

I'm With the Band – Part 1

This story takes place in [DKFenker's Trust Machines](#) universe. Trust Machines are also called Venn Machines because of the large Venn diagram on the outside panel. Two people enter. Each modifies the other without seeing how the other is modifying them. When they hit the green button, the change takes place. Changes can be in thirds of days, one to three days, months or years. But never permanent.

"Are you sure you want to do this?" Steve asked his tall friend.

"You're always talking about these Venn machines. And we all agree bands with a female front-person get better gigs," Kevin said.

"Yeah, but you won't come out of the machine suddenly knowing how to be a woman. It'll take practice."

"I know," Kevin said. "Baby steps. First we need to find out if I can sing after-ward."

"True. I'll set the machine to just three days to start. We don't have practice until Sunday night so that will give you time to figure out what you want to wear."

"Fuck, I gotta go shopping for gig clothes as a woman."

"See? You haven't thought about everything that's involved." Steve laughed. "Just get Sara to help."

"Yeah, my sister will get a kick out of playing dress up with me."

"And take any lessons she gives you."

"Let's get this over with."

"What do you want to look like?"

An hour later they were still inside the Venn machine. "You're not changing me, are you?" Steve asked.

"Not much."

"Kevin!"

"Trust me. You will like what I've done. It'll only be three days."

"Fine. I'm finished. When I push the button. I want you to sing a scale. In those last few seconds before the change is set things can still be modified and I want to try to make your voice sound as good as I can, if I can."

"Got it." Kevin said. A second later the change washed over him and out of her mouth came a lilting alto that quickly shifted up an octave.

"Try to sing low too."

Kevin sang various triads and just as the red light was about to fade, she hit her change button. The lights turned green and the doors opened. She had been too distracted by the singing to really take in her changes. She was short. Her hair was platinum blond, perfectly straight, and was long enough to reach the top of her ass. She had breasts that probably were not big by volume, but

compared to her short frame, looked huge. She was also rather thin. Her limbs felt like twigs to her. She was wearing ripped jeans, a jean jacket, a loose gray blouse, and flat sandals.

"Damn," Steve was standing in the doorway. "I do good work."

"Why am I so short?" Kevin's now high pitched voice asked.

"I figured you'd get some platform shoes to make up for it," Steve said. "Can you explain why I have breasts?"

"They're not too big, are they?"

"I suppose not. But why?"

"You still have your little friend. But, since you were giving me these babies, I thought you should spend some time with breasts so you'd know what I was dealing with. Did you look in the mirror? I also slimmed you slightly. An androgynous bass player might be cliché but I think it'll work for you."

"Ha ha," Steve said. "Let's go to my place and see how you sound."

In the parking lot, Steve walked Kevin to her vehicle. Kevin had to actually climb up into the cab of the pick up truck. Steve just watched and laughed. "You just wait until we use that machine again," Kevin said.

Steve walked away still laughing.

Steve's place was an unusual bachelor pad. It was clean for one thing. It also had several musical instruments in a corner of the living room. Steve picked up an acoustic guitar and checked its tuning before strumming the opening chords to one of the up tempo songs he had written.

Kevin took off her jacket and started singing when Steve reached her cue. After a verse, Steve stopped. "That was awesome. Try this." He started playing a ballad.

After singing a few notes, Kevin shook her head and said, "Can you play it in, maybe, B flat?"

Steve grabbed a capo and rechecked the tuning of the guitar. This time Kevin came in smoothly and the timbre of her vocal resonated beautifully. They performed the song to its conclusion and just looked at each other. "Are you crying?"

Steve looked away, "It's these boobs. I was pressing the guitar against them too hard."

"Oh, of course, that happens all the time," Kevin said with a giggle. "Did I just giggle?"

"Yep. And it was so cute," Steve said as he booped her nose.

They performed a few more songs and found a few of them needed key changes while others Kevin could sing in the original key. "Do you think Stig will be able to deal with this?"

"After he gets over not being able to fuck you, sure."

"You made me blond just to annoy him, didn't you?"

"Perhaps."

* * *

Kevin gathered her courage and entered the house. No one was in sight and she hurried up the stairs. She could hear Sara in her room talking on the phone. She knocked on the door loudly and then moved back to her own room. As Sara's door was opening, Kevin made a point of slamming the door. Seconds later, Sara flung open her brother's bedroom door and found a beautiful blond woman sitting on his bed, surrounded by Kevin's star charts and posters of various nebulae."

"Wha--- who are you?"

"It's me. Kevin," the woman said with a lilting, high pitched voice.

"Kevin?" Sara laughed. "You vanned?"

"Yeah."

"Finally. But why.... that?"

"For the band," Kevin said. "Steve and I thought we might get better gigs with a female singer."

"Well, you should but why is that singer you?"

"I know all the songs. And I'm pretty sure the guys in the band won't hit on me so we won't have that problem of members of the band dating one another."

"These were all Steve's ideas, right?" Sara said. "Stand up."

As Kevin stood and even spun around, Sara squealed, "You are too cute and young. You look eighteen again. You'll need platform shoes on stage."

"I was hoping you'd help me with a stage costume."

"You want me to dress you up?" Sara feigned a fainting spell. "This is too much. Have Mom and Dad seen you?"

"Not yet. I'm a little nervous."

"Well, coming out to your parents can cause anxiety. But they'll understand that you just have to be you."

"It's not like that."

"Isn't it?"

"If your band does do well, when will you have time to spend not looking like this."

"True. But it's only for three days right now. A trial run."

Sara looked at her phone. "You need to get use to heels. Let's see if you fit into any of mine, you might be too small." She dragged Kevin into her room and after rummaging around in her closet found a pair of red wedges with about a four-inch heel that never did fit her. Kevin sighed as she tried on the shoes. They fit her smaller feet and she stood up. She immediately liked feeling taller. Then she stumbled a bit as she tried to walk. Sara took the sandals and chucked them into the closet and closed the door. "You should wear those heels as much as possi-

ble so you can handle the platform shoes on stage."

"Logical, if annoying," Kevin said.

At that moment, their mother called them to dinner. Sara was out the door in a hurry. "I gotta get down there to see their reactions."

Kevin found descending the stairs tricky but was beginning to feel steadier on her heels. She entered the dining room and her mother looked at her with surprise. Her father seemed focused on his dinner plate.

"Hi, Mom."

"Sara said you were trying out a new look," her mother said.

"Kevin's fronting his band as a woman."

"That should get you extra fans," Mom said.

"That's the idea," Kevin said. There was an awkward silence.

Without looking up, Dad said, "Don't get knocked up."

* * *

The next day, Kevin spent the morning singing the band's songs, finding the best keys to sing them in. She even changed the melody on a few because of her extended range. Around four, Sara called and insisted that Kevin meet her at the mall. At the mall, Sara took her new sister to various shops with specialty items, looking for the right accessories to give her some style. They found Kevin a short skirt and cut-off tee that really showed off her figure and would look good on stage. Finally they arrived at a store not far from the Venn machine. The front of the store had several mannequins in the window. They were unusually life like and posed in ways unusual for normal mannequins. Sara waved at one of them as she took Kevin to the specials desk.

"Hi, Sara. Didn't you just sign out?" asked the sales clerk. Jerri.

"Yea, my cousin here needs some glam boots. Platforms with, like, disco ball material up to her thighs."

"Sounds cool."

"Sounds expensive," said Kevin.

"How long?"

"Just until Monday."

"With Sara's store discount, that'll run you about \$39."

"This is the store you work at?" Kevin asked.

"You never ask me about work."

"Hey, Megan?" Jerri called out.

"Who did you just wave at?" Kevin asked Sara.

"Amanda, my boss." Sara said. "She loves watching the store as a window mannequin."

A woman came out of the back room. "Yes?" Megan asked.

"You up for boots?"

"You know I love being boots." Megan said. "Hi, Sara. Am I for your friend?"

"Yep."

"I assume you won't need me to help," the clerk said.

"No, I got it," Sara said. They left the shop. As they walked to the Venn machine, Kevin explained her situation with the band.

Megan asked, "What's the name of your band?"

"Ravenous Libido," Kevin said.

"And you want to be a woman fronting that band?" Megan asked Kevin.

"The songs will also sound better."

"Guys are gonna think you put out."

"Well, they'll be disappointed."

"Then they'll think you're a bitch." Megan laughed. "And your boots will be sad if you don't have sex while wearing them."

"Aren't you going to be my boots?"

"As I said. Your boots will be disappointed."

"I only said the guys would be disappointed."

"Ooo."

A few moments later Megan walked into the Venn booth and did not walk out. Her side was empty except for a pair of platform boots that looked like they were made from a disco ball. Sara carried the boots back to the shop and the sales clerk gave her a box and a bag to carry them in. On the box, she wrote "Megan, Monday @4:33".

Back at the house, Kevin zippered the last boot up and attempted to stand up. The boots added about nine inches of height to Kevin's small frame. "They feel great. But I feel like I'm standing on stilts."

"You'll get use to them." Sara said. "We should bedazzle the leather jacket, too."

"Don't bother," Kevin said and he tried to walk back and forth without wobbling too much. "I'll probably take the jacket off after the first song."

"You can practice with those boots all day tomorrow," Sara said pulling a slinky red dress out one of the bags. "Tonight, you are wearing this and we're going to a club."

"Are you crazy?"

"How are you going to get comfortable in public looking like that?" She was sure to point out the crazy looking boots as well as the skirt and tie-off tee. "You need to spend some time doing things as a woman and you will learn a lot about being a woman at a club."

"I'm not sure I want to learn that much about being a woman."

"C'mon, it'll be fun."

"I'm not wearing the boots tonight."

"Of course not. I wouldn't want you looking hotter than me. Megan will be dis-

appointed though."

* * *

Kevin woke up a little hung over. Her face felt funny and she realized she had fallen asleep with her makeup still caked on her. She went to the bathroom and washed it all off. Sara had gone really thick with the make up last night. Kevin usually wore eye-liner when he performed and had made the mistake in the past of not removing it before sleeping. This was even crustier.

After a shower, Kevin put on one of her new bras. Getting fit for it had been embarrassing but the girls did feel better properly supported. Over it she put on one of her old t-shirts. The shirt went down to her knees and she shrugged. She put on a pair of panties and tried to wear Kevin's slippers. But they kept falling off her feet, she saw the boots and thought about Megan. She put them on.

"You okay?" his mother asked as she poured him a glass of water. She pointed at the griddle and Kevin nodded. She started pouring pancake batter onto the griddle.

"Forgot that I weigh almost half as much as I use to and may have had too much to drink."

"That shirt looks like a dress on you."

"I can save a lot on my wardrobe that way."

"You didn't pay for those drinks did you?"

"What?"

"I may be your mother, Kevin, but I remember being in my early twenties and a hottie and never needing to buy myself a drink."

Kevin laughed, trying hard not to imagine her mother out clubbing, "No, Mom, Sara was sure to remind me that I never needed to buy a drink. That's probably why I'm hungover."

"Did you dance?"

"Sara would take me out and let me wallflower?"

"I suppose not." Mom served the pancakes and put the syrup on the table. "You get groped?"

"More times than I can count."

"Did'ja ever enjoy it?"

"Mother!" Kevin said as her mother just arched an eyebrow. "A few times. It bothered me a lot less than the guys who tried to rub themselves against me."

"Clubs really haven't changed over the years." Mom said, sitting down. "Have you picked out a name?"

"A name?"

"Well, you don't look like any Kevin I've ever met before."

"Oh, yeah, maybe Vanna."

"Really?"

"No, I just have no idea."

"When I was pregnant with you your father insisted you would be Kevin. But I held out some hope that I would have another daughter. I was going to call her Rayne."

"You want me to be called Rayne?"

"God, no. Rayne would have been someone else." Mom said. "But you might combine them. Ravenna sounds like a rocker chick name."

"Ravenna? Yeah, it even sounds like ravenous. That might be cool." She said. She took a bite of her pancakes and then looked at her mother. "Did you just call me a rocker chick?"

"Isn't that the point of what you're doing?"

Ravenna laughed. "Yes, I suppose so."

"You'll get called worse. You should have vanned some tattoos onto that body."

"Why don't I know about this side of you, Mother?"

"You never talk to me about your life." She said. "Sons are like that."

"So you did want a daughter."

"I already have everything I wanted. I hope you can say the same thing." She got up and started cleaning the counter.

* * *

Ravenna practiced playing guitar and singing while wearing the platform boots during the afternoon. Eventually she felt steady doing it. She had to remove the boots to put her keyboard in its case. She was much weaker in this form than she was use to being.

"Steve?" Ravenna said into the phone.

"Hey, Kevin," Steve answered.

"Call me Ravenna," she said.

"Ravenna, that's a cool name."

"Mom figured it out."

"Your mom? I knew she was cool."

"Yeah, can you give me a ride to practice? I don't want to arrive alone. And I doubt I can get into my truck wearing what I'm wearing."

"Sounds kinky. Sure. I'll be over at quarter of."

"Great."

Steve arrived promptly and Sara answered the door. Steve was wearing a black, see-through mesh shirt that made it hard to tell if he had breasts or just pronounced pecs. He also had on ripped jeans and pale foundational makeup with dark eyeliner. "Interesting look, Steve."

"It'll be boring next to Ravenna's, I'm sure."

"Well, yeah." Sara stepped back to let Steve in and yelled up the stairs that

Steve was here.

Descending the stairs, Steve first saw the disco ball styled platform boots that went from ankle to mid-thigh. Black nylons continued up her legs, disappearing under a black and white checker board skirt. Her midriff was bare. A pink, cow-boy styled shirt, tailored like a men's dress shirt but tied below her bust line followed. A red bra could be seen under the shirt. A short leather jacket covered her shoulders and her hair was still straight and platinum blond. Her face was made up with heavy eye shadow with silver glitter speckled within it. She wore long eye lashes and her lips were bright red. There was a golden hue to her foundation. She was carrying a guitar case.

As she reached the floor, she gave a little spin. "How do I look?"

"Stunning. How do you walk in those things?"

"Very carefully," Ravenna said with a laugh. "Androgyny looks good on you, Steve."

"Steph," He said. "May as well make it as confusing as we can."

"We're overdressed for a rehearsal."

"We need them to see the full picture."

"Can you go get my keyboard? I can't really carry it down the stairs in this weakling body you made."

"Crap, I never thought about that." Steph said.

* * *

The sounds of a noodling guitar and random drum fills followed by the tuning of a drum head leaked from the loft as Steph and Ravenna arrived.

The guitarist, a wild haired man wearing a loose shirt and tight leather pants, stopped playing and asked, "Is that you Steve? And who's the chick?"

"Call me Steph," Steph said and she set down her bass guitar case and opened it. "Kevin's trying out a new look."

"Hi," said the woman. "Call me Ravenna."

"What the fuck?" Stig asked.

Steph said, "You're always bitching the songs need a female vocalist." He pointed at Ravenna. "I convinced Kevin to give it a shot."

Scott, the drummer, was wearing cut-off jeans and no shirt. He got up from behind the drum kit and took Ravenna's guitar case from her, "You are fucking hot, Ravenna. I hope you can still sing." He set the case down in her practice space.

"Is this a joke?" Stig asked. "You look like a fucking whore."

"I would think you'd be happy to have less competition for the groupies," Scott said.

"Fuck you."

"Guys, guys, just let her sing. You will see this can work. The venn ends tomor-

row so if you're still against it, no harm, no foul."

"Fine," Stig said. "I don't even want to discuss how you look."

"When you see me with bass in hand, you'll think I've always looked like this." Steph laughed.

Scott laughed to. "What do you want to play first?" He moved back to his kit.

Ravenna said, "We start from the top. But some of the songs need their key changed so they sound good with this voice."

"Of course," Stig complained.

"Just start," she said to Scott.

Scott counted in and played the drum fill that started the song. Stig and Steph joined in and after a few bars Ravenna joined in. By the second chorus, Stig was actually smiling. After the song, they finished setting up Ravenna's guitar and keyboard. They played the rest of their set with Ravenna having to tell them about some key changes. She also suggested that Stig sing one of the songs as she felt it was not right with a female vocal. In one song, Kevin would hold a note a couple extra beats while the band paused. Ravenna held that note for a few bars much to the guys' surprise.

Aside from a few curses from Stig and even once from Steph about some of the key changes, practice continued without too much hassle. As they were breaking it down, Ravenna was drinking some water and Steph was taking his bass back to the car.

"So tell me," Stig said. "Are you changing back or what?"

"Well, the current venn ends tomorrow night." Ravenna said. "Do you think we sounded better with Ravenna singing?"

"Of course," Stig said. "Kevin can sing. But you sound amazing."

Scott and Steph returned to pick up some equipment. Scott said, "I hope you stay like that. Watching you dance around is far more interesting than watching Kevin do so."

"Pig."

"Oink me." He said as he carried more equipment out.

"So we'll venn again, Steph?"

"Yeah. How about a month this time?" Steph asked as he also removed some equipment.

"Can you handle a month?" Ravenna asked Stig.

"I can handle anything." Stig said. "Seriously, I don't care what you look like as long as you sound fucking awesome. We have a bunch of gigs this month. Hopefully folks will really get turned on to Ravenous Libido." He paused and looked around. "Between you and me, have you taken that pussy for a spin, yet?"

"What?"

He held his hands up and made a circle with one and pushed a finger from his other hand into the circle.

"Thank you for the graphics. No, I haven't. And I don't plan to do so with you."

"Suit yourself, bitch," Stig said getting up and grabbing his guitar cases. As he stormed out, Scott came back and took a look at Ravenna's shocked face.

"He called you a bitch 'cause you turned him down?" Scott asked.

"How'd you know?"

"Stig is Stig and thus, to him, a body like yours is built for one thing: fucking."

"Am I?"

"You could be. But not with him, I'm guessing. Me either. It'd be too weird."

"Thank you."

"Don't get me wrong, I wouldn't say no. But I also wouldn't ask." Scott laughed. "I can't believe you gave Steve tits."

"I figured he and I could share in the mammaries."

"Ow, that was an awful pun." Steph said waking back in.

"I've been saving it."

"You ready to go?"

"I still can't carry my keyboard, Steph," Ravenna said batting her eyelashes.

In bed that night, makeup properly removed this time, Ravenna kept hearing what Stig had wanted to do and wondered if she should give that a try. Solo. Sara had joked about getting her a vibrator. And although Ravenna had said she did not want one, she had found one in one of the many shopping bags. As she lay there, curiosity got the better of her and she fell asleep after taking herself for a spin.

* * *

Monday morning, Ravenna arrived at work as the book store opened. She let herself in and began the beginning of day process. Around eleven, the owner arrived. She was a woman in her early fifties, dressed in a business casual jumpsuit. As soon as she saw Ravenna she swore. "Damned Venn machine. Which of my employees are you?"

"Morning, Mrs. Cache, I'm Kevin. But call me Ravenna." she said.

"Kevin?" Mrs. Cache said, looking her up and down. "Did you lose a bet?"

Ravenna explained her appearance with most of the details intact.

"Since this is your first time at work as a woman, I'll let it slide. But the employee handbook specifies that female employees must wear dark skirts of at least knee length, plain white or near white blouses, and low heeled shoes, not flats, not pumps. So tomorrow, be dressed correctly," she said. "It's an interesting idea you've had. You should write a book about your experience as a female singer in a band. Carry on." And Ravenna did not see much of her the rest of the day.

After work, Ravenna and Steph were in Kevin's bedroom Monday afternoon, talking about the band's website. "We never did too many promotional videos

so no one should really notice Kevin is missing.”

“That really strokes my ego,” Ravenna joked.

“I keep saying we should do photos but you guys hate the idea.”

“Scott doesn’t care.”

“Scott doesn’t care about anything.”

As they continued to discuss promoting the band, Sara knocked on the door and came in. “Where’s Megan?”

“Who?” Ravenna said and then nodded. “The boots.” She got up and got the boots out of the closet. She set them down on the floor.

“What’s going on?” Steph asked.

“Wait for it,” Sara said. Seconds later, the boots were replaced by a young woman.

She stretched and seemed to bubble over with joy. “That was great. You are an amazing singer. I could feel your singing vibrating in my toes. Oh my god.”

“Oh, that’s right,” Steph said looking at Sara. “You work at that store.” He turned to Ravenna, “You should have your sister do your venning. She’s probably better at it than I am.”

“And if you ever need those boots again, I’m your boots.” Megan said. “You were talking about gigs on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. I’m available. I’ll even do it for free. But....”

“But what?”

“Next time Sara takes you dancing, you wear me.”

Sara drove Megan back to the mall and Ravenna and Steph continued to discuss their band. A few hours later when they reverted to their normal selves they went to the mall as well. Kevin had Sara venged him for a month. She made him exactly as Steve had with a few improvements. She made his eyelashes long and lined his eyes with thin black eyeliner to save her time doing her eye make-up. Sara made her nails a little over half an inch longer than the tips of her fingers and from her work with the machine before, she was sure those nails were extremely resistant to breakage. And at her mother’s suggestion, she gave Ravenna a couple tattoos, pierced ears, a nostril piercing, and a pair of piercings. Ravenna really was not expecting through her nipples.

Megan wanted to turn into boots again, but Sara convinced her to wait until Thursday night.

Steve also got a turn in the machine, basically being turned into Steph again but better. When Steph came out, it was hard to tell if he was a he or if she was a she.

They shopped for more clothes, shoes, and accessories, including clothes for Steph’s on stage look. This took a few hours before they parted ways. At home, Ravenna spent the following couple nights making sure she could play her guitar and keyboard parts with long nails. Ravenna showed up to work properly

dressed the rest of the week. On Wednesday, a man named Derek entered the shop and he chatted with her for almost an hour. They had several things in common, including a love for photography and astronomy. Eventually, she agreed to a dinner date with him the following Monday.

On Thursday after work, the band loaded up Scott’s van and drove to their gig. Sara tagged along in case Ravenna needed her. She took notes about possible wardrobe improvements. The gig that night and Friday night went off with only one or two mistakes caused by someone playing in the wrong key for a bar or two. Stig made the most noise about this, but it did not really matter. At Saturday’s show, Sara managed to get herself put in charge of the lone spotlight the bar possessed and she used it to excellent effect, highlighting her sister the most but being sure to give the other band members their due when they were soloing or otherwise featured.

On Sunday, Sara surprised Ravenna with a website she had been working on.

“What is all this?” There were pictures, presumably of Ravenna, on stage, back stage, at the beach, at the mall, and a few of her high school soccer team and at her birthday party when she turned six. “When did I do this?”

“My friends at work love your look and when they aren’t out being someone or something else, I’ve had them dress up as you and take some photographs. If you are going to be Ravenna, people are going to want to look into her life before the band. So I’m creating some album pics that I’ve put up on your Face-gram web page.”

“I’m not...”

“You’re not what? Did you know I got Ravenna and the band into the Bunker Bash show?”

“Seriously? The Bunker Bash Festival?”

“Yeah, I’ve got you on the main stage. But I’m hoping they find a better time slot”

“What?”

“They called me yesterday about you going on around five pm on the second stage and I said call back when you have something better. They called back an hour later with six pm on the main stage. And said we might be able to get ten pm if we can show them gate sales of over five hundred in the next three weeks. And there are places that can happen.

“But as I was saying, Sis,” Sara said. “If you’re serious about the band, you’re probably going to be Ravenna for more than just the next month.”

“What else have you been doing?”

At band rehearsal that evening, Sara attended and told the whole band what she had been up to. She announced the Festival gig to a round of hoots and hollers. Scott suggested she become their manager. She declined. But she also suggested a few changes. They needed a sound guy, desperately. Relying on the

club to do their sound was amateurish. She explained there were a couple gigs she could book if they had their own lighting rig. When they pointed out all that stuff required money and roadies, she suggested they do a recording in a studio and get it up on the Internet. They could be getting money on a website like Fantron. Steph asked if Sara was sure she did not want to be their manager.

During a quiet moment in the rehearsal, Stig was Stig again. "Ya know," he said. "Since you went fem, the quality of the groupies has gone up, right Scott?"

"Sure, Stig." Scott said, shaking his head as Stig walked past him.

Stig approached Ravenna and stage whispered, "Did I see you with a pair of muff divers after Thursday's gig, Rav?"

Ravenna turned bright red because she had in fact made out with a couple of women after that gig. She did not think Stig had seen her.

"Ha, ha, guys, see? Same old Kevin. Taking them two at a time." Stig continued. "You still need to try it with a guy, Doll."

* * *

Ravenna's dinner date was the following night and Sara helped her get dressed. She was dressed similar to how she dressed for work except she wore a taller heel as she climbed into her truck. They met at the restaurant and had a pleasant evening of food and conversation. When they were done, he walked her to her car and gave her a simple kiss before saying goodbye. They arranged for another date the next Monday. Afterward, Sara said he was going too slowly but Ravenna did not mind.

Sara hired some rental equipment, a couple of roadies, and an engineer for a few days and booked the band at a couple of bigger venues. Word of mouth in the local area had them pulling in a few hundred people by themselves. And each gig gained them many more fans. They were actually staying in a motel for two days for these gigs as they were located further away from home than prior gigs had been. She also booked them some studio time on the days they were away from home. The engineer, Jim, liked them so much, he helped out at the studio as well. They managed to lay down the basic tracks for eight songs those two days. Stig had laid down finished guitar solos on most of the tracks. Ravenna had sung finished vocals for five of the songs and for the others, she wanted to do some layering of vocals that they did not have time for.

The month's venn was almost over. It would end long before the Bunker Bash Festival, two months later. Ravenna was amazed as people paid them, through Fantron, enough to retain the sound engineer and one roadie. And soon they would hit the target for a second roadie. The recording of one of their songs was doing well on a couple indie websites. And a couple UTube reviewers had asked for interviews with Ravenna.

Ravenna's second date with Derek was similar to the first. She had allowed

him to pick her up at the house for this date as she knew her parents would be out. Sara met him at the door so he could watch Ravenna descend the stairs. Ravenna was amazed that there was still stuff to talk about after all the talking they did. When they were finished eating, he drove them to a quiet street at the edge of town where they got out of the car and did some stargazing. After a while, they got back in the car and he took her home. Their good night kiss was more passionate this time. But he left her on her porch waving to him as he drove away. Sara was still convinced he was going too slowly. Ravenna said, "I don't know I kind of feel funny."

"Funny how?"

"Like I'm bloated or something."

Sara laughed.

"What's so funny?"

"I suspect you are about discover the true joy of womanhood."

"What?" Ravenna said and then she realized what Sara meant. "Oh, joy."

"It's time for the hygiene talk."

Shortly after that passed, Ravenna had Sara re-venn her for three years. Steph only vened for one year. Six weeks and about twenty gigs later, everything came crashing down the weekend before the festival when they were set to appear in front a few thousand people. As they pulled up to the gig, Stig blew up. No one knew what his deal was until they saw the marquis on the venue's front. They had been billed as Ravenna's Libido. Stig accused Sara of trying to take over the band and turning it into Kevin's band. Nothing would placate him. He called an Oober and left. With only a hour to go before the gig started, Ravenna and Steph started working out how to play the songs without Stig as fast as they could. Jim helped them out by pointing out stuff that Stig did that no one ever really heard. Ravenna was most worried about some of his solos. Steph could turn them into keyboard solos usually, but on the guitar centered songs, she would have to play them.

They went on. And the show went well. The crowd was into them. Without Stig hamming it up to the front row, Ravenna moved around on the stage a lot more than usual. Of course, there were all sorts of mistakes that only the three of them really noticed and only one or two that made it to the audience's ears. After the show, Sara was not around while they joked about all the stuff Ravenna and Steph did wrong. There was a knock and Sara entered with a woman. "Guys," she said. "This is Monica Jones. She's an A&R director at Liberty Records."

"You guys were fantastic. An amazing trio." They all look non-plussed at the comment until Monica laughed. "I'm sorry. I know your guitarist walked on you. Still you covered for him amazingly well with only, what, an hour's notice."

"If that," Steph said.

"You're too kind," Ravenna said. "There were so many mistakes."

"No, there were probably a lot of bits and pieces missing that you're use to hearing. But to the casual observer, the three of you were tight. The solos may not have been as practiced as they should have been. But you, darling, your vocals were gorgeous. And no autotune. What will our engineers do if they can't fiddle with the autotune?"

"Your engineers?"

"Oh, yes, I get ahead of myself," Monica said. "I heard some of your demos from your website and I was excited to see you based on them alone. Sara played me a couple of the songs just now that aren't on your website yet. It's a shame your guitarist walked. He can really play."

"He'll come back," Scott said.

"Unless he wrote all the songs, I say screw him," Monica said. "I'll bet he's also an ass."

"All lead guitarists are," Ravenna and Steph said at once and then laughed.

"So, Monica has an offer," Sara said.

"Yes, I do. We aren't signing bands at the moment. But we have a few concerts that a couple of our bands are headlining coming up in the area and we were hoping we might sign you to open for them depending on availability. The venues range from 8,000 to 20,000 seats in size."

The band members looked at each other in shock. Ravenna said, "We'd certainly love to do that."

"Depending on various factors that I'm sure we can let the lawyers work out," Sara added.

"You are savvy," Monica said to Sara. "I suggest you also keep the name change. I have to admit, I suggested the mistaken name to the sign guy. Ravenna is an excellent front-person. And bands live or die with their front, no offense to you two."

"I'd agree with that sentiment," Steph said.

"Yeah," Scott said. "That's why Stig probably won't be coming back. It's a shame too because a couple of the songs he wrote could be hit singles."

"I'll talk to Stig," Steph said. "He might do it just to be in front such huge crowds."

"I gotta get going," Monica said. "Sara, I'll call you Monday to work out a deal."

"Okay."

"Are you sure you aren't our manager?" Ravenna asked after Monica was gone.

* * *

"No," Stig said. "The name of the band cannot change."

"Stig, be reasonable," Sara said. "Look at this poll on our Fantron site. The peo-

ple who give you money every month are 86% to 12% in favor of Ravenna's Libido."

"I don't care. I named the band. Kevin's girl name could just as easily be Tabitha. That would also end the confusion."

Steph said, "You are giving up the chance to play in front of 20,000 people over the name of the band?"

"I suppose I am."

"Will you at least play with us at the Bunker Bash a few days from now? You signed that contract." Scott asked.

"Perhaps."

"Perhaps?"

"I have one condition." Stig said looking at Ravenna. "I get to test drive Ravenna's Libido."

"You what?"

"You heard me." Stig said. "A night in my bed and everything is back to..."

"Get out!" Scott stood up shouting. "Get the fuck out of here you worthless piece of shit."

"This doesn't involve you."

"This involves my friend and supposedly your friend but now I don't think you ever understood what that is. Now get the fuck out and never come back. Don't call us. Don't talk to us. You are dead to me."

"Fine!" Stig said standing up. "You'll never get anywhere without me. Enjoy your spot in the limelight. It won't last." He stormed out of the rehearsal space and slammed the door as he left.

"Thank you," Ravenna said after a moment of silence.

"Don't thank me. I've been sick of his bullshit for a while and was putting up with it for the band."

"I guess I was wrong," Steph said. "The band did get torn up over having a female lead singer even when we all knew the singer was Kevin."

"We'll find another guitarist."

Sara looked at her phone. "I actually called the local musician's union and asked them for the names of a couple players. One of them should be here in half an hour."

They all looked at her with an "oh, really?" kind of look.

"Okay, okay," Sara said. "I'll be your manager."

* * *

The guitarist who showed up, Terrance, was able to cover for Stig easily, mostly because Sara had sent him the demo recordings a few days before his audition. She ended up hiring two musicians so Ravenna could concentrate on just singing during the gigs. The Festival brought them a large amount of new sub-

scribers on Fantron.

Backstage after a gig one Wednesday night, a tall man in a business casual shirt and slacks entered the dressing room and seeing Ravenna asked, "Are you ready?"

Ravenna gave Derek a hug and a quick smooch. "I just have get the war paint off."

Scott stood up and introduced himself. "So you're Derek. I'm Scott. We were beginning to believe you were imaginary."

"You're the drummer, right? Pleasure to meet you. And you must be Steph."

"Hi." Steph said, shaking Derek's hand. "You met Ravenna at the book store?"

"Yes, I was looking for a book on meteors that had just come out and we apparently shared an interest in astronomy. We're going stargazing right now."

"I'm ready," Ravenna said. She handed her boots to Sara. "Help Megan get home."

"No problem," Sara said. "Have fun."

Derek drove them to a hilltop outside of town. When they arrived he handed her a blanket to spread out as he set his telescope down next to the blanket. He opened a laptop and the telescope whirled and spun a little before settling on a direction. He retrieved a basket from the car and put it down on the blanket. "We have about forty minutes before the show starts." He took out a fluted glass and poured some sparkling wine into it.

"It's so quiet up here. And dark. This is when you murder me, right?"

"I didn't bring my shovel."

"Oh, that's good."

They were kissing when there was a beep from the laptop. "What's that?"

"Time to gaze into the heavens." They got up and he directed her to the eyepiece.

As she looked into the telescope, she was aware of him standing right behind her. His breath was warm on her ear and neck. His scent was heady in her nose. They talked about celestial phenomena coyly for a while, taking turns to gaze at the heavens. While Derek was looking into the telescope, she stood close by. As he looked away from the eyepiece, she kissed him. They kissed for a while before there was another beep from Derek's equipment. He looked back into the eyepiece. "Here, quick, take a look at this."

She did so and it was beautiful to see. Derek's hand ran along her backside as he said, "Those streaks of light curve majestically. Though there are some curves here on earth that outdo them." She looked up at him and he smiled rakishly. They moved back to the blanket naturally, leisurely they removed one another's clothes. The night air was humid but held a certain chill. Neither seemed to mind, pressing their bodies closer together as needed.

Later, they were cuddling. Derek would point into the sky and name a star or

constellation. Ravenna knew most of them but was happy to listen to the sound of his voice. The stars were beginning to fade in the light of false dawn as they talked about the sounds of the birds chirping in the early morning light. At one point she asked if he could go again.

He pointed over his head, "That way is east."

"Yeah," she said.

"It is almost dawn. Do you see that glow on the hill to the east? The sun will soon crest that hill and the light will be the most beautiful orange and gold of sunrise."

"I love watching the sunrise."

"Straddle me," he said. He pulled the blanket away from his body and she could see he was erect. "Get on. I want to see you orgasm in the rising sunlight."

She smiled and mounted him. They kissed as she slowly rocked back and forth on him. He moaned under her effort and soon she found herself getting into it. He suggested she sit up and as she did she could see the sun beginning to rise over the hill. She closed her eyes as it was too bright.

He saw golden light bathe her hair, her face, her chest. Her face was radiant. Her hair glowed with orange and gold highlights. She was an angel of light making slow love to him. His phone lay nearby. He grabbed it and took several pictures of her.

She heard the camera shutter sound but she did not care. She was climbing to climax.

The look of bliss made her glowing face radiant. Soon he knew she was orgasming. She cried out his name and they heard it bounce around the various canyons nearby. She lay down on his chest and giggled. "The echo, oh my." He wrapped his arms and the blanket around her and she felt safe. It was an odd feeling. She had not felt unsafe before yet now she felt safe.

She awoke later alone in the blanket, the morning sun shining brightly. She looked around and found a bottle of water nearby. She opened it and drank from it gratefully.

"Are you awake?" He asked. He stood where the telescope had been. He had put it away while she slept, she thought. He was holding a camera and it looked like he was trying to get a picture of a bird in a nearby tree. "I hope I didn't wake you."

"I don't think you did." She said closing the water bottle. "What time is it?"

"Dunno, check my phone."

His phone was near her on the blanket. She unraveled the blanket and rolled over to get the phone. Swiping to unlock the phone she was surprised to see a picture of herself glowing in the morning light, her arms waving easily in the air, eyes closed, her breasts swung to one side, her face obviously mid-pleasure. It was an amazing image of pure ecstasy. She was also slightly out of focus and not

at all centered in the image. But still the picture should be in the dictionary next to the word 'bliss'.

"Do you like it?"

She turned her head and there was a flash from the camera. He was crouched down near her feet and had just taken a picture of her nude backside. "I don't remember saying you could photograph me."

"May I?"

She laughed. "I notice you are dressed and I am naked."

"People enjoy nude photography, not nude photographers."

They bantered as he suggested places for her to stand, sit, or lean. Each pose was artistic and did not reveal anything she was uncomfortable revealing. He even had a few props, a twelve-inch inflatable, red ball; a plush lion; and a diaphanous four-foot square of cloth that she could wear like a robe or toga garment.

After a while, he pulled her clothes from the car and said, "Are you hungry? Perhaps we should go eat." He pointed straight up at the sun. "It's already after noon."

"Time flies when you're photographing your nude girlfriend."

"She is the most beautiful woman I know."

Ravenna turned beet red as she was getting dressed.

"Your skin is unnaturally smooth. Did you have electrolysis to remove your hair?"

"I'm afraid I might have to confess something to you."

"Oh?" He finished putting his camera in its case and turned to look at her attentively.

She looked down. She looked left. She did not look him in the eye. "I don't normally look like this. I'm vanned. You know about the Venn machines, right?"

"I do," he said with a smile that she did not see.

"I... I..." She started to say something but could not put it into words.

"I know, Ravenna." He stepped closer to her and turned her head to look him in the eyes. "I know you're a man."

"You do?"

He laughed. "I've known since I saw you in the book store. I think your name is Kevin."

"How?"

"You see, that day we 'met' was not the first time I'd seen you in the store. I even once asked Kevin about a book on photography. You won't remember that because, you see, I'm also vanned."

"Are you a woman?"

"I am."

"What's the rest of the story?"

"I'm the woman who comes in every other Monday morning and peruses the do it yourself section. Short, brown hair, glasses, shy."

"Oh my god," Ravenna said. "I know the woman you mean. Always wears something blue."

"That's me. One Monday, I came in and Kevin was not there. You were in his place. I watched you carefully and I realized you could not be a woman. You look like a woman. You even walk like a woman. But you don't act like a woman. You are forward and unguarded. Women generally aren't like that. Especially, short women with no upper body strength. So I found out from the store owner all about Kevin's plan to be a rock star."

"So you became Derek to date me."

"Well, not exactly. I'd been Derek before. Just not 24/7 like you apparently do. You know I write magazine articles and interviews. Well, some people just will not talk to a Debra. But they will talk to a Derek. So I've been signing my articles as D. Richards for most of my professional life. No one knows if D. Richards is a man or a woman but my editor. And only because he's old school and sometimes needs to talk to me on the phone."

"So I decided maybe Derek could get me closer to the guy I was interested in who was now a woman."

"That is just a few steps from stalking."

"Well, I don't think you were complaining a few hours ago."

Ravenna blushed again.

"You turn colors so well," Derek said. "So, if you don't mind that I'm normally a woman, I won't mind that you're normally a man. And if you wait a few hours, I'll be changing back around three pm."

"That's a lot to take in."

"It is the same amount to take in as you were going to dump on poor Derek a few minutes ago."

"Oh, yeah. It is, isn't it?" She said. "Does this mean I can finally see your place?"

"I suppose it does. Grab the blanket and we can get back into town."

After stopping for lunch, they drove back to Derek's apartment. It was a two bedroom apartment and Ravenna also got to meet Derek's roommate Anne. Anne was a gym rat. Her small frame was muscular. She wore her blond hair in a pony tail. When she saw Ravenna, she immediately said to Derek, "You told her?"

"I did."

"You don't mind that your boyfriend is a girl."

Derek was behind Anne and mouthed the words. "She doesn't know about Kevin."

Ravenna caught his meaning and said, "There are worse things than being a

guy who is really a gal."

"I doubt that. But then I don't swing that way."

Derek looked at his phone and said, "Excuse me, I don't want to end up wearing Derek's clothes after I change." He stepped into her bedroom.

Anne whispered, "If you are just humoring her, go now. I'll make up some excuse."

"I'm really okay with this."

"Suit yourself."

The door opened and out stepped a brown-haired, mousy, glasses-wearing girl. She was still taller than Ravenna but not nearly as shapely. "Well?"

Ravenna recognized her from the store. She was not sure Kevin would bed her if she were a groupie and that made her mad at herself. She approached her and said, "Debra, right?" When Debra nodded, Ravenna said, "Will you still have me as your girlfriend?"

Debra kissed Ravenna and she kissed her back.

"Get a room," Anne said.

They looked at Anne and disappeared into Debra's bedroom.

* * *

"So, how did it feel to be Kevin for the past couple days?" Sara asked.

"It's funny," Kevin said. "After being Ravenna for over six months, I really don't miss Kevin. It was fun being the guy for Debra these few days. Derek and I even got to hang out. But if I had not needed to be Kevin to get a work visa for Canada, I don't think I would have bothered going back this soon."

"Really?"

"Yeah, it's funny. When I'm Ravenna and he's Derek, I'm not as assertive. I basically let him dictate our plans. If she's Debra we're more egalitarian. And this is fine."

"Well, tonight I'll vinn Ravenna back so the band can kick off its tour of New England and parts of Canada for three weeks."

"That is so amazing. I'm so glad we signed with Liberty Records. But touring in an actual bus with four roadies, a tech, sound and light guys, two musicians and a pair of backing vocalists. And I have an actual wardrobe and some costume changes. Lighting cues, choreography. PR interviews at various radio stations. It's so much to keep track of."

"I'm just glad you finally got a real manager. It was fun for me but I was in way over my head," Sara said.

"Aw, you were great," Kevin said, pulling Sara in for a hug.

"See how much you've changed? When was the last time Kevin hugged me?"

"Kevin can be an ass." They laughed.

"I've been meaning to ask you something," Sara said.

"What?"

"So you've had sex with Derek as Ravenna, and with Debra as Ravenna, and with Debra as Kevin, and..." he nodded and she smiled as she continued, "and with Derek as Kevin. What version was best?"

"A gentleman doesn't kiss and tell," Kevin said.

"I'm not asking about kissing, Mr. Gentleman."

"Frankly, there are parts of all of those that I like. I probably prefer the Derek and Ravenna connection slightly more than the others. But it's only because that was how we first discovered one another and thus it feels the most natural. I love being with Debra. These past two days have cemented our relationship. But being held by Derek feels right."

"Cemented how?"

"We were talking about moving in together after the New England tour."

"Really?" Sara said with a giddy laugh. "How about marriage?"

"We've talked about it. We're thinking about having two weddings. I told her Ravenna's wedding would have to have people related strictly to the band attending. And Debra said she did not care as long as she still got her wedding day. And I realized we would need to also marry as Kevin and Debra. So that one will be strictly family and friends. And Ravenna's wedding will be family, friends, and business associates."

"You guys have discussed this."

"For hours, yes. In fact, Ravenna would want you to be her Maid of Honor and I would like you to be my Best Person."

Sara laughed, "I never thought I'd get to be Maid of Honor for you, Bro. But Steph should be your Best Man." They hugged again.

"Well, don't do anything yet. We haven't settled on any dates yet. It probably won't be until next summer."

"I know."

"And I still need to tell Mom and Dad, the rest of the band, she has people to tell. So keep it under wraps," Kevin said.

"I'm just happy your life is working out for you. Even if it isn't what you expected, Sis."