

The Mustache Caper

Scene 104, Book 3

“Gavin, dear, what ever is wrong with your mustache?”

Apollo almost choked on his bacon; Gavin glanced at him. “I’m not sure. I think I got a bad tube of wax; it is not stiffening properly, and the smell reminds me of toothpaste.”

“It is definitely droopy. Now, are you going to tell me why you had to go to Portsmouth, and I couldn’t go?”

Gavin rolled his eyes. She was *never* going to let that drop.

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After breakfast, Gavin and Miranda went out onto the back veranda to feed Huginn and Muninn. The birds flashed down from the roof as soon as they heard the door open. They landed on Gavin’s shoulders before he reached his chair. They squawked in satisfaction; they had won again. “*Ave! Ave imperator!*”

“*Ave*, my children. A grand day, is it not?” Gavin sat and reached up to scratch the birds’ heads. They clucked and closed their eyes.

“I am still, after all these months, surprised at how they have attached to you,” said Miranda. “Are you sure you aren’t Odin incarnate or something?”

Gavin laughed. “More like Loki, god of mischief, if anything. Frankly, I’m still surprised as well. People do have pet ravens, and then there are the ones at The Tower, but I’ve found no one else who claims to have a wild one like they are.” Huginn fluttered to his perch and squawked; Gavin gave him a piece of bread. Muninn groomed his hair, and then, attracted by the strange scent, began on his mustache. “Muninn! What the hell are you doing? Leave my mustache alone; you’ll pluck it out!”

At the trigger word “mustache,” Huginn perked up. “Mustache! Grandpère has a limp mustache!”

Gavin and Miranda stared at Huginn, then Miranda broke up. Her laughter rang off the stones of the castle, she snorted and coughed, she pounded the table. Gavin sat like a statue; he had never taught them any English. He began to smell that rat again.

Peeping through a back window of the kitchenette, which was open just a crack, Apollo and Mercury smiled in satisfaction. Yes, revenge was a dish best served cold.