moves closer, smirk in place. "Behind, on top of, underneath I think you'll find, Ms. Granger, that I am able to enjoy multiple positions."

*Goddess!*

Ire dissipating rapidly, I feel my own smirk emerge as a different kind of flush runs through my body. "All right, then the power underneath the Minister."

He laughs without any sarcastic undertone. "Do not think me foolish enough to assume you will be controlled thusly. In fact, I would have no desire to do so if you were. It is readily apparent that the only reason I was able to persuade you to join the resistance was due to your own desire to overthrow the pastel menace. And within a month of becoming a member of Back in Black, you triumphed as a leader."

His voice drops to a lower, deeper register. "You are a force to be reckoned with."

I take a half step forward and reach out to run an index finger down the front of his frock coat. "And do you feel up to reckoning with such a force?"

His half step brings us only inches apart as his hand raises to clasp mine to his chest. "I shall do my damnedest."

I tip my head up and meet his intense gaze. "I've seen your damnedest."

He leans forward. "Yes?"

I smirk slightly. "As long as you've got expert direction from above, it's good." As our lips whisper over each other's in a first, electric kiss that thrums through my entire being, I murmur, "Very good indeed."

## **Fade to Black**

*AN: Please review it'll keep me thinking Black!*

*I want to thank everyone for joining the resistance!*

*Direct influences include: 1984 (novel), V for Vendetta (graphic novel and film), and Brazil (film).*