

A Little Off The Top, Part 2
A Mercynaries Story from <https://www.patreon.com/SinComics>

Brill grabbed the final bottle of hair gel and cleared it off his station. They'd all but drained their supply on the last client and her uncontrollable mane. He tossed the empty canister down the recycling chute and listened to it thud and ping down the seemingly endless hole. Even if he could fit through with his curves, it didn't seem like a safe escape route. For the last weeks whenever Vera wasn't around, Brill had spent his time testing the salon and its security. It seemed completely self-sufficient and unconnected to the outside world, aside from the doors and windows that refused to budge for him. All wires and pipes just turned around, looping through the building but never escaping either.

The jangle of the door's bell startled Brill out of his daydreaming of freedom. Vera joyously marched through with her arms around another strange woman. Her jeans were struggling to make it over her hips and contain her backside, while a dress shirt strained from the pressure against its buttons fighting a losing battle to save the woman's modesty. She had beautiful cocoa-brown hair down to her waist and her bangs framed some kind of mask over her face. Brill leaned in and saw it had a dark eye piece like a masquerade mask but the rest was an opalescent white that covered her entire face. Her struggling gait was one Brill immediately recognized. The unfamiliarity from a new form and all the sensations it threw off.

“Brill, love, say hello to our new client. This vision is Jazmine and she just signed up for some sessions with us.”

Brill could hear a muffled feminine voice as Vera dragged the woman over. Vera chuckled and hugged the woman's shoulders.

“Yes, yes! Brill is quite lovely herself. And so very talented. She'll fix you right up!”

Vera deposited her new friend at Brill's chair and Jazmine landed with a plop against the padding. Vera smiled and her new toy.

“Brill. Given her lovely artifact, makeup won't be required this time. But she does need some good hair care routines and I want to see you flex your fashion advice. You always look so adorable, so spread that charm to the world in praise of the Goddess.”

Brill gave his phony agreement, Vera knowing full well he had no control over the outfits the salon provided him with. Or its general inability to provide him with a properly sized shirt. With the boss leaving, Brill got to work and started brushing Jazmine's flowing hair.

The client was tense and rigid when Brill stopped the brushing.

“Miss, what happened to you? What help do you need?”

She replied in a quiet but entrancing voice. Brill listened raptly as she spoke, satisfied with her story before going back to the brushing task. As he started up again, he shook himself off and realized she hadn't actually said anything. Brill could hear her speaking, but there was no distinction to the words. It just flowed out sweetly as a white noise and that somehow made him feel like the conversation was satisfying. Brill's connection to the salon made him more resilient to the curses and powers of the clients and without that, he'd probably have never noticed the woman's strange speech. He leaned in once more and could just barely make out a muffled voice hidden behind the siren's charm

from the mask.

Jimmy had gone to a festival with a woman he was growing fond of. They had met several times with friends, but this was their first solo date and they had agreed to the festival as a way to keep the pressure low and just have a fun time together. He tried his best to show off at the booths, doing his damndest to win games that were almost certainly rigged and buying her a few trinkets. She laughed off his failed attempts at impressing her and they had a good time together.

After splurging on a lunch together, they came across a stall selling masks. His date immediately rushed over and tried a few on, giggling at their ostentatious and joking that this was her new look and Jimmy had to get used to it. She pushed her date into joining her, but he held back due to the worry of making himself look like a goof in front of the woman he'd spent all day trying to impress. Sensing his weakness, she prodded Jimmy and mockingly questioned his devotion and his macho act. Laughing it off, Jimmy scanned the stall and picked up the most simple one he could find, a blank white mask with an eye piece. He put it on and posed for his date, asking her if he rocked this look as well. She stared at him but cocked her head as if she couldn't hear what he was saying. Jimmy tried again but she shrugged and put her mask away.

Frustrated at looking foolish, Jimmy went to return the mask but it felt stuck to his face. He yanked hard but it stayed stuck in place. The mask was dark and he couldn't see but he shouted towards where his date and the salesman had been, but all he could hear back was his voice muffled by the mask. He could hear the woman saying he was acting weird and was drawing attention to them. Jimmy started to panic and could feel a strange sensation ripple through his body, like he was shrinking away from the world.

The mask was dark with no eye holes, but Jimmy started to feel as if he could sense the world through the mask. He just inherently knew where things were around him, like the mask was serving as his eyes and seeing for him. He spun away from his date and tugged harder at the mask, trying to pull it down or away from his face without success. Jimmy felt smaller still but his clothes were getting tighter and he shifted uncomfortably.

The woman nervously laughed and Jimmy could hear her ask what was going on. Her laughter started to draw attention from the festival-goers and Jimmy started to panic more, twirling to hide his face from everybody. Long strands of hair started to brush against the sides of his face and the dark auburn was getting lighter and shinier. Jimmy spun away the booth, trying to rush off in his panic, but his hips caught the side of a display and sent it clattering down. The noise alerted everybody around them and Jimmy's chest started to feel tight before straining outward with each gasping breath.

Jimmy bolted from the booth, pushing past people, and hearing the crowd question if he was a performer. He could feel them staring as he ran away and strange sensations thundered up as he made each pounding stride on the dirt. Each footfall led to a quivering bounce as he wobbled away, shaking his hips uncontrollably at the gawking public.

He finally broke free of the crowd and stumbled out of the festival. Straight into the arms of a woman at the gate. She introduced herself as Vera and offered to help him with the mask. They somehow ended up here at the salon, but the trip was a blur.

Brill pat Jazmine on the shoulder. "I'm here to help. I'll do what I can to get you free or at least out of here, but you need to play along in front of Vera. I'm not sure what she'd do if she found out we're-"

The clacking of heels stifled the two and Vera made her grand entrance holding a small purple bag.

"Oh, dears, Brill does the most divine work. Doesn't she, Jazmine? Your hair looks even more gorgeous! I think you two gossips have had enough girl talk for now. I've prepped the training room for Jazmine's practice, so let's move on to some fashion for now."

Vera handed Brill the bag and took Jazmine's hand to free her from the salon chair.

"You two can head upstairs and work on some outfits. Brill, honey, they're just for Jazmine. You're still on the clock! Have fun! Jazmine has the divine blessing of showing off. The Goddess will want her to display her lovely self to the world and get rid of those unfounded confidence issues."

Upstairs, Brill emptied the bag and felt sorry for his new charge. Jazmine held up its contents and showed off the bodice. It looked tight, small, and designed to push his new curves upward and outward. Jazmine started to breath rapidly behind the mask.

"I can't wear this!"

Brill held his arms out. "Stay calm. It's okay."

"I-I don't want to! This whole thing is too much. I need to get away and- and..."

Brill could sense a change in the air around Jazmine. He could tell that ever so slightly, she was starting to fill out and expand as she fretted.

"Take a breath! If you don't calm down, who knows when this will stop!"

"W-what?"

For the other clients I've seen, there seems to be some kinds of weird rules about this. Like the mask is a challenge you need to overcome. When you defeat it, you'll be freed."

Jazmine's panic turned to anger. "Defeat it?! It's a freaking mask latched onto my face!"

Brill sank down onto the couch. "I don't understand it either, but we're in this together. I know what it's like too. I have to show off, mince around the salon, get treated like a ditz... But I need to help people. I think that's the only way I'll be free of Vera."

Jazmine nodded. "Okay, okay. Just... Turn around or something."

Brill swung around and could hear Jazmine undressing. The sighs and grunts of being free of too tight clothing not designed for their new curves was something he knew well. Shortly, Jazmine coughed for his attention.

The client had changed into the contents of the bag, and seemed to stand more confidently. The bodice accentuated everything about her and included gloves and stockings, then a hair tie. She wobbled a little on the heels, but Jazmine looked strong. Standing up straight, her chest forward, and

hips back, she had determination. Brill was pleased the air of change around her had dissipated but was unsure if making her wear that was the right tactic.

A knock at the door startled the two and Vera strode in without further warning.

“Well, well! I knew Brill would do a fine job. You look wonderful, Jazmine.”

The client nodded and Brill could sense her secret disdain.

“Our new model and I have some runway practice to attend to in the training room downstairs, so we'll be occupied for the night. Brill, be a good girl while we're away. And do consider picking out a few outfits such as this for yourself! Jazmine may help to attract some extra business for the shop, but if we had the two of you, what luck!”

Jazmine and Vera returned to the shop the next morning. The client looked tired but had at least been able to change back into some flimsy shorts and a T-shirt after leaving. She marched over to Brill's station and the two discussed ways to break free as Brill did her nails. If the mask fed off of her panic, Jazmine would lull it into a false sense of security until it was starved enough to smash. It meant playing along with their plans, but it was the best option.

“Photo shoot!”

Brill and Jazmine startled at the sudden proclamation.

“Our dear was approved for a calendar shoot! Earrings can wait. Let's get her suited up and posing, posing, posing!”

Brill helped Jazmine up. “For what, Vera?”

Vera gleefully held out a few scraps of cloth that would barely qualify as a bikini for a woman half Jazmine's size.

Brill paced the shop for hours, unnerved by leaving Jazmine alone and out of sight for this long before the elevator in the back finally dinged. Out strutted Jazmine, still barely clad in the swimwear and perched on heeled sandals.

“Nailed it!”

Brill recoiled at the sound of her voice. It was overpoweringly phony to his ears. The mask's flirty, feminine filter drowning out the client behind it.

“Are you okay?”

“Better than ever! Vera said she could get those photos in calendars all over. And everybody will know you did my hair and makeup so you'll get so many new customers for the Goddess!”

Brill strained to hear the real voice underneath. It was struggling to get out, but Brill could detect exhaustion in Jazmine's tone. She'd been fighting the mask all day and was too worn out to maintain dominance.

Brill thought, trying to use this as a chance to help her. “Well that's good. Since you're doing so well, you won't need that mask soon. People will be so curious to see the real you!”

There was a reduction of pressure around Jazmine, like rewriting the narrative gave her some

control again.

“Th-Thanks, Brill...”

After a soak in the spa, Jazmine had recovered and calmed down. A hot rinse had done nothing to loosen the mask, but her hair was now a golden brown, sparkling in the light to draw attention.

“Vera dropped this off while you rested.” Brill held out another clothing box as Jazmine dried off. “She said it's for the final shoot.”

Jazmine gave a determined nod. She took the box to a stall and came back some short moments later.

She returned in a deep blue cocktail dress, held on by the force of her curves and the mightiest spaghetti straps fashion had known. The skirt flowed with every tiny motion she made, with slits all the way up both legs. The dress hid little but drew all the attention away from the bearer's mask.

“Jaz, you look... Gorgeous. Are you all right?”

She nodded. “Let's beat this damned thing.”



“Talking of winning the competition? Good!” Vera hovered in the doorway in her bizarrely punctual way.

Brill composed himself. “What competition?”

“Why the pageant, of course! Once Jazmine wins that, she's sure to find an agent for representation and her photo shoots will spread word of the Goddess far and wide!”

Brill felt his own panic. Their plan was backfiring and could put more people in danger and thrust Jazmine out into the public eye while still vulnerable.

“Maybe, maybe we're moving too fast. If her first auditions don't... If she doesn't come out on top, that could destroy her confidence! She's put in so much work and we should really set her on the best path forward. Let's not-”

Vera clucked her tongue. “I see what's going on here!”

Brill backed up. She was always around, what if she'd heard their plans. Nothing around to fight with, no escape routes, who knows what would happen if he attacked-

“No need to be jealous, Brill! Yes, Jazmine is our glorious beauty for the public, but once they come to the shop, YOU'RE our star.”

Vera swiftly moved in and gave Brill a deep hug.

“Say good-bye for now, love. But Jazmine will be back for our expansion ceremonies. The shop will be bigger than ever!”

Read more Mercynaries comics and stories at: <https://www.patreon.com/SinComics>