

# Practical Haunting

*by peppermint*

The shopkeepers of Diagon Alley experience unsettling practical jokes.

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*Chapter 1 of 1*

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It was a glorious August morning, and all along Diagon Alley, unsettling things were happening; the sort of things one expects on dreary April mornings. An early rain shower was evident in the puddles scattered among the cobblestones, but the sunlight glinting off the shop windows promised a busy day of back-to-school traffic. Unfortunately, many shopkeepers in Diagon Alley wished they would have had the sense to stay abed.

Floean Fortescue became aware of a problem when he served the first scoop of a new batch of cherry-mint gelato. It was his Grand Re-Opening day after the war, and he wanted everything to be perfect. He knew he had chopped mint leaves to steep in the cream for the mix and cherries had gone in afterward, but instead of cherry-mint gelato, he had pepperoni-basil. What in the world had happened? Had someone tampered with his ingredients?

A few doors down, the proprietor of Eeylops Owl Emporium had quite a shock when she opened for business: the owls were in the cat cages, the cats were in the rat cages, and the rats were holding a circus on the sales counter with the toads jumping through flaming hoops. She had to be taken to St Mungo's and given several hourly dosages of Calming Potion before she stopped gibbering.

Mr Flourish himself had to come in on his day off to help Mr Blott sort out the mess that had been made of their recent shipment of Rita Skeeter's latest expose—the cover pictures had all been charmed. Instead of Dolores Umbridge holding a sweet kitten, she was portrayed lustily kissing a centaur!

Pretty young witches strolling along the Alley found their skirts being lifted scandalously high by rogue breezes, and wizards were chasing their hats and tripping in rain puddles from the morning's cloudburst.

George Weasley leaned against the door frame of number 93, enjoying the August sunshine with a grin on his face. Ron was keeping pace with the steady stream of customers at the register: business was booming for Weasleys' Wizarding Wheezes even with the loss of a founding partner. Many of the Alley proprietors looked to assign the blame to Messrs Weasley and Weasley for the day's strange happenings – but both Ron and George had been at the shop the whole day.

As George drifted off to sleep that night, a ghost coalesced into view beside his bed.

"Just like old times, eh, Georgie?" the ghost whispered, before fading out of sight.

Prompt: An unseen presence unsettles the denizens of Diagon Alley.