

The Curator

Museum of Magic

Hocus Pocus Lane

London WC2 1HP

Dear Sir,

I am writing to complain about the appalling lack of health and safety at your museum and the blasé attitude of some of your staff.

Yesterday as it was Halloween my husband and I brought our two children, Alfie aged 9 and Annie aged 6 to your museum as a special treat. As it turned out it was anything but. We joined the rather long queue and paid what was an extortionate sum of money to get in and at first all seemed well although the entrance hall was rather dark and dingy and there was a very strange smell. My husband informed me that the smell was brimstone, though how he would know that I have no idea.

Anyway, as I say all seemed perfectly fine until Alfie became somewhat overexcited and proceeded to jump over some ropes which cordoned off a huge metal cauldron. I noticed a sign which stated in large red letters "Danger keep out!" and I called him back but as usual he ignored me. Then he appeared to have a change of heart and trotted back to the ropes. I was just about to praise him for listening to me when he grabbed his sister, lifted her over the ropes and tipped her head first into the cauldron which to my horror appeared to be full of some malodorous liquid.

I screamed and my husband dashed forward and pulled her out dripping in green slime. She was sobbing loudly and Alfie was nowhere to be seen. I took Annie to the Ladies to clean her up and it was then that we discovered that her beautiful long blonde hair had turned bright green! I managed to find a member of your staff who had a long flowing white beard and was wearing a purple cloak. I told him what had happened and when he had stopped laughing he said "Didn't you see the sign?" I told him that Alfie was rather highly strung and didn't always adhere to instructions. "Well then" was all he managed to say and we left him, still chortling to find my husband and Alfie. Annie caught sight of her hair in one of the distorting mirrors and began wailing loudly. I assured her (with crossed fingers) that it would wash out in a few days.

Eventually I met up with my husband who had found Alfie and was holding on tightly to his hand. We decided to calm the children down by visiting the Magic of the Egyptians section. As we entered I noticed Alfie was holding a long pointed stick and asked my husband where he might have acquired it. To my annoyance he just shrugged and at that point Alfie pulled away from him and noticing a line of mummies which stood all along one wall he began prancing around pointing his stick at them. To our astonishment they seemed to come to life and being very confused they began bumping into one another and tripping over their bandages. Alfie was shrieking with glee running around the room bringing more mummies to life as he went. I managed to grab him as he ran past but could not wrest the stick from him. I

was ready to go home at this point but Alfie pulled me towards another doorway which announced "Witches and Goblins Gallery".

A woman who, without wishing to give offence, looked like an extremely ugly old crone and who had skeletal fingers and a face covered with boils, was giving a demonstration of "how to ride a broomstick safely" There was no stopping Alfie now. He let go of my hand, pushed the "witch" to one side and leapt on the broomstick. He then proceeded to fly around the room swooping and dive bombing the screaming children and their gesticulating irate parents all the while screeching maniacally. Another member of your staff who was dressed, rather unconvincingly I thought, as a wizard tried unsuccessfully to grab him as he flew past shouting "Come here you little rascal" or something similar although looking back I rather think bad language was involved. Now I know from personal experience that that is the wrong approach to take with Alfie. He has a nasty temper when thwarted and so it proved. On his next turn he had a dangerous glint in his eyes and he pointed the stick at the wizard screaming "I'm going to turn you into a slimy frog!" But just as the words were out of his mouth the wizard ducked behind my husband. There was a blue flash and where my husband had been standing, well I don't have to spell it out for you do I?

At this point I became very distressed. Annie, bless her, was wailing like a banshee at the sight of her father hopping about on the floor, Alfie was in his element flying around like one possessed turning people into frogs. It was absolute chaos. I had previously spotted a group of children in one corner who were all dressed in black cloaks, obviously a school outing. One of them, a boy of about thirteen with thick round glasses and black hair with an unusual scar, stepped forward. I was afraid Alfie was going to turn him into a frog but he managed to jump onto the broomstick behind Alfie and bring it to a stop. He then whispered something into Alfie's ear and to my relief they both dismounted and Alfie followed the boy to a heavy oak door marked "Portal to the Past".

The boy, who introduced himself to me as Harry, asked if it was OK for Alfie to enter. I, assuming it was some sort of Diorama readily agreed. He then pointed his own stick at the door which slowly opened as he said a few words, which I didn't catch, and gently pushed Alfie through. I later found out that it was indeed a doorway leading to the past.

So there you have it. To recap, after our trip to your museum my daughter refuses to leave the house as everyone points and stares at her, I had to take my husband home in a bucket and he now resides in the pond at the bottom of the garden, oh, and my son, I believe, is somewhere in the 16th century!

I have it on good authority that you can put me in touch with someone who can sort all of this out and restore my family to me, therefore I am demanding that you do so, but not for a week or two please!

Yours faithfully,

Lucinda Longbottom