

# A Place to Hide

*by Aurette*

A shared last cup of heaven brings a mixed blessing.

## A Place to Hide

*Chapter 1 of 1*

A shared last cup of heaven brings a mixed blessing.

Thank you to my very-short-notice beta, Karelia.

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Shoving the door open, Alastor Moody swept the shop with an Auror's practiced eye. His other eye tracked passersby on the street outside.

Caractacus Burke scuttled from the backroom, gnarled and twisted hands spasming with malicious avarice. Seeing Moody, he cackled and scuttled away again.

"What have you got for me?" Moody called, following the smell.

"Jamaica Mountain Blue," Burke shouted back.

Moody squeezed into the cramped backroom and settled down in the lumpy chair, propping his wooden leg up on a small trunk. He waited with impatience, drumming his fingers. The smell was making him dizzy with want.

Burke scowled. "I should give you that piss from America my nephew sent. It tasted like boiled rat turds laced with rust." He passed a cup across, some fallen pure-bloods' hocked porcelain. "Here, try that and tell me it's not better than a woman in your bed."

Alastor took it with a snort. "Like you'd even remember?"

Burke gave him a beady stare. "I remember better than you, you legless worm." He sat back and watched Moody go through several detection spells to make sure the coffee wasn't tainted. It hadn't been in sixty years, but... constant vigilance. Burke was a shady character, but their mutual quest for the perfect cup of coffee had created a dependable détente years ago.

Satisfied, he took a sip. His eye slid closed as the full, rich flavor embraced his tongue like a lover he didn't know he'd lost. "Oh..." he sighed. "Oh, that's beauty in a cup, right there."

"Told you." Burke sat back and gave a wispy sigh of loss. "And that's the last. I've been told no more."

Moody grimaced. "That's terrible. Heart?"

"Pancreas."

"Ouch."

"This is my last week. Borgin's champing at the bit, gonna make changes."

"Like what? Dusting?"

"Oh, shut up. Don't expect my partner to play informant. He can't abide coffee."

"Bah," Moody grunted. "I'm out of a job soon as well. They're pushing me out the door."

"Foolish. With Potter in school, *they* are stirring. Besides, I can't see a bastard like you puttering in his garden," said Burke. "You'd drag the weeds in for questioning."

Moody snorted. "I won't go blind. Mark my words. My biggest problem is I have to clean out my office. Mother won't have any of it in the house."

Burke emitted a tinny cackle. "I've just the thing right here."

"I've not bought your tainted junk in all these years."

"This little beauty is perfect and harmless as a lamb." Burke pulled a keyring off his desk and thwacked it against Moody's wooden leg. "Move your hoof." He unlocked the seven locks, one at a time, opening and closing the chest each time to reveal ever larger spaces. When the seventh lock was opened, they looked down into a cellar. "There's even a place to hide from Mumsy."

Moody sat back and smiled. "Now that's better than coffee."

"I always said one day I'd sell you something."

"So you did."

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Prompt: A determined search for the perfect cup of coffee leads to an even more satisfying discovery.