

In Hiding

by HBAR

Alone ... desperate ... in hiding

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Chapter 1 of 1

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He ran. Unsure of the distance, he ran just to escape the scene. Muggles hated his kind, so he knew his best bet was to make it to Diagon Alley. His hand was throbbing, but if he could just make it there, he could rest.

He slipped through the Leaky Cauldron, then rested out back while awaiting entrance to Diagon Alley.

Once inside, he stopped for a moment, realizing for the first time that he had no plan. He'd acted out of necessity, and now he would have to wing it. *For how long? A week, a month?* He'd never been the smart one, but he knew that his actions in the next few hours would determine his survival. The shops here would soon be closing, so he hid behind some bushes to wait.

Diagon Alley after dark was disconcerting, and he entered Eeylops Owl Emporium by mistake. The hooting and screeching reached a fever pitch as he hurried down the main aisle, causing the shopkeeper to come down from his residence and demand, "Who's there?" The intruder hid in the storeroom, silent.

Adrenaline on an empty stomach made him nauseous, so once all was clear, his next stop was for food.

So cold ... tired. Instinct kicked in, and he made several more stops to procure the perfect bed.

He awoke the next morning to the Wizarding Wireless where several shop owners were reporting mysterious nighttime activities.

"Nothing is missing," Madam Malkin reported, "but some of the robes were shredded. Men's, women's ... they didn't discriminate."

"It's curious that the vandal would take the risk of coming into the store, scratching up the display case and then leaving. It was risky, with no benefit," said Florean Fortescue.

And so it continued. Bags of food ripped to pieces at Magical Menagerie, pages torn from books at Flourish and Blotts. Someone was on the loose, and the lack of motive was unnerving. Everyone was on high alert, for while Voldemort had recently vanished, there were surely devoted followers lurking in the shadows, preying on the fine folk of Diagon Alley. It was in the *Daily Prophet*, so it was true, of course.

I have to get out of here.

It was while hiding behind some shelving in Slug and Jiggers that his savior appeared in the form of a young boy. The red hair and tattered bag on his shoulder was a giveaway to the boy's surname. *The Weasleys ... they'll accept me without question.*

He scurried over to the boy, climbed up on the counter, and jumped into his bag.

At the Burrow, Percy was emptying his things from the shopping trip that day. Inside was one item he hadn't purchased.

"Hey, little fellow, come on out. I won't hurt you." Percy held out his hand, and the invitation was accepted. "Mom, he followed me home. Can I keep him?"

If rats could smile, this one would have.

A/N: Many thanks to my lovely and talented beta.

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