

Starting Somewhere

by Janet Rivenbark

Catherine walked into Vincent's chamber just in time to see him raising a large pair of sewing shears to his head and preparing to cut out a chunk of hair.

"Vincent! Stop! What on earth are you doing?" She rushed across the chamber, grabbed his arm, and pulled the scissors away from his head.

"I was with the children and unfortunately wound up with gum in my hair," he said, raising the scissors again.

She grabbed his arm and pulled it down again.

"Don't! That's so close to your head, and it's going to leave a huge bald spot that will be hard to cover. I know how to get gum out. I was always coming home from school with gum in my hair when I was little. I went to elementary school with a bunch of mean little boys."

"No scissors?" he asked.

"No scissors!" she assured him. "Now put those down and go sit. I'll be right back."

Catherine hurried out and down the corridor to the kitchen, where William was stirring a huge pot on the stove.

"Hello, Catherine," he said, putting down the spoon. "You here for a snack?"

"No, thank you. But do you happen to have some peanut butter or cooking oil? Even butter or mayonnaise will do."

William went to the pantry and started moving things around.

"What do you need it for?"

"Vincent has gum in his hair. He was going to cut it out."

William found a small bottle of olive oil and handed it to her.

"I hear that it makes a good oil treatment for hair too. Mary comes for some about once a month."

"It does. I use it all the time. Thanks, William."

When she got back to Vincent's chamber, he was sitting at the table, waiting patiently.

“Good God! How many pieces of gum was the child chewing?” she asked as she poured a little bit of oil onto the gum and started rubbing.

“The boys found a whole bag of bubble gum Uptop. They were having a contest to see who could get the most into their mouths. When they finished that, they were vying to see who could blow the biggest bubble. That was when I came along. They wanted me to be the judge. I got too close to Kipper’s bubble while trying to measure Geoffrey’s.”

“That explains why it’s spread over such a large area.”

She poured a little more oil and kept rubbing. It took a while to get the gum out, and by then half of Vincent’s head was an oily, greasy mess.

“It does make a good conditioning treatment,” she said. “I’ll just add a little more and rub it through, then let it sit for a little while. Then we can go wash it out.”

“We?” he asked hesitantly as she added more oil and started combing it through his hair with her fingers.

“Um, yeah. This stuff is tricky. It takes a good scrub to get it all out, or it leaves your hair greasy and goopy. I did this once when I was a Freshman in college. I was just getting ready to get in the shower to wash it out when the fire alarm went off. We stood outside for two hours while the firemen inspected the building, trying to find the fire. They eventually determined that it was a short in the alarm system. When I got back inside to the shower, it took forever to get all the olive oil washed out, but I had gorgeous, soft hair for the next few days.”

She finished and wiped her hands on a towel.

“Do you have a bathing suit or something?” she asked after a few minutes.

“A bathing suit? I don’t really get much opportunity to go to the beach, Catherine,” he said dryly.

“But you swim with the children; give swimming lessons. You’ve told me you do.”

“I usually wear cutoff jeans and a t-shirt.”

“Then put on the cutoffs and go get in the bathing pool. I’ll join you in a few minutes.”

“Will you be in the pool too?”

“I think I will have to be. I used the pool a few times while you were sick and I remember that the water level is almost a foot and a half below the floor level in there, and the pool is deep. I don’t think I could reach you if I’m not in the pool.”

“I’m sure I could wash it out myself,” he protested.

“As I said, it’s hard to get all of it out. I’ll help.”

“What will *you* wear?” he asked suspiciously as he rose.

“I’ve been learning from you,” she told him. “I’ve got on several layers and can safely shed a few without being indecent.”

He stepped behind the screen in front of his armoire, and she heard him rustling around. When he came out, he was wearing his heavy robe. She'd shed several layers and was down to her jeans and tank top. She was removing her shoes and socks when she looked up at him and smiled.

"Go on. I'll be there in a minute."

He quickly ducked into the tunnel to the bathing chamber as she reached for the button on her jeans.

She looked down at herself: bra, panties, and a tank top. It covered more than that little red bikini she wore the last time she went to the Caribbean on vacation.

When she walked into the bathing chamber, Vincent was just coming up from dunking his head.

"You're creating quite an oil slick there," she said as she picked up the shampoo and stepped carefully down the stairs into the water.

Vincent ran his hands over his head, wringing water out, but when he looked at his hands, the hair on them was greasy with the oil.

"I do seem to be creating a bit of a problem here," he said, holding up his hands.

She handed him a bar of soap for his hands.

"Isn't there a boulder in the center of the pool? If you sit on that, I should be able to reach your head easily."

Vincent moved to the center of the pool and sat as Catherine directed. The water came up to the tops of his shoulders.

Catherine walked up behind him and poured shampoo into her hand, set the bottle on the side of the pool, and started to work the shampoo through his hair. Not a bubble appeared, but she diligently worked the generous portion of shampoo through all his hair. As she worked, she noticed that the water was moving reasonably swiftly from one end of the pool to the other, and the oil slick he'd created earlier was almost gone.

Once she'd worked the shampoo through, she picked up a cup and started to rinse.

The second application of shampoo created a little more lather, which she worked down into the hair that grew on his upper arms and chest.

Vincent tensed and sat up straight.

"What are you doing?" he asked in a strained voice.

"The oil has settled into your body hair. I was just washing it off."

She picked up the cup and started to rinse again.

The third application of shampoo was as much for her benefit as his hair. She worked it into a lather, then started massaging his scalp and all along his hairline and temples. She concentrated for a time on the tense muscles in his neck until they began to loosen

up. His whole body relaxed and the bar of soap she'd handed him earlier popped to the surface of the pool and started to drift away from them. She caught it and put it on the ledge next to the shampoo bottle.

"Did you get all the oil off your hands?" she asked.

He didn't answer, just raised his hands out of the water, and held them up. She was surprised to see them shaking slightly.

She picked up the cup and started to rinse for the third time.

"I think you can just duck under and rinse the rest of it out," she finally told him. "Then, let me check to make sure we got it all."

He ducked under the water, and she watched as he shook his head then rubbed it briskly. She was surprised when he came back up facing her.

She picked up a washcloth, soaped it, then started to rub at spots on his face where the oil had settled. When she'd obliterated all the oil, she rinsed the cloth and gently wiped the soap away.

He'd been letting his arms float in the current, and she jumped a bit when she felt his hands settle at her waist. Their faces were at the same level, and she smiled at him.

"I think we got it all," she announced.

Then it was her turn to tense up a bit as his hands slipped to her back and he pulled her in close. But she relaxed much more quickly than he had.

"Thank you," he whispered as he rubbed his cheek against hers. "I wasn't looking forward to walking around with lopsided hair for the next month or so while it grew out. I'll have to remember the oil trick if I ever get gum in my hair again." His arms tightened a bit. "Does it work on tar?"

"Tar? Have you gotten tar in your hair?" She leaned back and looked at him.

"Sometimes we use tar to seal leaks, and I've had it all over. Father had to use a straight razor to shave the spots. I looked like I had mange."

She smothered a giggle at the visual that conjured.

"I've had tar on my feet from the beach, and Mom always used something like mineral oil or baby oil on that, but if the tar was thick, she just used ice. It got hard, and she peeled it off. I think the oil would work better on hair, though."

"I'll have to try that next time."

He didn't seem inclined to let her go, so she relaxed even more and draped her arms around his neck. His eyes were closed, and she leaned her forehead against his.

"So, are we going to get out, or are we going to stay until we prune up?" she finally asked.

He pulled in a deep breath and let it out in a long sigh.

"I enjoy holding you like this, but I just heard the dinner announcement, so we'd better get out. It's going to take me a few minutes to get dry, and as it is, I'll be going to dinner slightly damp."

He unwound his arms from around her, and she backed away and stepped out of the pool. She dripped across the chamber and grabbed several towels. She dropped all but one on the edge of the pool, then started drying herself with the last one.

She glanced down and hastily wrapped the towel around her hips. The silk panties had gone transparent. "I'll just leave you alone while I go see what I can do about getting dry," she said as she left the chamber.

Back in the front chamber, she took stock. Her panties were silk and would dry quickly, but if she put her jeans on over them, they'd soak through. They'd have to go, but she didn't like the idea of putting on her jeans with nothing underneath. She knew that Vincent kept some of the things she used when she was recovering after the assault, and she went to look for them. She found a pair of clean pink silk panties, a lot like the ones she had on. They must have been the ones she wore when Vincent first brought her Below. She'd gone home in plain white cotton.

She quickly stripped off the wet ones and put on the dry ones. The bra and tank top would have to go, but her sweater was bulky enough to cover.

Dressed, she hung her wet clothing over the top of the screen.

Vincent came out a few minutes later, dressed in his robe again. When he came out from behind the screen a few minutes later, he was dressed and carrying a comb.

"Would you care to do the honors?" he asked, holding the comb out to her.

"Don't mind if I do," she said as he sat on the chair and she stepped behind him.

One wall down, and only two dozen to go, she thought to herself as she worked the comb through his hair. *Trust has to start somewhere, and touching is a good place to start.*

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