Are You Ready To

RISK



by CBlack

Are You Ready To



Chapter One

by CBlack

I DON'T CARE IF YOU DON'T HAVE A CLUE...

A Saturday night in O'Doul's pub, near the University of Oregon in Eugene, Oregon...

I CAN'T THINK OF NO ONE ELSE... BUT YOU!




WOO-HOO!!


THANKS! WE'RE GONNA BE TAKIN' A BREAK BEFORE OUR NEXT SET, SO DON'T GO ANYWHERE, OKAY?

YOU REALLY SOUNDED GREAT TONIGHT, BRIAN! THE CROWD WAS LOVING IT!

YEAH, ALL *TWELVE* OF THEM! I TELL YOU, I'VE GOTTA GET OUT OF THIS LITTLE COLLEGE TOWN IF I'M GONNA GET *ANYWHERE* IN THIS BUSINESS!


ALL I NEED IS JUST ONE BREAK!


THEN I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY YOU DON'T TAKE MY ADVICE AND TRY OUT FOR THAT NEW REALITY SHOW THAT'S COMING UP! YOU'D BLOW THEM AWAY!
"ARE YOU READY TO ROCK"?! ARE YOU KIDDING?!


YOU KNOW HOW MUCH I HATE THOSE REALITY SHOWS! THEY'RE SO RIGGED AND PHONY!
MAYBE... AND MAYBE NOT! BUT IT IS AN OPPORTUNITY!

LOOK!
HERE'S THE PROMO
AGAIN!

Are You
Ready to
ROCK!

DO YOU HAVE
WHAT IT TAKES TO
BE THE NEXT
SUPERSTAR?!

OH... JOY!


ARE YOU READY TO ROCK WITH THESE THREE LEGENDS OF ROCK AND ROLL?!

CLIVE HANCOCK HAS SPENT THE LAST TWENTY YEARS AS BASSIST FOR BANDS AND ARTISTS SUCH AS PROVIDENCE, LOCO JONES AND WILLIAM 'CRAWDADDY' SMITH!

HARLEY MAXWELL HAS BEEN THE KEYBOARD WIZARD FOR MEGAGROUPS LIKE CICADA KILLERS, THE MELANCHOLY HEARTACHES AND THE ATOMIC LIGHT SYMPHONY!

AND, LAST BUT NEVER LEAST, NIGEL CORNWALL HAS BEEN POUNDING HIS SOUL INTO HARD-HITTING GROUPS LIKE HYPERDETH, BLOOMING STILETTOS AND SHORT CIRCUIT!

ARE YOU READY TO BE THE LEAD GUITARIST OR LEAD SINGER FOR THE NEXT GREAT MEGAGROUP?!


Are You Ready to ROCK!
AUDITIONS WILL BE HELD OVER A SIX WEEK PERIOD IN EIGHT CITIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY, STARTING NEXT WEEK IN SEATTLE!
SO YOU HAVE ONE WEEK TO DECIDE...


Ready
ROCK!
ARE YOU,,, READY TO ROCK?!
THAT IS A PERFECT CHANCE FOR YOU! YOU COULD RULE IN EITHER CATEGORY... GUITARIST OR VOCALIST!
YEAH, BUT IT'S TV!


BRIAN DELANCY WINTERS! WE'VE BEEN FRIENDS SINCE GRADE SCHOOL, BUT IF YOU DON'T AT LEAST GIVE THIS A SHOT, I'M GOING TO FIND ANOTHER MULTI-TALENTED UNKNOWN TO SPEND MY WEEKENDS WITH!


OKAY, AMY! OKAY! I GET THE MESSAGE! I'LL PUT SOMETHING TOGETHER, ABANDON ALL MY BELIEFS AND VALUES, AND AUDITION FOR THE NETWORK TOADIES IN SEATTLE NEXT WEEK!


GOOD!
I KNEW YOU'D SEE
IT MY WAY!

One week later, in the first round of auditions in Seattle...

Are You Ready to ROCK!?


SO,
TELL US A LITTLE
ABOUT YOURSELF,
BRIAN!

WELL,
I'M BRIAN WINTERS
FROM EUGENE, OREGON.
I STARTED PLAYING GUITAR
WHEN I WAS SEVEN AND I'VE
BEEN PLAYING, SINGING AND
WRITING IN SOME KIND OF
BAND OR ANOTHER SINCE
JUNIOR HIGH!

SO, I TAKE IT YOU'RE AUDITIONING FOR *EITHER* POSITION, RIGHT?

THAT'S RIGHT! I'LL BE SINGING AND PLAYING GUITAR FOR YOU TODAY! A LITTLE JIMMY RAY BOND!

SOUNDS GREAT, BUT YOU REALIZE THAT IF YOU MAKE THE CUT TODAY, WE'LL HAVE TO PUT YOU IN ONE CATEGORY OR THE OTHER!

IF YOU HAD TO CHOOSE, WHICH WOULD IT BE... GUITARIST OR SINGER?

TRUTHFULLY, IT REALLY DOESN'T MATTER TO ME!

I'D DO JUST ABOUT ANYTHING FOR A CHANCE TO TOUR WITH YOU GUYS... IN WHATEVER POSITION YOU WANT!

A BLOKE AFTER ME OWN HEART! OKAY, SON... LET 'ER RIP!

Brian launched into a blistering rendition of Jimmy Ray's signature classic...

...I LIKE MY BABY SHAKEN... BUT NOT STIRRED!




WHOA! THAT TAKES ME BACK!
AWESOME STUFF, MAN! TOTALLY AWESOME!
HELL, SCREW THE FUCKIN' SHOW! LET'S JUST TAKE THIS BLOKE AND HIT THE ROAD! WADDYA SAY, MATES?

WHAT?!

ANYWAY... THAT WAS SOME SOME OF THE BEST GUITAR WORK AND VOCALS I'VE HEARD IN A LONG TIME!

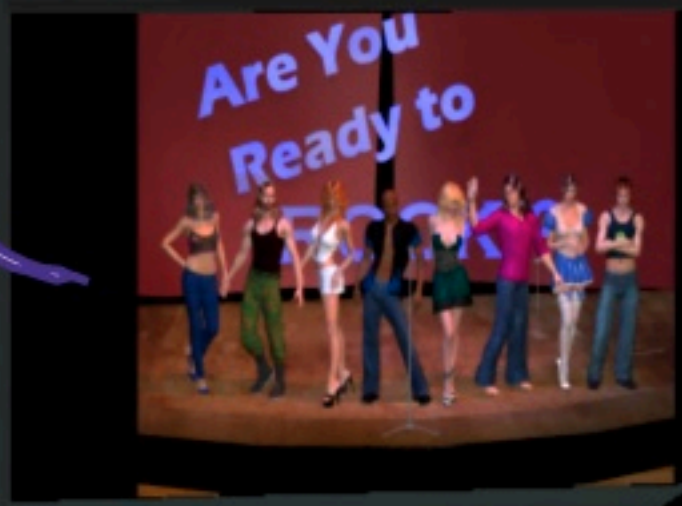
BUT, WE'VE GOT ABOUT ANOTHER HOUR OF AUDITIONS BEFORE WE POST THE WINNERS, SO STAY CLOSE BY, BRIAN... IF YOU GET MY DRIFT!

A few moments later, just outside the concert hall...

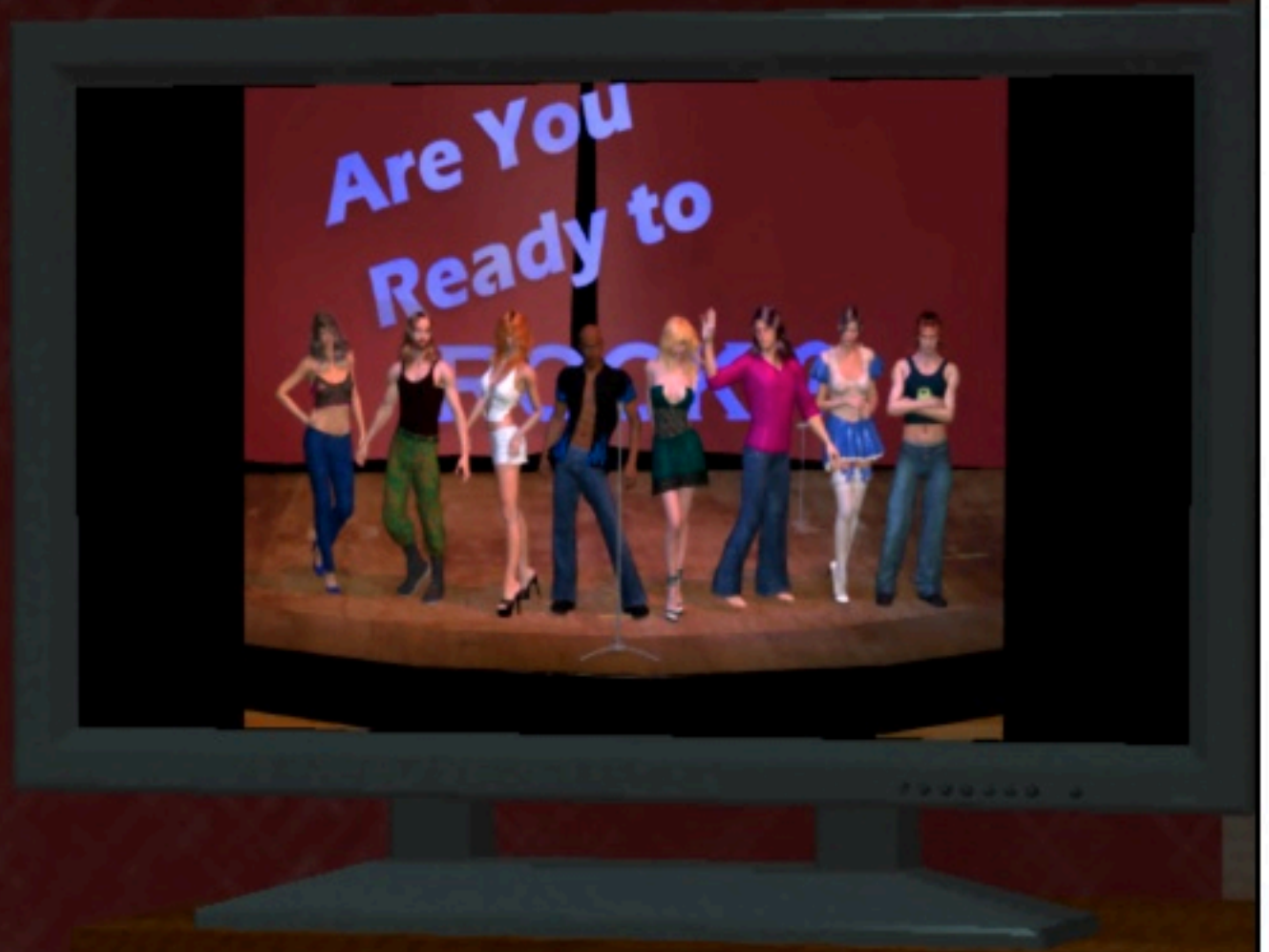
YES!!!


Are You
Ready to
But when it comes to television, real talent is usually the first to be compromised in the name of entertainment...

AND HERE ARE THE EIGHT WINNERS FROM THE SEATTLE AREA TO MOVE ON TO LOS ANGELES, SIX WEEKS FROM NOW...



SHIT! LOOK AT ALL THOSE PIMPED-UP VIDEOSTAR WANNABES! I CAN'T BELIEVE *THEY* MADE IT AND I DIDN'T!



WELL, IT'S OBVIOUS WHAT *MENTALITY* I HAVE TO PLAY TO *NEXT TIME* I GET A CHANCE TO...!

WHO THE FUCK AM I KIDDING?! I'LL NEVER GET ANOTHER CHANCE LIKE THIS AGAIN!

HELL! EVEN IF I WAITED A FEW WEEKS AND AUDITIONED AGAIN UNDER A DIFFERENT NAME, THEY'D RECOGNIZE MY STYLE... MY VOICE... UNLESS...

[redacted]


UNLESS I DO SOME SERIOUS IMAGE ADJUSTMENT!

Five weeks later, at the last round of auditions in Phoenix...




THANK YOU AGAIN, LUV! THAT WAS TRULY AMAZING!
THANK YOU, GUYS!



SO, TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF, DEL!

YEAH, MAN! LIKE, I'M DEL SPRINGS FROM, UH... TUCSON... AND I'VE BEEN A ROCKER SINCE THE DAY I WAS BORN, MAN!

YOU NEED A SINGER OR A LEAD GUITAR, THEN LOOK NO FURTHER, CAUSE I AM YOUR MAN!

WELL, YOU'RE DEFINITELY NOT LACKING IN *CONFIDENCE, MATE!* SO, LET'S HEAR WHAT YOU'VE GOT AND SEE IF YOU'RE UP TO IT!


backer


WOW!
YOU WEREN'T KIDDING WHEN YOU SAID YOU COULD PLAY!


FUCKIN'-A, MATE! YOU KICK ASS!


WHAT?!


WE'VE JUST GOT A COUPLE MORE TO GO HERE, DEL, SO STAY CLOSE BY!


HEY, I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE, MAN! NOT TILL THIS WHOLE THING IS OVER!

OKAY,
WHO'S NEXT?

At the same time, back in Eugene...

HEY, AMY! YOU'RE JUST IN TIME! THEY'RE JUST ABOUT TO ANNOUNCE THE PHOENIX FINALISTS!

YOU KNOW, SINCE THEY DUMPED BRIAN, I REALLY DON'T CARE ABOUT THIS CIRCUS ACT ANYMORE!

SPEAKING OF BRIAN... WHATEVER HAPPENED TO HIM, ANYWAY? I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM AROUND SINCE HE DIDN'T MAKE THE CUT IN SEATTLE!


HE CALLED ME RIGHT AFTERWARD AND SAID HE WAS GOING TO DO SOME TRAVELING... TRY AND GET SOME GIGS HERE AND THERE.
HE'S CALLED A FEW TIMES SINCE, BUT IT'S BEEN A FEW WEEKS SINCE I'VE HEARD ANYTHING.

AND HERE THEY ARE... THE FINAL EIGHT CONTESTANTS TO JOIN THE OTHERS IN L.A. NEXT WEEK...

Are You Ready to ROCK!

SHHH! HERE IT COMES!

...AND BRENDA COLLINS... LYLE GREEN... BREE SUMMERS...

OH MY GOD! I CAN'T BELIEVE THEY VOTED THAT SKANK ON!

ARE YOU KIDDING? LOOK AT THE NIPS ON HER! HOW COULD THE JUDGES RESIST?


OH MY GOD!
THAT CAN'T BE!
BUT IT IS!!

DEL SPRINGS... AND MAGGIE O'HARE!

IT'S BRIAN!!

A few days later, in an L.A. hotel not far from the TV studio...

551

549

547

LET'S SEE... 547, 549... AH, THERE IT IS... 551!

FINALLY...!

JUST A MINUTE!

551

KNOCK KNOCK

AMY?!

IT'S TAKEN ME A FEW DAYS TO FIND YOU, BUT I JUST HAD TO COME DOWN AND CONGRATULATE YOU...


...BREE!!


DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW MUCH I'VE MISSED YOU?
UHHH, AMY...!

ALTHOUGH I SHOULD BE *FURIOUS* WITH YOU FOR NOT TELLING ME WHAT YOU WERE UP TO!

AMY...!!


BUT I GUESS I CAN FORGIVE YOU... IF YOU LET ME STICK AROUND, THAT IS...
AMY!!!


WHAT?
HOW THE HELL DID YOU RECOGNIZE ME?!


HEY, WE GREW UP TOGETHER, REMEMBER? I'D KNOW THOSE PRETTY GREEN EYES ANYWHERE!

BESIDES, REMEMBER THE BEAUX ARTS BALL AT U_O_ A FEW YEARS BACK? THE THEME WAS "BEND YER GENDER", AND WE TOOK THE TOP PRIZE?

YOU LOOK JUST LIKE YOU DID BACK THEN!

EXCEPT FOR THE WICKED NEW GIRLY SHAPE YOU'RE SPORTING! HOW'D YOU MANAGE THAT?

WELL, THAT'S A LONG STORY... BUT LET'S JUST SAY IT'S MOSTLY DUE TO WEEKS OF, UMMM... DIET, SPECIAL EXERCISES...

...AND THIS RESTRICTIVE LITTLE NUMBER RIGHT HERE!

CUTE! VERY CUTE! IF THE GUYS BACK HOME COULD SEE YOU NOW!

HOLY SHIT! DID ANYONE ELSE RECOGNIZE ME?

DON'T WORRY, 'BREE'! I WAS WITH DON AND MARK WHEN THEY MADE THE ANNOUNCEMENT AND THEY DIDN'T BLINK!

IF ANYONE ELSE COULD'VE POSSIBLY RECOGNIZED YOU, IT WOULD'VE BEEN THEM!


SO DON'T WORRY, GIRLFRIEND! YOUR SECRET'S SAFE WITH ME!
GO EASY ON THE 'GIRLFRIEND' STUFF, OKAY? I'M HAVING ENOUGH TROUBLE KEEPING TRACK OF WHO I REALLY AM UNDER ALL THIS!


BUT I AM DAMN GLAD TO SEE YOU, AMY! HAVING MY BEST FRIEND AROUND WILL SURE MAKE ALL THIS A HELL OF A LOT EASIER!
THEN YOU'RE LETTING ME STAY?! YAYY!!!


OF COURSE I AM! I'VE BEEN LUCKY SO FAR, BUT IF I'M GONNA PULL THIS OFF, I'M GONNA NEED ALL THE HELP I CAN GET!


WELL THEN, WHAT ARE WE STANDING AROUND CHATTING FOR? YOU GO ON AGAIN TOMORROW NIGHT!


WE HAVE A LOT OF WORK TO DO!
UH-OH!

Are You Ready To



Chapter Two

by CBlack

Are You Ready to ROCK!?

HI, AMERICA! I'M SKIP BANCROFT!

WELCOME TO L.A. AND "ARE YOU READY TO ROCK?!"

LAST NIGHT, *MILLIONS* OF YOU VIEWERS TUNED IN TO WATCH OUR THIRTY-TWO GUITARIST-CANDIDATES GET WHITTLED DOWN TO THE *SIXTEEN* WHO WILL APPEAR ON NEXT WEEKS SHOW!

TONIGHT'S THREE-HOUR EXTRAVAGANZA WILL SHOWCASE THE TALENTS OF THE TOP THIRTY-TWO SINGER-CANDIDATES CHOSEN FROM THE THOUSANDS WHO AUDITIONED OVER THE LAST SIX WEEKS!


BUT AT THE END OF TONIGHT'S SHOW, ONLY SIXTEEN WILL BE LEFT STANDING TO PARTICIPATE IN THE NEXT VOCALIST COMPETITION TWO WEEKS FROM TONIGHT!
SO, LET'S GET THIS SHOW ROLLING!!

And so, after the first hour of contestants...

Ready to ROCK!?

YOU'VE GOT A *WONDERFUL* STAGE PRESENCE, HILARY! EVEN IF YOU DID HAVE A LITTLE *TROUBLE* WITH SOME OF THOSE HIGH NOTES, I THINK YOU'VE GOT SOME GREAT POTENTIAL!


Curvin
WHO GIVE A BLOODY HELL ABOUT HIGH NOTES WHEN YOU'RE DRESSED LIKE THAT? AM I RIGHT, MATES?!

VERY NICE, HILARY! YOU DID A WONDERFUL JOB!

THANKS! AND THANK YOU, NIGEL!

... and the second hour...

Are You Ready to ROCK!?

WOW! YOU'VE GOT QUITE A RANGE THERE, LANCE! YOU GOT THE HIGHS WITHOUT CRACKING A NOTE!

REMINDS ME A LOT OF OL' FREDDIE M. HIMSELF! IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE, IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN...!


GOOD STUFF, LANCE! GRADE-A!
THANK YOU! THANK YOU ALL SO VERY MUCH!

And finally, toward the end of the show...

Are You Ready to ROCK!?

NEXT UP IS BREE SUMMERS FROM PHOENIX!

urvin

urvin

SO BREE, I KNOW WE WENT THROUGH ALL THIS LAST WEEK IN PHOENIX, BUT WHY DON'T YOU TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF AGAIN. A LITTLE *REFRESHER*, AS IT WERE!

WELL, LIKE SKIP SAID, I'M BREE SUMMERS FROM PHOENIX. BUT I JUST MOVED THERE A COUPLE OF MONTHS AGO FROM BACK EAST WHERE I GREW UP.

I STARTED SINGING IN CHURCH WHEN I WAS JUST A LITTLE GIRL AND HAVEN'T STOPPED SINCE!

Curvin

OH, AND I ALSO LEARNED A LITTLE GUITAR AND KEYBOARD ALONG THE WAY!

Curvin


WELL, LET'S HEAR WHAT YOU'VE GOT FOR US TONIGHT, BREE!

HONEY, OPEN A YOUR EYES AND LOOK, MY LIFE IS TURNING BLACK, OH, BABY, IF YOU GO MY JOY JUST WON'T BOUNCE BACK.

THIS EVE YOU CAME UP TO ME AND SAID YOU DON'T WANT ME, THAT SOME OTHER GIRL HAS CAUGHT YOUR EYE, BUT LET ME MAKE THIS PLEA...

TOMORROW YOU TWO WILL CUDDLE AND THE EMPTINESS WON'T GO, YOU'LL TELL YOURSELF AND SHE'LL TELL YOU THAT YOUR HEART IS FREE OF WOE.

BUT I ALONE WOULD TRAVERSE THE FIRE OF HELL FOR YOU, BUT I ALONE FEEL I'M NOT ENTIRE WITHOUT YOU...

YOU'RE ONLY
RUNNING 'CAUSE OF FRIGHT.
WHAT'S ENDING US IS JUST THIS FLIGHT!
WHO CAN HOLD YOU THE
MOST TIGHT?

I ALONE WOULD ....

Curvin


HELL, LUV! IF I'D KNOWN THERE WERE VOICES LIKE THAT IN CHURCH, I NEVER WOULD'VE STOPPED GOING!
WHEN HAVE YOU EVER BEEN TO CHURCH, NIGEL?

LOTS OF TIMES, MATE!

NOT COUNTING WEDDINGS OR FUNERALS...

OH... WELL THEN, I WOULD'VE STARTED GOING TO CHURCH JUST TO HEAR THIS LOVELY BIRD SING!


I DON'T USUALLY LIKE TO AGREE WITH NIGEL, BUT YOU DO HAVE ONE AMAZING VOICE, YOUNG LADY!


THERE'S SOMETHING IN YOUR VOICE THAT INTRIGUES ME! A SMOKY, SULTRY LAYER THAT I THINK YOU'RE TRYING TO REPRESS!
AS MUCH AS I ENJOYED HEARING YOU TONIGHT, I THINK WE'RE IN FOR AN EVEN BIGGER TREAT IF YOU CUT LOOSE A LITTLE AND LET THAT SEXY VOICE COME ALIVE!


MY THOUGHTS EXACTLY! THE SEXIER THE BETTER, I ALWAYS SAY!


YOU WERE WONDERFUL, BREE! THANK YOU!
THANK YOU, GUYS! THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

And, at the very end of the show...

ROCK!?

Curvin

Curvin

... AND THAT'S THE SWEET SIXTEEN VOCALISTS WHO'LL RETURN IN *TWO WEEKS* AND DUEL IT OUT FOR THE *TOP EIGHT* SPOTS IN OUR COMPETITION!

DON'T FORGET TO TUNE IN NEXT WEEK FOR OUR SWEET SIXTEEN GUITARIST COMPETITION!

THIS IS SKIP BANCROFT SAYING GOODNIGHT FROM L.A.!


I DID IT AGAIN! I CAN'T BELIEVE I REALLY DID IT!
I CAN! YOU WERE AMAZING UP THERE! BETTER THAN ALL THE OTHERS!


WELL, I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THAT...!
WELL, I DO! AND I THINK WE NEED TO GO OUT AND CELEBRATE!


GREAT IDEA! LET'S GO BACK TO THE HOTEL FIRST SO I CAN CHANGE AND...
UH-UH, GIRLFRIEND! YOU'RE GOING OUT JUST LIKE THIS!


WHAT?!
ARE YOU CRAZY?
ISN'T IT ENOUGH THAT
I LET YOU TALK ME
INTO WEARING THIS
OUTFIT UP ON STAGE?
NOW YOU WANT ME
TO WEAR IT OUT
IN PUBLIC?

YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT? YOU WERE JUST ON NATIONAL TV... MAYBE WORLDWIDE! HOW MUCH MORE 'PUBLIC' CAN YOU GET?

I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE SAYING, BUT... IT'S JUST SO DIFFERENT IN PERSON!

LOOK, IF YOU'RE SERIOUS ABOUT ALL THIS, YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO GET USED TO APPEARING IN PUBLIC LIKE THIS SOONER OR LATER!

BESIDES, WOULDN'T YOU RATHER GET STARTED WHILE YOU'RE STILL RELATIVELY UNKNOWN?

BECAUSE IN ANOTHER COUPLE OF WEEKS YOU'RE GOING TO BE A SUPERSTAR AND THE WHOLE WORLD WILL RECOGNIZE YOU!


OKAY, YOU'RE GOING JUST A WEE BIT OVERBOARD... BUT I GET YOUR POINT!


LET'S GO, BUT TRY TO FIND SOMEPLACE CLOSE TO THE HOTEL, OKAY?
YOU'RE ON!


A short time later, at a nightclub between the studio and the hotel...

IT LOOKS LIKE MOST OF THE OTHER WINNERS HAD THE SAME IDEA WE DID!

WELL, THIS IS THE CLOSEST CLUB TO THE THEATER AND ALL THE HOTELS NEARBY, SO I GUESS IT MAKES SENSE!


IT LOOKS LIKE A LOT OF THE GUITARISTS ARE IN HERE TOO!
ARE YOU HAVING SECOND THOUGHTS ABOUT CHOOSING VOCALIST OVER GUITARIST FOR THE COMPETITION?

NO... I FIGURED THOSE GUYS IN THE BAND WOULD PROBABLY PREFER ONE OF THOSE CHISELED, HARD-ROCKIN' TYPE DUDES FOR A LEAD GUITARIST!

I ACTUALLY TRIED PULLING OFF THAT LOOK AT A FEW CLUBS IN DENVER AND CHICAGO, BUT NOBODY BOUGHT ANY OF IT... ESPECIALLY WITH MY SIZE AND BUILD!

SO, THIS WAS YOUR BACKUP PLAN THEN? PRETTY RADICAL!

YEAH, WELL I REMEMBERED ALL THE COMMENTS WE GOT ABOUT HOW CONVINCING I WAS AT THE BEAUX ARTS BALL BACK AT U.O. AND FIGURED A FEMALE SINGER WOULD HAVE A MUCH BETTER CHANCE AT THIS THAN A GUY WOULD!

WOW! SO WHEN YOU SAID YOU'D DO PRETTY MUCH ANYTHING TO GET INTO THE BAND, YOU WEREN'T KIDDING!

HEY THERE, LADIES! HOW YOU DOING THIS EVENING?

UMMM... FINE, THANKS!

HEY THERE, FELLOW PHOENICIAN! YOU WERE PRETTY SMOKIN' UP THERE TONIGHT!

UMM... THANKS!

YOU KNOW, SINCE I'M GONNA ACE THE GUITAR COMPETITION, YOU AND I SHOULD GET MUCH BETTER ACQUAINTED IN CASE YOU WIN, TOO!

ALL FOR THE SAKE OF BAND *HARMONY*, YOU KNOW!

WELL, IF THERE WAS EVER A *REASON* FOR ME TO THROW THE CONTEST, DEL, *THAT* WAS IT!


OUCH! HARSH, BITCH! HARSH! YOU JUST BLEW YOUR CHANCE AT GREATNESS!


YOU GO, GIRL! THAT WAS PERFECT!

I REMEMBER THAT SLEAZEBALL, DEL, FROM PHOENIX! POMPOUS ASSHOLE WAS CONSTANTLY HITTING ON EVERY GIRL THERE... EVEN *ME!*

WELL, YOU'D BETTER GET USED TO IT... ESPECIALLY IF YOU WANT TO KEEP MOVING UP IN THIS CONTEST!

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

YOU REMEMBER WHAT NIGEL SAID... "THE SEXIER THE BETTER!"

IF YOU WANT TO KEEP COMPETING, YOU'RE GONNA HAVE TO SEX UP YOUR ACT A BIT!

I COULDN'T AGREE MORE!

AND YOU ARE...?


MALCOLM GENTRY, OWNER OF UTOPIA TALENT AGENCY HERE IN LOS ANGELES. WE SPECIALIZE IN DISCOVERING AND DEVELOPING NEW MUSICAL TALENT...
TALENT THAT I BELIEVE YOU HAVE IN ABUNDANCE! MY CARD!
WELL, THAT'S VERY NICE OF YOU TO SAY, MR. GENTRY, BUT...
"MALCOLM", PLEASE!

OKAY... MALCOLM! BUT YOU'VE JUST HEARD ME SING ONCE... OKAY, TWICE IF YOU WATCHED THE SHOW! HOW CAN YOU BE SO SURE ABOUT ME?

OH, I'VE SEEN YOU MORE THAN TWICE,'MISS SUMMERS'! I'VE SEEN ALL THE AUDITIONS FOR THIS SHOW LIVE...

INCLUDING PHOENIX... AND SEATTLE!


UH-OH!
UMMM...
YOU MUST BE MISTAKEN!
I'VE NEVER BEEN TO
SEATTLE!

YOU NEEDN'T WORRY ABOUT ME! I HAVE NO DESIRE TO 'OUT' YOU, MISS SUMMERS!

OR IS IT, MR. WINTERS?

OH, SHIT!


MR. GENTRY...
MALCOLM! HOW DID YOU POSSIBLY FIGURE THAT OUT? EVEN HIS FRIENDS BACK HOME DIDN'T RECOGNIZE HIM!
I'M IN SHOW BUSINESS, REMEMBER? I DIDN'T GET WHERE I AM TODAY WITHOUT BEING OBSERVANT AND DOING MY HOMEWORK!

AND I'VE BEEN DOING THIS LONG ENOUGH TO SPOT CERTAIN... "INCONGRUITIES", SHALL WE SAY?

CRAP! CRAP! CRAP! IT'S OVER! IT'S ALL OVER!


ON THE CONTRARY, MISS SUMMERS! I'M HERE TO HELP, NOT HURT! I MEANT IT WHEN I SAID I BELIEVE IN YOUR TALENT! I'D LIKE TO TAKE YOU ON AS A CLIENT!

A CLIENT?! ME?! I'M STILL ONE OF SIXTEEN! I'M FAR FROM WINNING ANYTHING YET!

YOU DON'T THINK ANY OF THE *OTHERS* HAVE AGENTS YET? THEY'RE *FOOLS* IF THEY DON'T!

BUT... EVERYTHING YOU KNOW ABOUT ME! WHO I REALLY AM...?!

MORE REASONS WHY I WANT TO REPRESENT YOU! WHAT YOU'RE DOING SHOWS ME HOW MUCH YOU WANT A CAREER IN MUSIC AND YOU'RE NOT AFRAID TO DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO SUCCEED!


I THINK HE'S ON THE LEVEL, BREE!
I WISH I SAW THAT MUCH PASSION AND DEDICATION IN ALL MY CLIENTS!
MAYBE SO! BUT THERE'S SO MUCH AT STAKE HERE!


WHICH IS EXACTLY WHY YOU NEED ME! AS YOU CONTINUE TO WIN, YOU'LL BE UNDER A LOT MORE PUBLIC SCRUTINY!
YOU'LL NEED TO BE EVEN MORE CONVINCING IN THIS ROLE... FOR MUCH LONGER PERIODS OF TIME!


AND THEN THERE'S THE BACKGROUND CHECKS! IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE SOME MEDIA OUTLET DISCOVERS "BREE SUMMERS" DOESN'T EXIST!
HAVE YOU CONSIDERED ALL THIS?
NO... NO I HAVEN'T! I FIGURED THE DISGUISE WOULD GET MY FOOT IN THE DOOR! FROM THERE, I JUST HOPED MY TALENT WOULD GET ME THE REST OF THE WAY!

OH, IT WILL! I'M VERY CERTAIN OF THAT! BUT THAT TALENT MUST NOW COME FROM "BREE SUMMERS", NOT "BRIAN WINTERS"! DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT I'M SAYING?

YES... I THINK I DO!

WELL, I'M NOT SURE I DO!

FIRST, BREE HAS TO HAVE A *HISTORY!* I HAVE ENOUGH CONNECTIONS TO CREATE A SOLID BACKGROUND FOR BREE THAT SHOULD PASS ANY MEDIA CHECK!

OKAY, THAT MAKES SENSE! WHAT ELSE?

WELL, BREE'S DONE AN EXCELLENT JOB WITH HER APPEARANCE... SO FAR!

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "SO FAR"? WHAT ELSE CAN WE DO?

WELL, FIRST OFF, BREE NEEDS TO GET STRONGER MEDS THAN THE ONES "SHE'S" BEEN TAKING!

RIGHT, BREE?

MEDS? ARE YOU CRAZY? BRIAN'S NEVER DONE ANY DRUGS IN HIS LIFE! TELL HIM, BREE!

HE PROBABLY MEANS THE FEMISIROL I'VE BEEN TAKING FOR THE LAST SIX WEEKS! HOW THE HELL DID YOU KNOW?!

LIKE I SAID, I'VE BEEN IN SHOW BUSINESS A LONG TIME! I'VE BECOME VERY FAMILIAR WITH THE EFFECTS OF FEMISIROL USAGE!

AND IT'S THE ONLY READILY AVAILABLE TREATMENT THAT COULD CHANGE YOUR APPEARANCE THIS MUCH!

FEMISIROL?! BUT IT'S ONLY AVAILABLE BY PRESCRIPTION... AND EVEN THEN, ONLY IN CASES OF SEVERE GENDER DYSFUNCTIONS! HOW DID YOU GET IT, AND WHY THE HELL DIDN'T YOU TELL ME!

I DIDN'T TELL YOU BECAUSE I DIDN'T GET IT THROUGH A DOCTOR! SINCE IT WASN'T EXACTLY 'LEGAL', I DIDN'T WANT YOU INVOLVED!

AND THAT ENDS RIGHT NOW! I KNOW SEVERAL REPUTABLE PHYSICIANS WHO CAN PRESCRIBE A NEW TREATMENT CALLED TIRESIALIS... IT PROMISES TO BE MUCH SAFER AND MUCH MORE EFFECTIVE!


SO, WHAT WILL IT BE, BREE? TAKE YOUR CHANCE WITH WHAT YOU'VE GOT, OR LET ME USE MY RESOURCES AND EXPERTISE TO HELP YOU GO ALL THE WAY?


WHAT DO YOU THINK, AMY?
IT'S YOUR CALL, BREE! BUT FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH, I TRUST HIM!


SO DO I! OKAY, MALCOLM... WHERE DO WE START?!

A few days later at rehearsals...

Are You Ready to ROCK!?


THAT WAS GREAT, BREE! YOU'RE GONNA KNOCK 'EM DEAD NEXT WEEK!
I DON'T KNOW! THERE WERE A FEW NOTES IN THERE THAT SOUNDED A LITTLE IFFY TO ME!


IT'S THE TIRESIALIS. IT'S A GOOD DEAL STRONGER THAN FEMISIROL.


THE CHANGES IN YOUR VOICE, SKIN, AND... OTHER THINGS... ARE ACCELERATING, SO YOU'LL HAVE TO LEARN TO ADAPT MORE QUICKLY!

BUT DON'T WORRY... YOU'RE DOING FINE! I HAVE THE UTMOST CONFIDENCE IN YOU!

THANKS, MALCOLM!

HEY, SWEET THING! YOU'RE SOUNDIN' PRETTY HOT UP THERE! I STILL SAY WE'D MAKE A GREAT TEAM... BOTH ON STAGE AND OFF! WADDYA SAY?!

I CAN THINK OF SO MANY THINGS I'D MUCH RATHER BE DOING...

A ROOT CANAL OR A BIKINI WAX ARE THE FIRST TO COME TO MIND!

Curvin


YOUR LOSS, BABE! YOUR LOSS!

GOD! HE IS SUCH A SLEAZE!

WELL, MY SOURCES TELL ME YOU WON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT HIM MUCH LONGER!

WHY? HE MAY BE A SLIMEMOLD, BUT HE'S ONE OF THE BEST GUITAR PLAYERS IN THE CONTEST... IF NOT THE BEST!


LET'S JUST SAY HIS LITTLE COCAINE PROBLEM IS ABOUT TO CATCH UP WITH HIM! HE PROBABLY WON'T BE AROUND AFTER THIS AFTERNOON!
GOOD RIDDANCE! COULDN'T HAPPEN TO A NICER GUY!

WELL, I'VE GOT SOME BUSINESS TO TAKE CARE OF! I'LL TOUCH BASE WITH YOU LADIES LATER!

OKAY... BYE, MALCOLM!

YOU KNOW, I SHOULD BE USED TO IT BY NOW, BUT IT STILL CATCHES ME OFF GUARD WHEN ANYONE REFERS TO ME AS A 'LADY'!

WELL, YOU SHOULDN'T BE SURPRISED! HAVE YOU TAKEN A GOOD LOOK AT YOURSELF LATELY? YOU'RE PRETTY DAMN CUTE, SWEETIE!

THANKS TO YOU AND THE *TIRESIALIS* THE DOCTORS HAVE ME TAKING! WHEN I FIRST DECIDED TO START TAKING FEMISIROL, IT WAS JUST TO HELP WITH MY SKIN, VOICE AND GENERAL SHAPE!

I FIGURED *MAKE-UP*, *WIGS* AND *BODY-SHAPERS* WOULD TAKE CARE OF THE REST!


BUT NOW, I REALLY DON'T NEED THE BODY-SHAPERS ANYMORE! AND I'M STARTING TO DEVELOP MORE UP HERE, TOO!
WELL, THE JUDGES DO SEEM TO FAVOR THE BUSTIER GIRLS!


NOT FUNNY, AMY!
SORRY, BREE! BUT YOU'VE GOTTA ADMIT, WITH THESE JUDGES, THE MORE FEMININE YOU CAN APPEAR, THE BETTER YOUR CHANCES!

I KNOW... I KNOW! THAT JUST MEANS IT'S GOING TO TAKE THAT MUCH LONGER TO RETURN TO BEING BRIAN AGAIN WHEN THIS IS ALL OVER!

SPEAKING OF 'BRIAN', I'D BETTER CHECK 'HIS' MESSAGES IN CASE I NEED TO ASSURE ANYONE HE HASN'T FALLEN OF THE EDGE OF THE EARTH!


OH MY GOD!


WHAT IS IT, BREE? WHAT HAPPENED?!


IT'S A CALL FROM THE PRODUCERS OF THE SHOW! THEY WANT ME TO REPLACE ONE OF THE GUITAR CONTESTANTS WHO'S BEING ASKED TO LEAVE THE SHOW!

OH MY GOD! THEY WANT YOU TO REPLACE DEL?! THAT IS SO PERFECT!


NO, THEY WANT 'BRIAN' TO REPLACE HIM!


WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?!

Are You Ready To



Chapter Three

by CBlack

WOW! EVEN I DIDN'T SEE THAT COMING! IT CERTAINLY PUTS AN INTERESTING SPIN ON THINGS, DOESN'T IT?

WELL, MAYBE THEY FINALLY REALIZED THEY SHOULD'VE PICKED YOU IN THE FIRST PLACE!

IT'S ENOUGH TO DRIVE ME CRAZY! I DIDN'T HAVE TO DO ANY OF THIS! THE MAKE-UP, THE FEMINIZING DRUGS... THIS WHOLE CHARADE... WAS A BIG WASTE OF TIME!

THEY WOULD'VE CALLED ME BACK ANYWAY!

Later that evening, back in Bree's hotel room...


WHATEVER THE REASON, I DON'T CARE! I'M BACK IN AS *MYSELF!* THAT MEANS I CAN TOSS THE MAKE-UP AND PILLS OUT THE WINDOW, AND...!
NOT SO FAST THERE, YOUNG LADY! BREE CAN'T JUST DISAPPEAR!

SURE SHE CAN! I KNOW I SIGNED A CONTRACT, BUT THEY'RE GONNA HAVE A HELLUVA TIME TRYING TO SUE SOMEBODY WHO DOESN'T EXIST!

IT'S NOT JUST THE CONTRACT I'M CONCERNED WITH! UP TO NOW, THERE'S BEEN NO CONNECTION WHATSOEVER BETWEEN BRIAN WINTERS FROM EUGENE AND BREE SUMMERS FROM SOMEWHERE BACK EAST!


BUT IF BREE MYSTERIOUSLY DISAPPEARS THE SAME TIME BRIAN SHOWS UP, SOMEONE'S GOING TO NOTICE A FEW SIMILARITIES AND START PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER!

AND IF *THAT* HAPPENS, BRIAN WILL BE KICKED OUT OF THE CONTEST ALSO... AND PROBABLY *SUED* FOR EVERYTHING HE'S GOT!

DO YOU *REALLY* THINK SOMEONE WOULD FIGURE IT OUT, MALCOLM!


THE MEDIA WILL LOOK AT EVERY ANGLE POSSIBLE TO TRY AND COME UP WITH A STORY! SOMEONE'S BOUND TO FIGURE IT OUT EVENTUALLY!
THEN WHAT THE HELL AM I SUPPOSED TO DO?! I CAN'T BE BOTH BRIAN AND BREE AT THE SAME TIME!


WHY NOT? NOT AT THE EXACT SAME TIME, OF COURSE, BUT SINCE THE SINGERS AND GUITARISTS COMPETE ON DIFFERENT NIGHTS, WE COULD PULL IT OFF!
IT WOULD ALSO DOUBLE YOUR CHANCES OF WINNING!

BUT... I LOOK SO DIFFERENT NOW! AND IF I KEEP TAKING TIRESIALIS, I'LL BECOME EVEN MORE... FEMININE! CAN I STILL PASS AS BRIAN?

BREE, HONEY! IT'S ACTUALLY GOING TO BE MUCH EASIER TO COVER UP YOUR NEW CURVES THAN TO CREATE THEM!

REMEMBER, NO ONE'S SEEN BRIAN FOR WEEKS, SO IT SHOULDN'T SEEM TOO UNREASONABLE FOR HIS APPEARANCE TO CHANGE A LITTLE!

DO YOU REALLY THINK WE CAN PULL THIS OFF?

ABSOLUTELY! BETWEEN THE THREE OF US, WE'LL MAKE BRIAN AND BREE THE HOTTEST TWO CONTESTANTS ON THIS SHOW!

SO, WHAT DO YOU THINK, BREE?


AS USUAL, MALCOLM... I'M IN YOUR HANDS!

Later that week, at the "sweet sixteen" guitar competition...

ROCK!?

AS MANY OF YOU HAVE PROBABLY HEARD, SINCE THE LAST CONTEST THERE'S BEEN A SLIGHT CHANGE! ONE OF THE GUITAR CONTESTANTS, DEL SPRINGS, WAS ASKED TO LEAVE FOR CONTRACT VIOLATIONS!

WE ASKED OUR JUDGES TO SEARCH THROUGH ALL THE GUITARISTS' AUDITIONS TO FIND A SUITABLE REPLACEMENT! WE WERE AFRAID IT WOULD BE A DAUNTING TASK, TAKING DAYS AND DAYS!

HOWEVER, IT ONLY TOOK THEM A FEW *MINUTES* TO *UNANIMOUSLY* PICK THE YOUNG MAN WHO WILL START THE COMPETITION TONIGHT!

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, LEADING OFF THIS WEEK'S CLASSIC ROCK THEME WITH EDDIE ST. PAULI'S "YOU BARELY GOT ME", FROM EUGENE, OREGON... BRIAN WINTERS!

CLAPCLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAPCLAP!!

For the next few minutes,
Brian plays his heart out...

Knowing full well that this could be his very last chance at a "big break"...

Curvin

But his fears quickly diminish as he finishes to a standing ovation!

Curvin

Curvin

Curvin

Curvin

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!


WOW! THAT WAS EVEN BETTER THAN I REMEMBER BACK IN SEATTLE!


DEFINITELY!
I'M GLAD THINGS
WORKED OUT SO
YOU COULD BE HERE
TONIGHT WHERE
YOU BELONG!

AS YOU WOULD'VE BEEN FROM THE GET-GO, TOO, IF THE SUITS HADN'T FUCKED IT ALL UP!


WHAT?!

THANKS GUYS! THAT MEANS A LOT TO ME!

WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOUR VOICE, BRIAN? IT SOUNDS A LITTLE FUNNY!

OH, WELL... I, UH, JUST GOT OVER A RUN-IN WITH THE *SWINE FLU!* COULDN'T KEEP ANYTHING DOWN FOR *WEEKS!* LOST A LOT OF WEIGHT AND LEFT MY THROAT PRETTY *RAW!* BUT I'M FEELING A *HELL* OF A LOT BETTER NOW!


THAT'S GREAT, BRIAN! IT'S GOOD TO HAVE YOU BACK! THANKS AGAIN!

YOU DID IT, BREE... I MEAN, BRI! YOU TOTALLY ROCKED OUT THERE! YOU'RE IN THE ELITE EIGHT FOR SURE!

I SURE HOPE SO! BUT WHAT DID NIGEL MEAN WHEN HE SAID "SUITS FUCKED IT ALL UP"?

HE'S PROBABLY REFERRING TO WHAT YOU *SUSPECTED* IN THE FIRST PLACE... THE RECORD EXECS VIEW CERTAIN TYPES AS *MORE MARKETABLE* THAN OTHERS! AND YOU WEREN'T THE *'TYPE'* THEY WERE LOOKING FOR!

BUT I'M HERE *NOW!* WHAT MADE THEM CHANGE THEIR MINDS?

I'D GUESS THE BAND MEMBERS PUT THEIR COLLECTIVE FOOT DOWN AND INSISTED ON BRINGING BACK THE BEST *GUITARIST* THEY'VE EVER HEARD... *REGARDLESS* OF MARKETABILITY!

I'LL BET HE'S RIGHT! I COULD TELL BY WATCHING THEM THAT THEY REALLY LOVE YOUR PLAYING! I'LL BET THEY'RE SIZING YOU UP FOR AN ALBUM COVER AS WE SPEAK!

LET'S NOT GET AHEAD OF OURSELVES, SHALL WE? EVEN THOUGH I'M NINETY-FIVE PERCENT CERTAIN YOU'LL MOVE ON TO NEXT WEEK, IT'S NOT OFFICIAL YET!

AND BESIDES, REGARDLESS OF WHAT HAPPENS TONIGHT, WE STILL HAVE BREE'S COMPETITION NEXT WEEK! WE'LL BE STARTING BRIGHT AND EARLY TOMORROW!

I KNOW! I KNOW!


SO, AS SOON AS THE SHOW'S OVER, IT'S BACK TO THE HOTEL! NO CELEBRATING AFTERWARD, GOT IT?
YES, OBI-WAN! I PROMISE!

A short time later, not back at the hotel...

YOU KNOW, I PROMISED MALCOLM WE'D GO RIGHT BACK TO THE HOTEL AFTER THE SHOW!

I KNOW... BUT WE'VE JUST GOT TO CELEBRATE A LITTLE! I MEAN, YOU'RE IN THE *ELITE EIGHT* FOR CRYIN' OUT LOUD! AREN'T YOU THE LEAST BIT *EXCITED?*

EXCITED?! CHRIST, AMY! I'M READY TO BURST INSIDE! I WANT TO HOP UP ON THAT BAR AND YELL TO THE WORLD, "HEY, LOOK AT ME! I'M ALMOST THERE, GODDAMN IT! I'M ALMOST THERE!!"

THEN WHY DON'T YOU?

BECAUSE, AT THE SAME TIME, I DON'T WANT TO DRAW ANY UNDUE *ATTENTION* TO MYSELF... AT LEAST NOT WHILE *BOTH* BRIAN AND BREE ARE IN THE CONTEST!

I GUESS YOU'RE *RIGHT!* OKAY, ONE DRINK AND THEN IT'S BACK TO THE CAVE FOR US! *PARTY POOPER!*

SO, THAT'S THE HACK THEY THINK CAN REPLACE ME, HUH?! WELL, I'LL SHOW THEM THEY MADE ONE BIG FUCKIN' MISTAKE!

IF THEY THINK THEY CAN KICK ME OUT JUST FOR A LITTLE BLOW, THEN YOU CAN BE DAMN SURE I'LL FIND AN EVEN BETTER REASON TO GET YOUR ASS KICKED OUT, TOO!


IT'S JUST A MATTER OF TIME!

One week later... the night of the sweet sixteen vocalist competition...

SIT STILL! I'M TRYING TO GET YOUR MAKEUP JUST RIGHT!

I STILL DON'T SEE WHY WE HAD TO DO THIS TO MY HAIR! I UNDERSTAND THAT WE NEED TO MAKE BRIAN AND BREE AS DIFFERENT AS POSSIBLE, BUT WHY THE HELL CAN'T I JUST WEAR A WIG?

BECAUSE, MY NEOPHYTE GIRLFRIEND, PEOPLE LOOK AT *WOMEN'S* HAIR A LOT *MORE* CLOSELY THAN *MEN'S!* THE *TIRESIALIS* IS MAKING YOUR HAIR GROW FASTER, SO WE'RE TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THAT!


CONTRARY TO WHAT THE COMMERCIALS WOULD HAVE YOU BELIEVE, NO ONE REALLY CARES MUCH ABOUT GUY'S HAIR, SO BRIAN CAN WEAR A WIG!

FINE, IF YOU REALLY THINK WE CAN FIT ALL *THIS* UNDER A LITTLE WIG LIKE THAT!


WE CAN AND WE WILL! NOW, GO GET INTO YOUR OUTFIT! YOU'RE ON IN TWENTY MINUTES!
ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THAT OUTFIT? I DON'T KNOW IF I'M READY FOR SOMETHING LIKE THAT!

IT'S PERFECT! FOR BOTH YOUR SONG AND YOUR BOD! NOW STOP WORRYING! YOU'RE GOING TO KNOCK THEIR SOCKS OFF!

I SURE HOPE SO!

Are You Ready to ROCK!?

WELCOME TO THE SWEET SIXTEEN VOCALISTS FOR ARE YOU READY TO ROCK?

ROCK!!

TONIGHT'S THEME IS CLASSIC ROCK AND ONLY EIGHT OF THE PEOPLE YOU HEAR TONIGHT SINGING FROM THE 70'S AND 80'S WILL MOVE ON TO COMPETE ON NEXT WEEK'S SHOW!

Curvin

Curvin

Curvin

OUR FIRST CONTESTANT TONIGHT IS HILARY PRESCOTT FROM ATLANTA, SINGING PAULINE BENETTON'S "LOVE IS A FOOTBALL FIELD"!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!

THAT WAS VERY NICE, HILARY! YOU'VE OBVIOUSLY WORKED HARD THESE LAST TWO WEEKS... AND IT *SHOWS!*


I'VE ALWAYS BEEN A MITE PARTIAL TO PAULINE'S CHOICE IN WARDROBE! AND I LIKE THE SKINTIGHT LOOK ON YOU MUCH BETTER, LOVE!

I AGREE WITH CLIVE! YOU DID SOUND MUCH BETTER THAN LAST TIME! A LITTLE LACKLUSTER, BUT A DEFINITE *IMPROVEMENT!*

HERE'S HOPING FOR EVEN GREATER THINGS FROM YOU!

Curvin

Curvin

THANK YOU, GUYS!

NEXT UP IS BREE SUMMERS FROM PHOENIX WITH STEVIE CAVALIER'S "CHAIN AROUND MY HEART"!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!

BECAUSE OF THIS
MADDENING LOVE,
IT SINGS A SONG,
SOUNDS LIKE IT'S SINGING,
YOU, YOU, YOU...

AND THE MORE I TRY,
THESE CHAINS THEY BIND
MORE PULL TIGHT
AROUND MY HEART.

I CAN NOT WIN.
HARD TO ADMIT, BABY.
MY HEART BELONGS
TO YOU...

WHEN WE FIRST MET, BABY THEN I WAS SO BROKEN. NOTHING WITHIN.

THEN I LAID MY EYES ON YOU, CAPTURED BY, ENRAPTURED BY YOUR CHAIN AROUND MY HEART!

BECAUSE OF THIS MADDENING LOVE, IT SINGS A SONG, SOUNDS LIKE IT'S SINGING YOU, YOU, YOU...

OOH... ONLY YOU, I NEED YOU!


WOO HOO!!
YEAH, BREE!
CLAP CLAP!!
CLAP CLAP!!
CLAP CLAP!!

YOU KNOW, BREE, IT'S A GOOD THING *STEVIE* ISN'T ON THIS PANEL WITH US TONIGHT!

WH...WHY?!

'CAUSE SHE'D BE SO *JEALOUS* OF WHAT YOU DID WITH HER SONG, SHE JUST MIGHT GRADE YOU DOWN TO SAVE FACE!


ANOTHER OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE, BREE! SIMPLY OUTSTANDING!


SUPERB, LOVE! JUST... SUPERB!

THANK YOU!
THANK YOU VERY
MUCH GUYS!

A few hours later, after the winners have been announced...

SEE... ALL THE OTHER WINNERS ARE HERE! ADMIT IT! THIS WAS A GREAT IDEA!

FINE! OKAY! ONE DRINK... MAYBE TWO, AND THEN WE'RE OUT OF HERE!

OH, DON'T GET YOUR PANTIES IN A BUNCH! THERE'S AN OPEN TABLE OVER THERE!

SPEAKING OF PANTIES, REMIND ME AGAIN WHY I KEEP LETTING YOU DRESS ME?

BECAUSE I KEEP DOING A FANTASTIC JOB! C'MON!

I TOLD YOU YOU'D KNOCK 'EM DEAD TONIGHT! IT WAS OBVIOUS HOW MUCH BETTER THEY THOUGHT YOU WERE THAN ANYONE ELSE!

OBVIOUS TO YOU, MAYBE!


YOU'RE IN THE TOP EIGHT, HONEY! ONLY A FEW MORE PERFORMANCES LIKE TONIGHT AND YOU'VE GOT THIS SINGING GIG LOCKED UP!

I'D BE HAPPY JUST TO MAKE IT INTO THE TOP FOUR... AS LONG AS 'BRIAN' GOES ALL THE WAY FOR THE GUITAR GIG!

LADIES! HOW'S IT GOING THIS EVENING?

IT WAS GOING JUST FINE!

BREE, BABY! YOU LOOK HOTTER EACH TIME I SEE YOU! LOVE THE NEW LOOK!

DEL, YOU WERE KICKED OUT OVER A WEEK AGO! WHAT ARE YOU DOING STILL HANGING AROUND HERE?

JUST BECAUSE I'M OUT OF THE CONTEST DOESN'T MEAN I'M NOT GOING PLACES, BABE! IT'S STILL NOT TOO LATE TO HITCH A RIDE IN MY 'ROCKET' TO THE TOP!

THANKS, BUT NO THANKS! I DON'T THINK YOUR LITTLE 'BOTTLE ROCKET' WOULD GET ME WHERE I WANT TO GO!


AM I INTERRUPTING ANYTHING?
JUST LEAVING, MAN! JUST LEAVIN'! REMEMBER WHAT I SAID, BABE!

WAS HE BOTHERING YOU TWO?

NO MORE THAN USUAL! HE'S BEEN A FIXTURE HERE FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE SHOW... EVEN AFTER HE GOT KICKED OFF!

YEAH, I EVEN SPOTTED HIM IN HERE LAST WEEK RIGHT AFTER THE GUITAR CONTEST! HE LOOKED PRETTY HAMMERED!

YOU TWO WERE IN *HERE* LAST WEEK? *TOGETHER?* AFTER I TOLD YOU TO GO BACK TO THE HOTEL?

WELL, YOU SEE, MALCOLM... I JUST THOUGHT...!

IT WAS *MY* FAULT, MALCOLM! I *INSISTED!* BUT WE WERE ONLY HERE FOR ONE DRINK... I *PROMISE!*


MY MAIN CONCERN IS THE RANDOMNESS OF A PLACE LIKE THIS! YOUR 'DISGUISES', BREE, ARE FAR FROM PERFECT AND WHO KNOWS WHAT COULD HAPPEN!

I JUST WANT TO *MINIMIZE* THOSE POSSIBILITIES!

I UNDERSTAND, MALCOLM, AND I'M *SORRY!* IT WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN!


I'M NOT SAYING YOU HAVE TO STAY LOCKED UP IN YOUR HOTEL ROOM! I JUST WANT YOU TO EXERCISE A LITTLE MORE CAUTION, THAT'S ALL! WE HAVE A LOT AT STAKE HERE!
I GOT IT, MALCOLM!
ME TOO!

GOOD! NOW, HAVING SAID ALL THAT, ENJOY THE REST OF YOUR EVENING... YOU'VE EARNED IT! BUT BE PREPARED TO WORK YOUR FANNY OFF THE REST OF THE WEEK! GOT IT?

OKAY, MALCOLM! AND THANKS!

YEAH, THANKS, MALCOLM!


YOU KNOW, FROM WHAT I CAN TELL, THERE ARE A LOT OF GUYS IN HERE WHO WOULD DISAGREE WITH MALCOLM'S ASSESSMENT OF YOUR 'DISGUISE'!
THAT'S JUST FINE WITH ME, AS LONG AS NONE OF THEM ACT ON IT... LIKE THAT CREEPY DEL CHARACTER!


HEY, YOU CAN'T REALLY BLAME HIM! THAT SKIRT REALLY SHOWS OFF THOSE DYNAMITE LEGS OF YOURS!
THAT, AND IT'S A HELL OF A LOT EASIER ON MY HIDDEN 'EQUIPMENT' THAN A TIGHT PAIR OF PANTS, LEMME TELL YOU!


OOOO...
TMI, HONEY!
T...M...I!


JUST WANTED TO CLARIFY THAT IT'S ALL FOR COMFORT, NOT FASHION, THAT'S ALL!
WHATEVER, BREE! WHATEVER!


WAIT A MINUTE!
THAT CHICK WHO'S ALWAYS HANGING OUT WITH BREE...
SHE WAS IN HERE LAST WEEK WITH THAT WINTERS DUDE!
HOW DOES SHE KNOW BOTH OF THEM?


AND WHERE THE HELL IS WINTERS? I'VE SPOTTED EACH AND EVERY WINNER FROM LAST WEEK AT TONIGHT'S SHOW AND HERE IN THIS BAR! EVERY ONE THAT IS, EXCEPT FOR WINTERS!


I THINK I NEED TO START WATCHING HIM AND THESE TWO EVEN CLOSER!

Almost a week later...

HEY, BRIAN! YOU HERE?

I'M IN *HERE!* BE RIGHT OUT!


WHAT'S UP?
Pretty
WELL, I WAS HOPING TO GO OVER TO YOUR GUITAR REHEARSAL WITH YOU, BUT IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE 'BRIAN'S' GOING ANYWHERE RIGHT NOW!


OH, DIDN'T I TELL YOU? I RESCHEDULED ALL MY GUITAR REHEARSALS FOR THE MORNINGS SO I COULD GET THAT COSTUME CHANGE OUT OF THE WAY AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE!
"COSTUME CHANGE"? THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE CALLING YOUR MALE HALF THESE DAYS?


DON'T GO READING TOO MUCH INTO IT, AMY! IT'S JUST THAT, LATELY, IT'S SO MUCH EASIER TO HANG OUT AS BREE THAN AS BRIAN!
NO WIG, NO FALSE BEARD...
Pretty


...AND NO ACE BANDAGE STRAPPING THESE THINGS DOWN!
YOUR GIRLS ARE GETTING A LITTLE PERKY, AREN'T THEY?

"PERKY"? HELL, THEY FEEL LIKE THEY'RE GETTING BIGGER EVERY DAY!

I ASKED MALCOLM ABOUT IT AND HE SAID *TIRESIALIS* EFFECTS PEOPLE DIFFERENTLY! IT USUALLY DEPENDS ON YOUR GENETICS!

UH-OH! YOUR MOM... AND BOTH YOUR GRANDMOTHERS...!


STACKED! YEAH, I KNOW! PROBABLY WHY I'M DEVELOPING SO DAMN FAST! BUT MALCOLM INSISTS IT'S ALL REVERSIBLE WHENEVER I WANT!
AW, BUT WHY? YOU'RE SO ADORABLE AS BREE! AND I LOVE HAVING A NEW GIRLFRIEND!


VERY FUNNY!
WELL, SINCE I MISSED BRIAN'S GUITAR PRACTICE, CAN I AT LEAST HELP BREE PICK OUT AN OUTFIT FOR THURSDAY NIGHT?


WELL, OKAY! I'D HAVE A HECK OF A TIME WITHOUT YOU ANYWAY! GIVE ME A MINUTE AND I'LL BE READY TO GO!


NOW, NOTHING TOO EXTREME THIS WEEK, OKAY? I ALMOST FELL FLAT ON MY FACE FROM THOSE HEELS YOU PICKED FOR ME LAST WEEK!


NO PROMISES, HONEY! NO PROMISES!

HMMM... I WAS HOPING THAT CHICK WOULD LEAD ME TO WINTERS! BUT IT'S ALWAYS GOOD TO KNOW WHERE LITTLE MISS BREE IS STAYING, TOO!

I'LL JUST KEEP TABS ON THEM BOTH AND SEE WHAT CONNECTION THEY'VE GOT TO THAT WINTERS DUDE!

THERE'S SOMETHING GOING ON WITH HIM! AND I'M GONNA SEE HE'S BUSTED BIG TIME FOR WHATEVER IT IS!

BILLY FACTORY

The night of the next guitarist contest... and Brian is wowing the crowd with his rendition of Carlos Antigua's "Asia"...

Curvin

Curvin

Curvin

Curvin


THAT IS PROBABLY MY FAVORITE SONG OF HIS AND YOU PERFORMED IT EXQUISITELY! I COULD CLOSE MY EYES AND IMAGINE CARLOS HIMSELF UP THERE!

STRAIGHT AWAY, MATE! YOU AND THAT GUITAR ARE ONE!


YET ANOTHER FLAWLESS, INSPIRING PERFORMANCE, BRIAN! I'M BEGINNING TO WONDER IF THERE'S ANYTHING YOU CAN'T PLAY PERFECTLY!


WELL, I JUST HOPE YOU ALL WILL GIVE ME THE CHANCE TO KEEP SHOWING YOU!


AS WE WILL, MATE! AT LEAST IF I HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY ABOUT IT!

YOU DO, NIGEL... REMEMBER?

OH... RIGHT!

AS USUAL, YOU WERE BRILLIANT AND COMPLETELY AWESOME TONIGHT! THE JUDGES LOVE YOU!

MAYBE... BUT I STILL SLIPPED ON A FEW NOTES OUT THERE TONIGHT! I'M SURPRISED THEY DIDN'T CATCH IT! I NEED TO SQUEEZE IN MORE PRACTICE THIS WEEK IF I CAN!

BUT FIRST, I NEED TO GET OUT OF THIS *OUTFIT!* I CAN BARELY *BREATHE* WITH THIS BANDAGE ON!

I'M SURE "*BREE*" WILL APPRECIATE THAT, TOO!

SPEAKING OF BREE, CONSIDERING HOW WELL YOU'RE BOTH DOING, WHAT'LL YOU DO OF YOU BOTH WIN?

I'M NOT EVEN *THINKING* ABOUT THAT POSSIBILITY YET! THERE'S STILL *WEEKS* OF COMPETITION LEFT... ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN BETWEEN NOW AND THEN, SO I'M NOT WORRYING ABOUT IT!


OKAY! LET'S GET YOU INSIDE SO WE CAN START CONCENTRATING ON BREE'S PERFORMANCE TOMORROW!

SO! WINTERS AND LITTLE MISS BREE KNOW EACH OTHER! WELL ENOUGH TO EVEN SHARE A HOTEL ROOM, MAYBE? INTERESTING!


BUT IF THEY KNOW EACH OTHER, WHY WASN'T SHE AT HIS SHOW TONIGHT? COME TO THINK OF IT, I'VE NEVER SEEN THEM TOGETHER ANYWHERE!


WHAT THE HELL'S GOING ON WITH THOSE TWO? AND WHAT ARE THEY TRYING TO HIDE?

Are You Ready To



Chapter Four

by CBlack

I STILL SAY THIS SKIRT IS TOO DAMN SHORT!

IT LOOKS GREAT ON YOU! THE MORE OF THOSE SEXY LEGS YOU SHOW, THE BETTER!

Thursday night, just before Bree's performance...


IT'S NOT MY LEGS I'M AFRAID OF SHOWING!
STOP WORRYING, HONEY! THAT GAFFE THAT MALCOLM FOUND FOR YOU SHOULD KEEP EVERYTHING TUCKED AWAY JUST FINE!
JUST KEEP THE HIGH KICKS TO A MINIMUM, OKAY?


VERY FUNNY! JUST ONE MORE THING TO WORRY ABOUT WHILE WAITING FOR THIS NEW BRA TO POP ME RIGHT OUT OF THIS BLOUSE!
OH, QUIT BITCHING ALREADY! YOU LOOK HOT AND IT GOES WITH THE SONG YOU'RE DOING! THE JUDGES WILL EAT IT UP!

HMMM... THAT'S A LITTLE OF WHAT I'M AFRAID OF!

Meanwhile, lurking within the crowded theater...

HMMM! NO SIGN OF WINTERS...

ROCK!?

EVEN WHEN HIS LITTLE *GIRLFRIEND'S* ABOUT TO GO ON STAGE!

NEXT UP TONIGHT... DOIN' A LITTLE *"TRASH"*-TALKIN' AT YA...

Curv'n

Curv'n

BREE SUMMERS!

WOO HOO!!

YEAH! BREE, BABY!!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!

ONLY LIKE YOU WHEN YOU'RE **BAD**, I ONLY LIKE YOU WHEN YOU'RE **MISBEHAVING!**

AND THOUGH IT'S SOMETHING I SHOULD **NOT** BE CRAVING I ONLY LIKE YOU WHEN YOU'RE **BAD!**


YOU MAKE ME CRAZY WHEN YOU'RE DANGEROUS, AND EVEN WHEN YOU'RE SO PRECARIOUS...
I'M ONLY WITH YOU 'CAUSE YOU'RE BAD!

WRAP YOUR WICKEDNESS 'ROUND, WRAP YOUR WICKEDNESS ALL AROUND ME...

WRAP YOUR WICKEDNESS 'ROUND, WRAP YOUR WICKEDNESS ALL AROUND ME...

I ONLY LIKE YOU WHEN YOU'RE BAD! YOU MAKE ME LOSE ALL OF MY SELF-CONTROL...

AND SURRENDER EVERY BIT OF MY HEART AND SOUL, I REALLY LOVE IT WHEN YOU'RE BAD!

Curvin

Curvin

YEAH! I'LL BE BAD FOR YA, BREE!!

WHOA!! YEAH, BABY!!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!


WOW! EACH WEEK I DON'T THINK YOU COULD GET ANY BETTER AND EACH WEEK YOU PROVE ME WRONG, BREE! ABSOLUTELY STUNNING PERFORMANCE!

DO WE REALLY HAVE TO KEEP LOOKING FOR THREE MORE WEEKS? I MEAN, C'MON, MATES! GET REAL! HERE SHE IS!


I SHARE BOTH MY COLLEAGUES' ENTHUSIASM WHEN I SAY "FABULOUS" YET AGAIN, BREE! YOU CONTINUE TO SURPRISE AND DELIGHT US!


THANK YOU!
I JUST HOPE YOU
ALL WILL GIVE ME
THE CHANCE TO KEEP
SHOWING YOU!
THANK YOU SO
MUCH!


Curvin
Curvin
MAN, THAT'S LIKE WORD-FOR-WORD WHAT WINTERS SAID TO THOSE HAS-BEEN JUDGES LAST NIGHT!
CLAP CLAP!!
CLAP CLAP!!
CLAP CLAP!!

SHIT! THEY SHARE A HOTEL ROOM, THE SAME GROUPIE AND EVEN THE SAME THANK-YOU SPEECHES, BUT THEY'RE NEVER TOGETHER AT THE SAME TIME!

IT'S ALMOST AS IF...

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP CLAP!!

NO WAY! NO... FUCKIN'... WAY! THAT IS JUST TOO BIZARRE!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!

AND TOO FUCKIN' PERFECT IF IT'S TRUE... AND I CAN PROVE IT!

A few hours later, after Bree unsurprisingly moves on in the contest...

Clubhouse

Clubhouse

Clubhouse

OKAY... WE'VE BEEN COMING HERE FOR *WEEKS* AND THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THERE'S BEEN A *LINE* TO GET IN! *WHAT'S UP?*

I DON'T KNOW! LET'S ASK THE BOUNCER!


WHAT'S WITH THE BIG CROWD TONIGHT?
WORD GOT OUT THAT SOME OF THOSE ROCK-STAR WANNABES FROM TV HANG OUT HERE! BUSINESS HAS TRIPLED IN THE LAST WEEK ALONE!


WELL, DON'T YOU KNOW WHO THIS IS? THIS IS BREE SUMMERS! SHE'S ONE OF THE FINAL SIX VOCALISTS ON THE SHOW!
HONEY, IF I HAD A DIME FOR EVERY PERSON WHO FED ME THAT LINE, I WOULDN'T HAVE TO WORK NIGHTS LIKE THIS!


BESIDES, I DON'T WATCH TV ANYWAY!
EXCUSE ME...

ARE YOU SURE WE CAN'T GO IN? JUST FOR A QUICK LOOK? I'M SUPPOSED TO MEET SOME PEOPLE AND I JUST WANT TO SEE IF THEY'RE HERE YET!

WE'LL COME RIGHT BACK! I PROMISE!


JUST ONE... QUICK... LOOK? PLEASE?
WELL... I GUESS TWO MORE PRETTY YOUNG THINGS WOULDN'T HURT!


BESIDES, THESE TWO WERE JUST LEAVING ANYWAY!
HEY!!

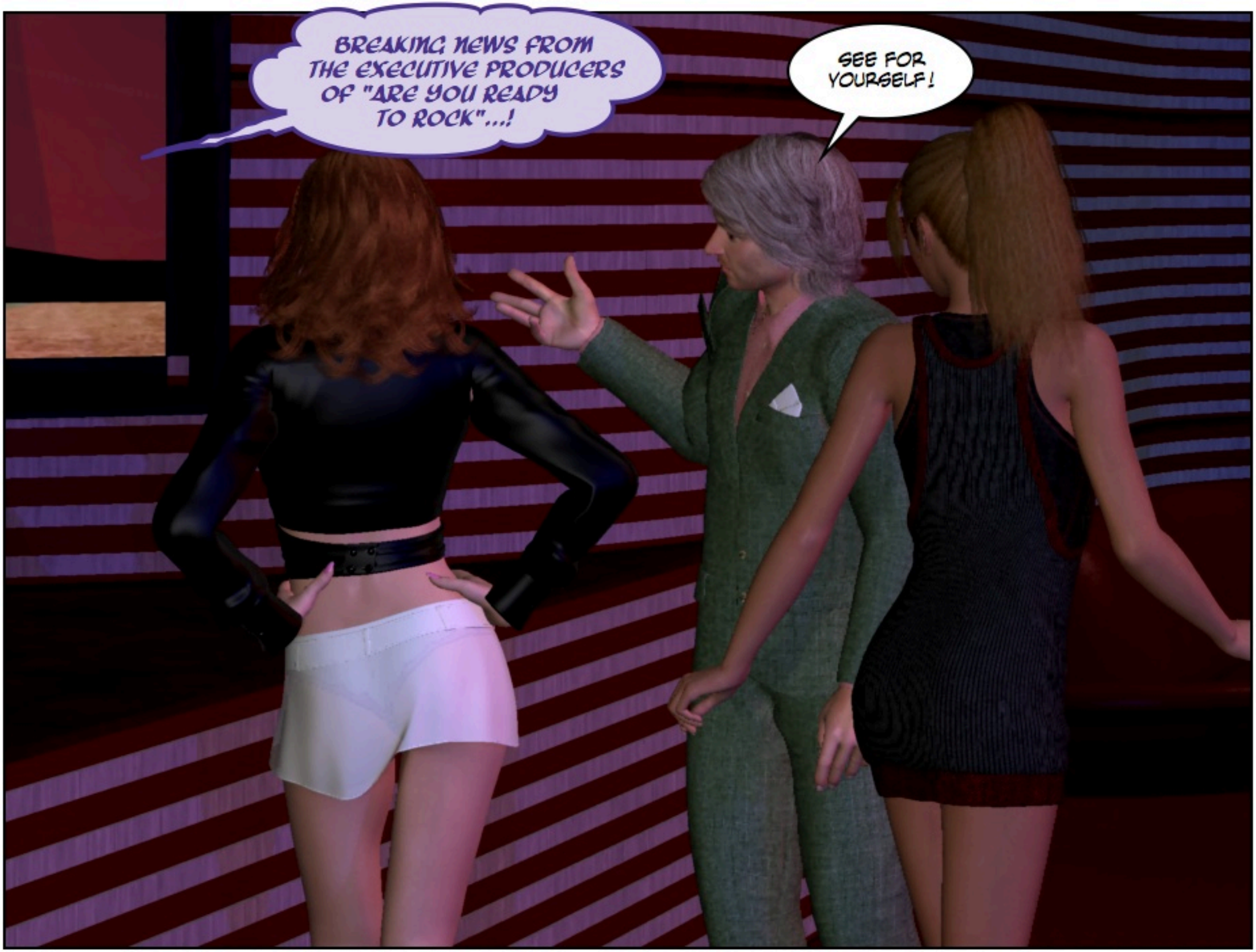

THANK YOU!
YEAH... THANKS!


WOW, GIRL! WHERE'D YOU LEARN TO WORK IT LIKE THAT?
YEARS OF BEING ON THE RECEIVING END OF DOE-EYES LIKE THAT!


BESIDES, WHAT'S THE USE OF CARRYING THESE GIRLS AROUND IF I CAN'T PUT 'EM TO GOOD USE EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE!


YOU'RE LEARNING, GIRLFRIEND! YOU'RE LEARNING!
LOOK! THERE'S MALCOLM!


THERE YOU ARE! THE PRODUCERS CALLED ME EARLIER AND I'VE BEEN TRYING TO PHONE YOU FOR THE LAST HALF HOUR!
I FORGOT MY PHONE! WHAT'S UP?


BREAKING NEWS FROM THE EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS OF "ARE YOU READY TO ROCK"...!
SEE FOR YOURSELF!

IN TWO WEEKS, THURSDAY NIGHT THE FOURTEENTH, THE FINAL FOUR GUITARISTS AND THE FINAL FOUR VOCALISTS WILL ALL PERFORM ON THIS STAGE... TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME!

EACH VOCALIST WILL PAIR UP WITH EACH OF THE GUITARISTS GIVING YOU 16 INCREDIBLE AND UNIQUE PERFORMANCES IN ONE AMAZING NIGHT OF MUSIC!

AND, FOR THE FIRST TIME, YOU, THE AUDIENCE HERE AND AT HOME, CAN VOTE FOR YOUR FAVORITE PERFORMERS!

SO TUNE IN NEXT WEDNESDAY AND THURSDAY TO SEE WHICH OF OUR PERFORMERS WILL MOVE ON TO THIS FINAL FOUR EXTRAVAGANZA TWO WEEKS FROM TONIGHT!

TOGETHER?! THE VOCALISTS AND GUITARISTS TOGETHER? ON THE SAME NIGHT? I'M SCREWED! I AM SO SCREWED!

NOW, NOW, HONEY! IT'S OKAY! WE'LL FIGURE SOMETHING OUT! RIGHT, MALCOLM?

WELL, THIS HAS ALWAYS BEEN A *POSSIBILITY* LURKING IN THE BACKGROUND SINCE THEY REINSTATED BRIAN!

I'D HOPED WE'D HAVE *MORE TIME* TO CONSIDER IT, BUT THIS NEW SCENARIO THEY DEVELOPED FOR THE FINAL FOUR VOCALISTS AND GUITARISTS LEAVES US WITH REALLY ONLY *ONE OPTION!*


WHICH IS...?


BRIAN AND BREE CAN'T BOTH GO TO THE FINAL FOUR! ONE OF THEM HAS TO LOSE NEXT WEEK!

I'M AFRAID THAT'S WHAT IT ALL BOILS DOWN TO! I'M SORRY, BREE! I WISH THERE WAS A WAY I COULD CHANGE THAT!

BUT WHICH ONE?!

BREE?!


WHAT? OH...UH, BRIAN! OF COURSE! THAT'S WHO I AM... BRIAN WINTERS! AND THAT'S WHO SHOULD WIN THIS THING!


WHICH MEANS I'VE GOT TO WORK MY ASS OFF THIS WEEK SO BRIAN MAKES IT TO THE FINAL FOUR! THEN, I MAKE SURE BREE LOSES THE NEXT NIGHT!
AFTER THAT, BRIAN'S LIFE, AND BODY, CAN RETURN TO NORMAL!

OKAY, IF THAT'S WHAT YOU *REALLY* WANT! BUT DON'T STOP TAKING THE TIRESIALIS UNTIL WE'RE *ABSOLUTELY SURE*, AND THEN WE CAN WEAN YOU OFF OF IT!

IF YOU STOP TAKING IT *COLD TURKEY*, YOU COULD HAVE *SERIOUS* PROBLEMS!

BUT... WHAT IF, BY SOME SMALL CHANCE, BRIAN DOESN'T WIN ON WEDNESDAY?

THEN WE'VE STILL GOT A SECOND SHOT WITH BREE, RIGHT?

IF IT COMES TO THAT, I GUESS SO! I JUST DON'T KNOW IF MY HEART'LL BE IN IT IF I LOSE ON WEDNESDAY!

I'M SURE IT WON'T COME TO THAT! YOU'RE THE BEST GUITARIST IN THE SHOW! EVERYONE, EVEN THE JUDGES, KNOWS THAT!

I HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT! BRIAN JUST HAS TO WIN NEXT WEEK! HE JUST HAS TO!

As the week passes, Brian squeezes in as much practice time as possible, both in the concert hall...



...and back in the hotel room...

Then, Wednesday afternoon, after Bree's last practice of the day...

ROCK!?

THANKS, GUYS! SEE YOU LATER!

Curvin

Curvin

Curvin

Curvin


HEY THERE, SUGAR! HOW THEY HANGIN'?
GOD! WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO GET RID OF YOU? A COURT ORDER? OR JUST A BIG CAN OF RAID?!

HEY, I DON'T NEED THIS SIDESHOW TO MAKE MY CAREER, HOT STUFF! UNLIKE YOU...

...OR BRIAN?

BR... BRIAN?! YOU... YOU MEAN THAT GUITAR PLAYER? WH... WHAT DO I CARE HOW HE DOES? I DON'T EVEN KNOW HIM!

OH, YOU KNOW HIM ALL RIGHT! AND I KNOW EXACTLY HOW WELL, TOO!

I... I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE BABBLING ABOUT!

BILLY FACTORY


YOU KNOW, A LITTLE 'SUGAR' FROM YOU AND I JUST MIGHT BE ABLE TO MAKE SURE 'BRIAN' WINS TONIGHT!

YOU'D BE AMAZED AT ALL THE 'TECHNICAL PROBLEMS' THAT CAN RUIN A PERFORMANCE, IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN!


LOOK! I'M GOING TO SAY THIS FOR THE LAST TIME! I DON'T KNOW BRIAN! AND IF YOU BOTHER ME AGAIN, I'M CALLING SECURITY! GOT IT!?

SUIT YOURSELF, BABY!

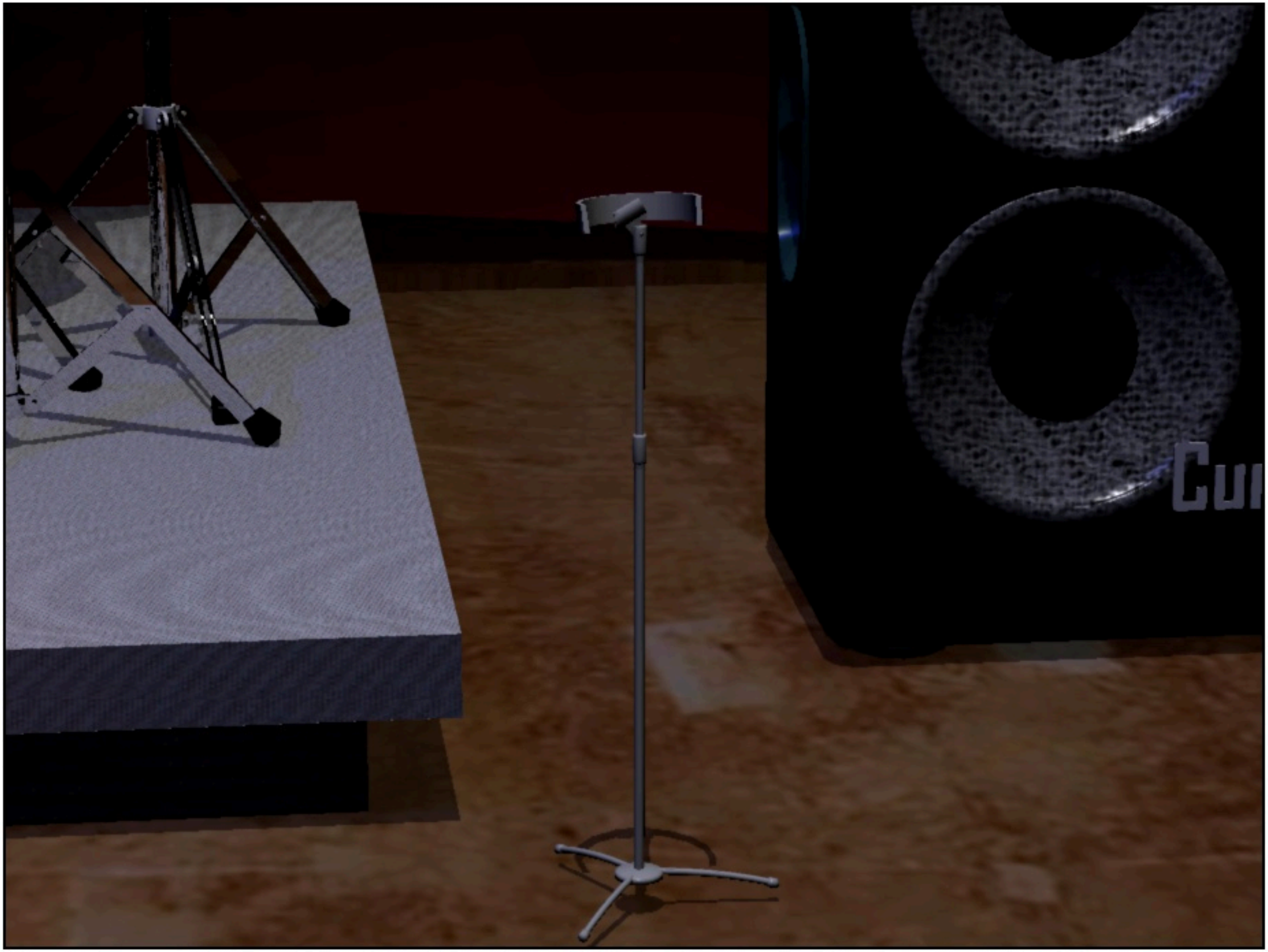
GUESS WE'LL HAVE TO DO THIS THE HARD WAY AFTER ALL!

BILLY FACTORY

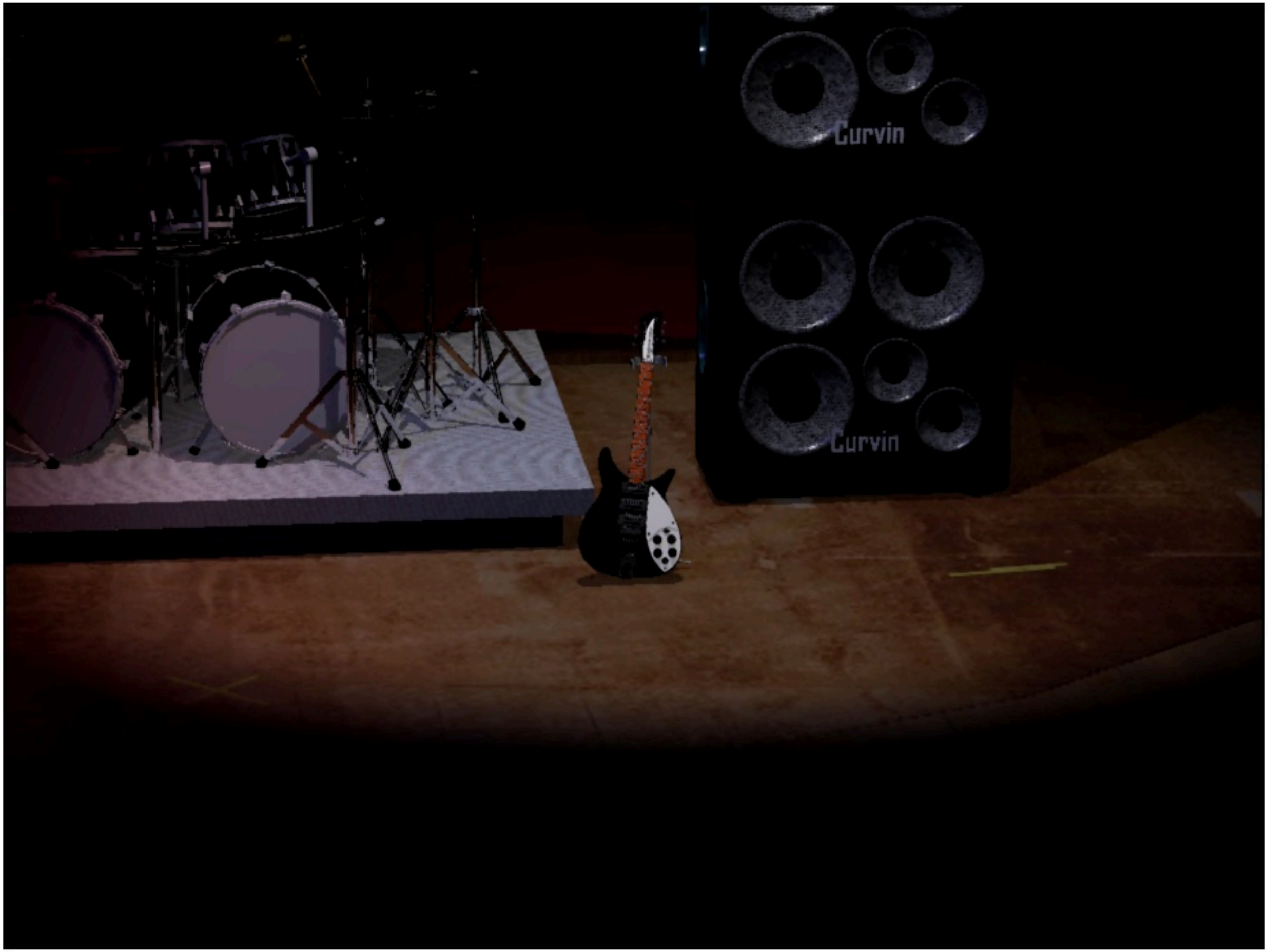
Later that evening, during the dinner break before the show...








Rickenbacker


Curvin
Curvin

ROCK!!

WELCOME TO THE GUITARISTS' SEMI-FINALS FOR ARE YOU READY TO ROCK!

TONIGHT, OUR SIX CONTESTANTS WILL BATTLE IT OUT FOR THE CHANCE TO PERFORM WITH THE WINNERS OF TOMORROW NIGHT'S VOCALIST SEMI-FINALS IN OUR FINAL FOUR MUSIC EXTRAVAGANZA NEXT WEEK!

Curvin

Curvin

ROCK!!

FIRST UP TONIGHT IS THE *SLOWHAND* FROM SEATTLE! THE GUITAR *WIZARD* WHO CAME OUT OF *NOWHERE* TO ROCKET TO THE *TOP* OF THIS COMPETITION!

ROCK!?

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, PLAYING THE CLASSIC BY LAWRENCE AND THE LEGOS... BRIAN WINTERS!

Curvin

Curvin

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!



UH... SORRY! I... GUESS IT WASN'T AS TUNED AS I THOUGHT! GIVE ME A SEC...


Curvin
Curvin


SPROING!!
Rickenbacker

A deafening silence fills the concert hall...

Curvin


WOW... BRIAN! I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY! I WISH WE COULD GIVE YOU ANOTHER CHANCE, BUT THE RULES ARE PAINSTAKINGLY CLEAR ABOUT SITUATIONS LIKE THIS!


BLOODY HELL! FUCK THE BLOODY RULEBOOK!
WE ALL KNOW HOW TALENTED THE LAD IS! WHY NOT JUST GIVE HIM A MULLIGAN THIS ROUND?! EH?

I AM TRULY SORRY, BRIAN! BUT THE *RULES* ARE THE *RULES* AND PREPARING YOUR EQUIPMENT IS A *MAJOR* PART OF BEING A PROFESSIONAL GUITARIST!

I AM TRULY, *TRULY*, SORRY!


I... I UNDERSTAND! IT'S BEEN A GREAT EXPERIENCE, THOUGH! AND I APPRECIATE EVERYTHING YOU ALL HAVE GIVEN ME HERE! THANK YOU FOR LETTING ME GET THIS FAR!


ROCK!!
BOO!!
Curvin
WE LOVE YOU, BRIAN!!
NO WAY, MAN!!!

A short time later, back at the hotel room...

WHERE IS HE?!

I DON'T KNOW! HE WAS HERE AND GONE BEFORE I GOT HERE!

HOW DO YOU KNOW HE WAS ALREADY HERE?

HIS GUITAR'S HERE... AS WELL AS HIS WIG AND THE CLOTHES HE WAS WEARING TONIGHT!

Bad Girl


THEN ITS BREE WE'RE LOOKING FOR! DAMN! I MUST'VE BEEN TOO LATE!
Bad Girl
WHAT DO YOU MEAN? TOO LATE FOR WHAT?

I SPOTTED THAT DEL CHARACTER HANGING AROUND BACKSTAGE EARLIER AND HAD SECURITY REMOVE HIM FROM THE BUILDING! HE MUST'VE GOTTEN TO BRIAN'S EQUIPMENT BEFORE I SAW HIM!

THAT SLEAZEBAG! WELL, WE NEED TO TELL SOMEONE! THE JUDGES! THE PRODUCERS! THE POLICE! THEN THEY CAN GIVE BRIAN ANOTHER CHANCE!

UNFORTUNATELY, THERE'S VERY LITTLE CHANCE OF ACTUALLY *PROVING* THAT DEL SABOTAGED BRIAN'S EQUIPMENT! EVEN IF THEY HAD *VIDEO* CATCHING HIM IN THE ACT, THE RULES ARE *EXPLICIT* REGARDING PERSONAL EQUIPMENT FAILURE!


WE HAVE TO FACE THE FACT THAT BRIAN IS OUT! NOW ITS ALL UP TO BREE!


OKAY... I UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE SAYING...
Bad Girl


...BUT WHERE IS SHE?!

Are You Ready To



Chapter Five

by CBlack

Early the next morning...

HEY, SLEEPY HEAD! WAKE UP!

HUH?! WHUZZAT?


BOY, YOU LOOK LIKE CRAP!
BREE?!

WHAT DO YOU EXPECT AFTER WHAT YOU PUT US THROUGH? WHERE THE HELL HAVE YOU BEEN ALL NIGHT?!

Bad Girl

JUST WALKING... DOING A LOT OF THINKING! TRYING TO FIGURE THINGS OUT!


YOU HAD US SO DAMN WORRIED! YOU JUST DISAPPEARED WITHOUT TELLING US! ARE YOU OKAY?
I'M FINE... NOW! I ADMIT I WAS A LITTLE CATATONIC AND PISSED AFTER THE SHOW, BUT I THINK I'VE FINALLY SETTLED DOWN ENOUGH TO MOVE ON FROM THAT!
Bad Girl


YOU SURE? YOU THINK YOU'LL BE ABLE TO GO ON TONIGHT?
Bad Girl


OH, DEFINITELY! BUT THERE ARE SOME CHANGES I WANT TO MAKE, WHICH MEANS WE HAVE TO GET STARTED RIGHT AWAY!

The next six hours are a whirlwind of activity for Bree as she prepares for the night's performance... surprising everyone with the changes she insists on...

BUT BREE, AS THE MUSICAL DIRECTOR, I HAVE TO ADVISE AGAINST CHANGING YOUR SONG AT THE LAST MINUTE LIKE THIS! ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT TO CHANGE IT NOW?!

IT'S GOT TO BE THIS SONG, BOB! THIS, OR NOTHING!

The song...

I DON'T KNOW... IT'S STILL NOT WHAT I WANT!

ALL OF A SUDDEN YOU'RE GETTING PICKY! OKAY, BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD IT IS, GIRLFRIEND!

Her wardrobe...


Her hair...

Finally, shortly before Bree's performance...

EVERYBODY DECENT IN HERE?

SURE, MALCOLM! COME ON IN!


HOW YOU DOING, BREE? YOU READY FOR THIS?
I THINK SO!

NOW, I DON'T WANT TO PUT ANY UNDUE STRESS ON YOU, BUT I JUST WANT TO POINT OUT THAT WHAT YOU'RE DOING TONIGHT IS THE *BIGGEST* STRETCH FOR YOU TO DATE!

ALL OF 'BREE'S' PERFORMANCES SO FAR HAVE BEEN AS A 'CUTE GIRL' OR A 'SEXY GIRL'... THE KEY WORD HERE BEING 'GIRL'!

TONIGHT, YOU HAVE TO GO ABOVE AND BEYOND ANYTHING YOU'VE DONE SO FAR AND SELL YOURSELF AS A CONFIDENT AND SENSUAL 'WOMAN'!

ARE YOU READY TO DO THAT?

I GUESS WE'LL SEE IN A FEW MINUTES, WON'T WE!

ROCK!?

THANK YOU, HILARY, FOR A VERY... ENLIGHTENING PERFORMANCE!

HOWEVER, WHEN WE ASKED YOU ALL TO STRETCH THE LIMITS OF YOUR ABILITIES THIS WEEK, WE DIDN'T MEAN JUST YOUR WARDROBE!

AND WHAT'S WRONG WITH HER DRESS, MATE? EH? I, FOR ONE, APPRECIATE THE THOUGHT THAT WENT INTO CHOOSING SUCH A DELICIOUS GARMENT!

THANK YOU, HILARY! VERY NICE JOB!

Curvin

Curvin

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!

ROCK!?

OUR FINAL VOCALIST TONIGHT IS *BREE SUMMERS*, WITH ONE OF MY *FAVORITES* BY ALICIA LOCK!


WHOO-HOO!!
WHOA, BABY!!
CLAP CLAP!!
CLAP CLAP!!
CLAP CLAP!!


NEVER THOUGHT I'D FEEL THIS WAY ABOUT YOU 'BOUT YOU OR ANY OTHER MAN...
BUT EVER SINCE YOU CAME INTO MY LIFE, I FEEL A PASSION I JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND...


Curvin
I FEEL A PASSION WHEN YOU'RE NEAR ME, PASSION I JUST CAN'T CONTROL...
PASSION MAKES ME TREMBLE, FEEL IT IN MY HEART AND SOUL.


CAN'T IGNORE MY BODY'S REACTION EVERY TIME YOU HOLD ME TIGHT.
ACTING ON THIS PRIMAL ATTRACTION, FILLING US WITH CARNAL DELIGHT...


WE FEEL
THE PASSION
WHEN TOGETHER,
PASSION WE JUST
CAN'T CONTROL...


PASSION...
AN ADDICTION...
YOU'VE CLAIMED MY
HEART, MY BODY,
MY SOUL!

ROCK!?

Curvin

Curvin

WOW!!

I'M ALL YOURS, BABY!!

YOU'RE THE ONE, BREE!!

CLAPCLAP!!

CLAPCLAP!!

CLAPCLAP!!


THAT, MY DEAR YOUNG WOMAN, WAS ONE OF THE FINEST AND MOST AMAZING PERFORMANCE I'VE EVER SEEN! AND I THINK THE CROWD AGREES WITH ME!


ONE QUESTION, LOVE...
YES, NIGEL?


WHAT THE DEVIL'S 'OLDIN' UP THAT BEWITCHIN' DRESS OF YOURS, EH?


WILL POWER, NIGEL! LOTS AND LOTS OF WILL POWER!


HMMM... WELL THEN, OBVIOUSLY YOUR WILL'S AN 'ELLUVA LOT STRONGER'N MINE!

THE PASSION YOU PUT INTO THAT SONG NEARLY BROUGHT TEARS TO THESE CRUSTY OLD EYES, BREE! AND, ASK THESE GUYS, THAT'S SAYING QUITE A BIT!

THANK YOU, GENTLEMEN!

AND THANK YOU ALL, TOO!

YOU'RE THE BEST, BREE!!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!

OH MY GOD! I NEED TO SIT DOWN AND BREATHE!

NEITHER OF WHICH YOU CAN DO WITHOUT SPLITTING THAT DRESS, HONEY!

DON'T WORRY, I'LL ONLY BE A MINUTE AND THEN I'LL LEAVE YOU TO YOUR MODESTY!


MAKE IT SHORT, MALCOLM! THIS DRESS WON'T STAY UP MUCH LONGER!

FIRST, I DON'T NEED TO TELL YOU HOW *MAGNIFICENT* YOU WERE OUT THERE, BREE! BUT I WILL *ANYWAY!*

SECOND, HAVE FUN CELEBRATING, BUT *REMEMBER*, WE HAVE A LOT OF WORK THIS WEEK! YOU HAVE TO DO *FOUR* DIFFERENT PERFORMANCES NEXT WEEK, SO YOU'LL BE PRACTICING FOUR TIMES AS HARD!


AREN'T YOU COMING TO THE FINAL FOUR PARTY WITH US?
OH NO! THAT'S PRIMARILY FOR YOU WINNERS AND THEIR FRIENDS TO GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER AND LET YOUR HAIR DOWN!


BESIDES, I'VE GOT SOME THINGS TO LOOK INTO! I'LL SEE YOU TOMORROW AT REHEARSAL!
GOOD NIGHT, MALCOLM!

OKAY, LET'S GET YOU OUT OF THAT DRESS AND INTO SOME PARTY CLOTHES!

ANYTHING! AS LONG AS IT'S NOT STRAPLESS!

A short time later, in an upscale home in the Hollywood Hills...

OH MY GOD! THIS HOUSE IS AMAZING! I HEARD SOMEONE SAY IT WAS SKIP BANCROFT'S PLACE!

REALLY? I THOUGHT IT WAS ONE OF THE PRODUCERS'! EITHER WAY, IT LOOKS LIKE ONE HELL OF A PARTY!

HEY, THERE'S STEVEN BILLINGS OVER THERE TALKING TO LENA MORROW! MMMMM... HE IS ONE YUMMY PIECE OF WORK!

AND A HELL OF A GUITAR PLAYER... THEY BOTH ARE! I COULD DEFINITELY SEE MYSELF COLLABORATING WITH EITHER ONE OF THEM!


OH, I'M SURE YOU COULD!
THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT, AND YOU KNOW IT!


WHATEVER! C'MON, LET'S GO ON OVER!


SERIOUSLY... IF I HAD TO CHOOSE BETWEEN THE FOUR OF YOU SINGERS, YOU'D BE MY FIRST, SECOND, THIRD AND FOURTH CHOICES!
DITTO! YOU CAN SING WITH ME ANYTIME, BREE!


THAT'S AWFULLY SWEET OF YOU TWO TO SAY THAT!
OH, NOW LOOK WHAT YOU'VE DONE! YOU WENT AND MADE THE POOR GIRL BLUSH!
AAAAA


WELL, HEAVEN FORBID I PUT ANY MORE COLOR IN THOSE LOVELY CHEEKS!


SO... WHO NEEDS A DRINK?
OH, I DEFINITELY NEED ONE!
ME TOO!
I'LL GIVE YOU A HAND WITH THOSE, STEVEN.

WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA *EMBARRASSING* ME LIKE THAT IN FRONT OF THEM?!

I'M *SORRY*, BREE! I DIDN'T *MEAN* TO *EMBARRASS* YOU, BUT YOU *WERE* BLUSHING LIKE A *SCHOOL* GIRL!


BESIDES, IF I DIDN'T KNOW BETTER, I'D SAY YOU HAD THE HOTS FOR STUDLEY STEVEN OVER THERE!
DON'T BE RIDICULOUS! YOU AND I BOTH KNOW HOW IMPOSSIBLE THAT IS!


REALLY? THEN IT MUST JUST BE THE CHILLY AIR THAT'S MAKING YOUR GIRLS 'NIP OUT' LIKE THAT!


WHAT?!
OF COURSE, IT'S AT LEAST SEVENTY-FIVE DEGREES IN HERE, AND THEY'VE ONLY BEEN DOING THAT SINCE HE STARTED TALKING TO YOU...!

IT... IT'S THE TIRESIALIS! THAT'S ALL! IT'S SCREWING UP MY BODY SO MUCH, IT DOESN'T KNOW WHAT IT'S DOING!

UH-HUH!

A A A A


I'VE GOTTA GO FIND SOMEPLACE I CAN SIT DOWN FOR A MINUTE... CALM DOWN AND EVERYTHING! TELL THEM I'LL BE BACK IN A FEW, OKAY!
A COLD SHOWER ALWAYS WORKS FOR ME!
STOP IT!


WITH ALL THE ROOMS IN THIS HOUSE, THERE'S GOT TO BE A PLACE I CAN BE ALONE FOR JUST A FEW MINUTES!


OH... HEY HILARY! TAKING A LITTLE SELF-GUIDED TOUR, TOO, HUH?
TOUR? YEAH, THAT'S IT! SEE YOU LATER, BREE!


OH BREE, THERE YOU ARE! CAN I HAVE A WORD WITH YOU?
UMMM... SURE, SKIP! WHAT'S UP?


I JUST WANTED TO TELL YOU THAT YOU LOOKED AND SOUNDED INCREDIBLE OUT ON THAT STAGE TONIGHT!
WELL, THANKS! I APPRECIATE THAT, SKIP!

AND TO SAY HOW GLAD I AM THAT YOU COULD MAKE IT TO MY LITTLE GATHERING TONIGHT!

THIS IS YOUR *PARTY?!* I THOUGHT IT WAS THE *PRODUCERS'!*

I AM THE EXECUTIVE PRODUCER OF THE SHOW, BREE! I USE A PSEUDONYM AS PRODUCER FOR LEGAL AND FINANCIAL REASONS!

OH, I DIDN'T KNOW THAT! WELL, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME...


BREE... I DON'T KNOW HOW TO SAY THIS, BUT I WAS GIVEN SOME DISTURBING INFORMATION EARLIER TODAY!
INFORMATION?! ABOUT WHAT?

ABOUT YOU, I'M AFRAID! INFORMATION THAT COULD JEOPARDIZE YOUR PLACE IN THIS CONTEST AND ANY CAREER YOU HOPE TO HAVE AFTERWARD!

WHAT... WHAT DID YOU HEAR?!

WELL... I'D RATHER NOT REPEAT THOSE UGLY, SORDID WORDS. I STILL PREFER TO THINK OF YOU THE SAME WAY AS BEFORE... THE SAME WAY YOUR FANS ACROSS THE HEARTLAND SEE YOU... AS A GORGEOUS SONGBIRD.

IT WOULD BE A SHAME IF THAT HAD TO CHANGE. I'D *MUCH* RATHER KEEP THIS INFORMATION *PRIVATE*, JUST BETWEEN *US*, RATHER THAN RUIN *YOUR* REPUTATION AND THAT OF THE SHOW!


OH, SKIP, THAT WOULD MEAN SO MUCH TO ME IF YOU COULD DO THAT! YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW MUCH THIS CONTEST MEANS TO ME!


REALLY?!
THEN WHY DON'T WE DISCUSS JUST HOW MUCH IT MEANS TO YOU!


I'M SURE WE'LL BE ABLE TO WORK SOMETHING OUT!

YOU SURE BREE'S OKAY? IT'S BEEN ALMOST HALF AN HOUR! MAYBE I SHOULD GO LOOK FOR HER!

SHE SAID SHE JUST NEEDED TO LIE DOWN FOR A MINUTE! I'M SURE SHE'S OKAY, AND...


THERE SHE IS RIGHT NOW!

HEY, BABE! WE WERE BEGINNING TO WONDER WHAT HAPPENED...

WE HAVE TO LEAVE! WE HAVE TO LEAVE NOW!!


WHAT?! BUT... WE JUST...!


WHAT'S GOING ON, BREE? WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT?
I HAVE TO LEAVE! THIS HOUSE... THE CONTEST... L.A....! I CAN'T DO THIS ANYMORE!


BREE, YOU'RE SCARING ME! WHAT HAPPENED IN THERE?!
SKIP... KNOWS! ABOUT ME! DEL... MUST'VE FIGURED IT OUT AND TOLD HIM!


BANCROFT KNOWS? HOLY SHIT!
SKIP SAID THE INFORMATION CAME FROM AN ANONYMOUS SOURCE... AND THAT... WITH ONE PHONE CALL... HE COULD GET ME KICKED OUT OF THE CONTEST... TURN ME INTO TABLOID FODDER!

DAMN! HAS HE TOLD ANYONE ELSE?

NO... SKIP SAID... HE PROMISED TO KEEP IT QUIET IF I... IF I...!

AAAAAAAAA


OH GOD!!
BREE! WHAT DID YOU DO?

I... I DIDN'T HAVE A CHOICE! HE WOULD'VE MADE THE CALL RIGHT THERE IF I HADN'T... HADN'T GONE DOWN ON HIM...

OH MY GOD, BREE! HE MADE YOU **BLOW** HIM?!


WE HAVE TO LEAVE! WE HAVE TO LEAVE... NOW!!
OKAY! BUT I'M CALLING MALCOLM! HE'LL KNOW HOW TO HANDLE THIS!

Are You Ready To



Chapter Six

by CBlack

After a hurried drive back to the hotel and a frantic phone call to Malcolm...

HOW IS SHE?!

SHE'S IN THERE! ON HER THIRD SHOWER!

I AM SO... SO SORRY THIS HAD TO HAPPEN! I WISH I'D BEEN THERE TO PROTECT HER FROM ALL THIS!

BUT WHAT COULD YOU HAVE DONE, MALCOLM? SKIP KNOWS EVERYTHING!


SKIP BANCROFT IS A BOTTOM-FEEDING WANNABE WHO KNOWS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING!
NOTHING?! BUT HE TOLD BREE...

WHATEVER HE COULD THINK OF TO GET WHAT HE WANTED! IT'S AN OLD, *LOW-LIFE* CASTING DIRECTOR TRICK! IN THIS BUSINESS, ALMOST *EVERYONE* HAS SOMETHING THEY'D LIKE TO KEEP QUIET!

SKIP TOOK A SHOT IN THE DARK AND THEN COUNTED ON BREE'S *NAIVETE* TO NOT CALL HIS BLUFF!


BUT WHAT ABOUT DEL? BREE SEEMED TO THINK HE KNEW SOMETHING!
MR. SPRINGS' SUSPICIONS ARE BASED ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT BREE IS IMPERSONATING BRIAN!
AS LONG AS HE KEEPS BELIEVING THAT, WHICH IS VERY LIKELY, HE'S NO THREAT TO BREE!


THEN WHAT I DID TONIGHT WAS FOR NOTHING! IS THAT WHAT YOU'RE TELLING US?


WELL, NOT FOR NOTHING, I HOPE! WE CAN SEE TO IT THAT SKIP BANCROFT NEVER PULLS ANYTHING LIKE THIS AGAIN! AND THE SOONER THE BETTER!

DO YOU REALLY THINK IT'S A GOOD IDEA TO GO AFTER THE EXECUTIVE PRODUCER BEFORE THE CONTEST IS OVER?

BREE, HONEY... THE EXECUTIVE PRODUCER OF THIS SHOW IS A GOOD FRIEND OF MINE! SKIP BANCROFT IS NOTHING MORE THAN A GLORIFIED DJ!


THEN HE LIED ALL THE WAY AROUND! THAT FUCKING SLEAZE!
YES, I'M AFRAID HE DID... AND YES, HE IS! I'D HOPED TO SPARE YOU EXPOSURE TO THIS UGLY SIDE OF OUR INDUSTRY... AT LEAST UNTIL AFTER YOU'D MADE ANY FINAL DECISIONS REGARDING YOUR FUTURE!

IF ANYTHING, MALCOLM, TONIGHT'S EXPERIENCE STRENGTHENED MY RESOLVE TO WIN THIS CONTEST... NO HOLDS BARRED!


THEN... WE'LL DEAL WITH SKIP BANCROFT!

The following week is a whirlwind of activity. Song choices are argued over, choreographers and costume designers are consulted...

Ready

ROCK!?

and, of course, lots and lots of rehearsals...




WOW! THAT WAS PERFECT! I THINK WE'VE FINALLY GOT THAT NUMBER DOWN!
WE DID SOUND GREAT, DIDN'T WE? YOU GUYS WAILED ON THOSE GUITAR SOLOS!


THANKS TO YOUR SUGGESTIONS! YOU PLAY MORE THAN JUST A LITTLE GUITAR, DON'T YOU!
WELL, YEAH! I USED TO SING AND PLAY GUITAR IN A GROUP...


BUT THAT WAS ANOTHER LIFETIME AGO!


YOU KNOW, IF NEITHER ONE OF US WINS THIS THING, I'D LOVE IT IF WE COULD HOOK UP WHEN ITS OVER!
'HOOK UP'?!

Curvin

IN A BAND, I MEAN! HOOK UP IN A BAND... YEAH!

I'D LIKE THAT TOO, STEVEN! WE DO WORK GREAT TOGETHER!

NOW... COSTUMES! WHAT TIGHT, SLINKY THING DO YOU WANT ME TO SQUEEZE INTO FOR THIS SONG?

WHATEVER YOU WANT! YOU'RE MOVING AROUND MORE THAN ANYONE ELSE, SO WEAR WHAT YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE IN!


REALLY? THE OTHER GUYS HAVE ME WEARING...WELL, YOU'LL SEE FOR YOURSELF TOMORROW NIGHT!
REALLY?! WELL, NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, I DID SEE THIS LEATHER CATSUIT HANGING UP BACK THERE!


MMM-HMMM! AND I ALSO SAW A POTATO SACK IN THE BACK ROOM! MAYBE I'LL JUST WEAR THAT FOR OUR NUMBER!
YOU'D STILL LOOK INCREDIBLE IN MY BOOK!


WELL, THEN... WHAT DO YOU SAY WE GET THE GUYS BACK AND RUN THOUGH THIS ONE MORE TIME!
SOUNDS LIKE MY KIND OF PLAN!

The night of the final concert...

THIS IS CRAZY! IT'S JUST NOT POSSIBLE TO PUT TOGETHER FOUR NUMBERS WITH FOUR DIFFERENT GUITARISTS IN JUST ONE WEEK! I NEED MORE TIME!


RELAX, HONEY! EVERYONE ELSE IS IN THE SAME BOAT YOU ARE! BUT YOU HAVE ONE MAJOR DIFFERENCE OVER THE OTHERS THAT GIVES YOU THE ADVANTAGE!


WHAT'S THAT? BESIDES THE OBVIOUS, THAT IS! AND I DON'T SEE THAT AS AN ADVANTAGE RIGHT NOW!


YOUR ADVANTAGE IS YOU'RE THE BEST! AND YOU'RE GOING TO WIN IT ALL TONIGHT! I CAN FEEL IT!


ALL I FEEL IS NAUSEA RIGHT NOW!
IT'S PROBABLY THAT NEW GAFFE YOU GOT THIS WEEK! IT MAY DO A GREAT JOB OF HIDING YOU, BUT ITS GOT TO BE DAMNED UNCOMFORTABLE!
YOU SURE IT'S NOT DOING ANY SERIOUS DAMAGE DOWN THERE?

IT WOULDN'T MATTER IF IT DID! I'VE COME TOO FAR TO LET ANYTHING GET IN THE WAY!

BESIDES, IT'S NECESSARY FOR MOST OF THE OUTFITS I'M WEARING TONIGHT!

HOW'S OUR GIRL DOING?

OUR 'GIRL' FEELS READY TO PUKE!

SHE'S DOING FINE, MALCOLM! JUST A LITTLE CASE OF THE JITTERS!


I JUST WANTED TO TELL YOU THAT NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS TONIGHT, I'M VERY PROUD OF YOU, BREE! AND I'LL STICK BY YOU AS LONG AS YOU WANT ME! I PROMISE!
THANK YOU, MALCOLM! I REALLY NEEDED TO HEAR THAT!

YOU KNOW, THERE'S A VERY *DEFINITE* POSSIBILITY THAT YOU COULD WIN THIS WHOLE THING TONIGHT! HAVE YOU CONSIDERED THE *RAMIFICATIONS* IF THAT HAPPENS?

YOU MIGHT HAVE SOME DIFFICULT DECISIONS TO MAKE!

I'M JUST TRYING TO GET THROUGH THE NEXT FEW HOURS, MALCOLM! WHAT HAPPENS AFTERWARD, WIN OR LOSE, I'LL DEAL WITH WHEN IT COMES!


WELL, IF IT HELPS PUT YOUR MIND AT EASE A LITTLE, I DO HAVE A FEW IDEAS, IF YOU'D LIKE TO HEAR THEM!
IF IT CAN TAKE MY MIND OFF THIS SHOW, AND THIS GAFFE, FOR A FEW MINUTES, THEN I'M ALL FOR IT!


AND FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH, MALCOLM... WHATEVER THE OUTCOME TONIGHT, I'M GLAD I'M IN YOUR HANDS!

Are You Ready to ROCK!?

WELCOME TO THE FINAL FOUR SHOWCASE OF *ARE YOU READY TO ROCK!!*

TONIGHT, WE'LL SEE THE TOP FOUR VOCALISTS AND THE TOP FOUR GUITARISTS OF THE THOUSANDS WHO TRIED OUT COMPETING FOR THE CHANCE TO JOIN OUR ILLUSTRIOUS JUDGES IN THE NEXT GREAT *MEGA BAND!*

FOR THE NEXT TWO HOURS, YOU'LL SEE EACH VOCALIST AND EACH GUITARIST PERFORM FOR A TOTAL OF *SIXTEEN* UNIQUE MUSICAL EXPERIENCES!

AND AT THE END OF THE SHOW, NOT ONLY WILL THE JUDGES VOTE, BUT EVERYONE HERE AND *YOU* AT HOME WILL HAVE THE CHANCE TO *VOTE* FOR YOUR *FAVORITE* GUITARIST AND VOCALIST!

SO, LET'S GET STARTED!

FIRST UP TONIGHT, BREE SUMMERS AND LENA MORROW WITH AMORE'S "WHAT ABOUT ME?"!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!

CAN'T YOU SEE ME? I'VE BEEN HERE ALL ALONG. HIDING FEELINGS, EMOTIONS SO STRONG.

THIS LOVE ENDURING I'VE HARBORED FROM YOU FOR SO LONG.

YOU'VE BEEN RIGHT HERE, ALWAYS RIGHT HERE FOR ME, NEVER KNOWING HOW GOOD WE COULD BE.

YOU'RE ALWAYS ASKING IF THERE'S SOMEONE OUT THERE JUST FOR YOU... BUT THERE'S SOMETHING THAT YOU SHOULD KNOW...

WHAT ABOUT ME? CAN'T I BE THE ONE WHO'S HERE JUST FOR YOU?

WHAT ABOUT ME? JUST TURN AND LOOK THIS WAY...

WHAT ABOUT ME?
I SHOULD BE THE ONE
WHO SHARES IT ALL WITH YOU!
'CAUSE I'LL BE HERE
ALWAYS...


Curvin
YAY!! YOU GIRLS ROCK!!
WOO-HOO!!!
CLAP CLAP!!
CLAP CLAP!!
CLAP CLAP!!


FABULOUS
WORK LADIES!
JUST FABULOUS!


YOU TWO REMIND ME VERY MUCH OF THE WILLIAM SISTERS... THAT IS, OF COURSE, BEFORE ANNIE WENT AN' GOT HERSELF HUGE!


A WORD OF ADVICE FROM YOUR UNCLE NIGEL, GIRLS... JUST SAY "NO" TO PORK RINDS!


FANTASTIC WORK, LADIES! JUST FANTASTIC! I WISH WE HAD TIME FOR MORE THAN JUST ONE NUMBER FROM YOU!

THANK YOU, GUYS!

YES... THANK YOU VERY MUCH!


THAT WENT PERFECTLY! YOU AND LENA WERE AWESOME!
IT DID FEEL REALLY GOOD OUT THERE WITH HER! WIN OR LOSE, I COULD DEFINITELY SEE THE TWO OF US PLAYING TOGETHER!

WELL, YOU DEFINITELY HAVE A MUCH BETTER CHANCE THAN HILARY! CAN YOU BELIEVE SHE HAD ANOTHER "WARDROBE MALFUNCTION" ON STAGE?!

I THINK SHE'S DOING IT ON PURPOSE!

OF COURSE SHE IS! THAT GIRL JUST CAN'T KEEP HER TITS IN HER TOP!

WELL YOU'D BETTER GET A MOVE ON, GIRLY! YOU'VE ONLY GOT ABOUT TWENTY MINUTES BEFORE YOUR NEXT NUMBER!

AND IT'LL TAKE ME MOST OF THAT TIME TO SQUEEZE INTO MY OUTFIT!

CHRIST! I HOPE I NEVER HAVE TO PLAY WITH THESE NEXT TWO YAHOOS EVER AGAIN!

THEY'RE ARROGANT, CONDESCENDING AND INSISTED... NO, DEMANDED I WEAR THESE RIDICULOUSLY SKIMPY COSTUMES!


DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, HONEY! YOU'VE GOT THE FIGURE FOR THEM... AT LEAST YOU DO NOW!


STILL... IT'S HARD TO CONCENTRATE ON MY SINGING WHEN I'M TRUSSED UP LIKE THAT!


OH WELL... IF IT'S WHAT I'VE GOTTA DO... IT'S WHAT I'VE GOTTA DO!

ROCK!?

NEXT UP... RICK DORSEY AND BREE SUMMERS, WITH A LITTLE EDDIE ST. PAULI!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!


Curvin
Curvin

DADDY STOP YOUR PREACHIN', MAMA CAN'T YOU SEE... I'M NOT YOUR BABY GIRL NO MORE!

Curvin

Curvin

EVEN BEFORE MY SWEET SIXTEEN, BEEN DOIN' THINGS YOU'D CALL OBSCENE... RIGHT BEHIND MY UPSTAIRS BEDROOM DOOR!


YOU KNOW WHEN BOYS GROW UP, THEIR TOYS THEY KIND OF MISS...
BUT THEN THEY NEVER PLAYED WITH TOYS THAT LOOKED LIKE THIS!

JUST CALL ME BAD, CALL ME BAD, CALL ME BAD... I'M NOT YOUR GOOD GIRL!

CALL ME BAD, SO BAD... I'M NOT YOUR GOOD GIRL!






Curvin
Curvin
HOT LICKS, MAN!!
BE MY BAD GIRL, BREE!!
CLAP CLAP!!
CLAP CLAP!!
CLAP CLAP!!


VERY AMBITIOUS CHOICE, RICK! VERY FEW BESIDES EDDIE HIMSELF CAN HANDLE THE RIFFS IN THAT SONG!


ROCK
THANKS, HARLEY!


I DIDN'T SAY YOU WERE ONE OF THEM! I THINK THIS SONG WAS A LITTLE OUT OF YOUR REACH... AT LEAST IT WAS TONIGHT!


I AGREE! IT ALSO WASN'T A VERY GOOD SHOWCASE FOR YOUR TALENTS, BREE! NOT A GOOD SELECTION FOR A VOCALIST! I TAKE IT IT WASN'T YOUR CHOICE!


WELL... LET'S JUST SAY WE TOSSED A COIN... AND I LOST!


HMMM...
I UNDERSTAND!


WELL, PERSONALLY... I THINK THE OUTFIT SHOWCASED YOUR TALENTS QUITE NICELY, LUV!


THANKS, NIGEL! I CAN ALWAYS COUNT ON YOU FOR A POSITIVE SPIN!

But as soon as Rick and Bree are off stage...

THANKS FOR STABBING ME IN THE BACK, BITCH! IF I'M GOING DOWN, YOU'RE GOING DOWN WITH ME!

WHAT?! ALL I SAID WAS...!

LET IT GO, BREE! HE'S AN ASSHOLE AND NOTHING WE DO CAN CHANGE THAT! LET'S HURRY UP AND GET READY FOR YOUR NEXT NUMBER!

LEADING OFF THIS NEXT HOUR IS MARCO SLADE AND BREE SUMMERS, DOING JOHNNY ICON'S "PLEASURE AND PAIN"!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!

THAT FIRST NIGHT WHEN I MET YOU I KNEW YOU WERE THE ONE. YOU LOOKED SO SWEET AND MORAL MY FAVORITE KIND OF FUN.

Curvin

I SAID "COME HERE, BABY. LEAVE YOUR OLD LIFE BEHIND. JUST LEAVE IT TO ME, I'LL MESS WITH YOUR MIND!"

Curvin

FROM THE UPPER FLOOR, THEY HEARD HIM MOAN, MOAN, MOAN! IN PLEASURE AND PAIN, HE CRIED "NO, NO, NO!"

WHEN I TOLD HIM I'D STOP, HE CRIED "NO, NO, NO!" IN PLEASURE AND PAIN, HE JUST MOANED, MOANED, MOANED.

NO, NO, NO!

I TRAINED YOU WELL, THAT'S TRUE, BABE! BETTER THAN I EVER DREAMED...

YOU LEARNED THE LIFE, AND THEN SOME, BABE.

'CAUSE NOW, IT'S NOT, JUST YOU THEY HEAR SCREAM, BECAUSE...

FROM THE UPPER FLOOR, THEY HEAR ME MOAN, MOAN, MOAN! IN PLEASURE AND PAIN, I CRY "NO, NO, NO!"

WHEN YOU THREATEN TO STOP, I CRY, "NO, NO, NO!"

IN PLEASURE AND PAIN, I JUST MOAN, MOAN, MOAN! NO, NO, NO!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!


THAT WAS EXCELLENT WORK UP THERE, MARCO... JUST EXCELLENT! AND BREE... WOW! YOU NEVER FAIL TO SURPRISE ME! YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY FROM THAT YOUNG GIRL IN PHOENIX!

NO KIDDING! I HARDLY RECOGNIZED YOU UP THERE! AND I LOVED WHAT I HEARD!

OH, YOU WERE FABULOUS TOO, MARCO!

MARCO?
MARCO WHO?!
BREE, LUV, YOU HAD ME MESMERIZED AT "COME HERE BABY"!

THANK YOU, GUYS! THAT'S VERY SWEET OF YOU!


YEAH! THANKS CLIVE AND HARLEY!

And the backstage drama continues...

BREE, WE'VE GOT A PROBLEM!

A PROBLEM?! I DON'T KNOW IF I WANT TO HEAR THIS, STEVEN!

I JUST GOT THE WORD FROM THE PRODUCERS... WE CAN'T DO THE SONG WE REHEARSED! WE HAVE TO DO THE BACKUP!

WHAT?! WHY?! IT'S A GREAT SONG! IT'S PERFECT FOR MY RANGE AND THE GUITAR WORK BETWEEN YOU AND MAX IS AWESOME!


THAT'S THE PROBLEM! MAX IS TECHNICALLY CONSIDERED AN ADDITIONAL LEAD GUITARIST ON THIS SONG AND ONLY THE CONTESTANTS CAN BE CONSIDERED "LEAD GUITARISTS"! SINCE MAX IS ONE OF THE STUDIO MUSICIANS HERE, HE CAN'T PLAY THE SONG!

WHAT THE HELL?! WE'VE BEEN PRACTICING THAT SONG ALL WEEK... RIGHT IN FRONT OF THE PRODUCERS! AND NOW THEY DECIDE TO TELL US WE CAN'T DO IT?!

WELL, IT SEEMS ONE OF THE OTHER GUITARISTS BROUGHT IT TO THEIR ATTENTION AND IS RAISING A STINK ABOUT IT!

RICK! THAT ASSHOLE!

I WOULDN'T BE SURPRISED! ANYWAY, I WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW AS SOON AS I...


WAIT A MINUTE! DO THE RULES SAY ONLY A "CONTESTANT" CAN PLAY LEAD GUITAR OR DO THEY SAY A "GUITAR CONTESTANT"?
THEY JUST SAID "CONTESTANT"! WHY?


BECAUSE, I HAVE AN IDEA!

ROCK!?

ALL RIGHT! FOR OUR FINAL ACT TONIGHT, WE'RE REACHING WAY BACK INTO THE CLASSIC, HARD-ROCKIN' SEVENTIES!

HERE'S STEVEN BILLINGS AND BREE SUMMERS WITH THEIR SCORCHIN' RENDITION OF SMOKEY SHOES' "I CAN'T THINK OF NO ONE ELSE BUT YOU"!

CLAP!!

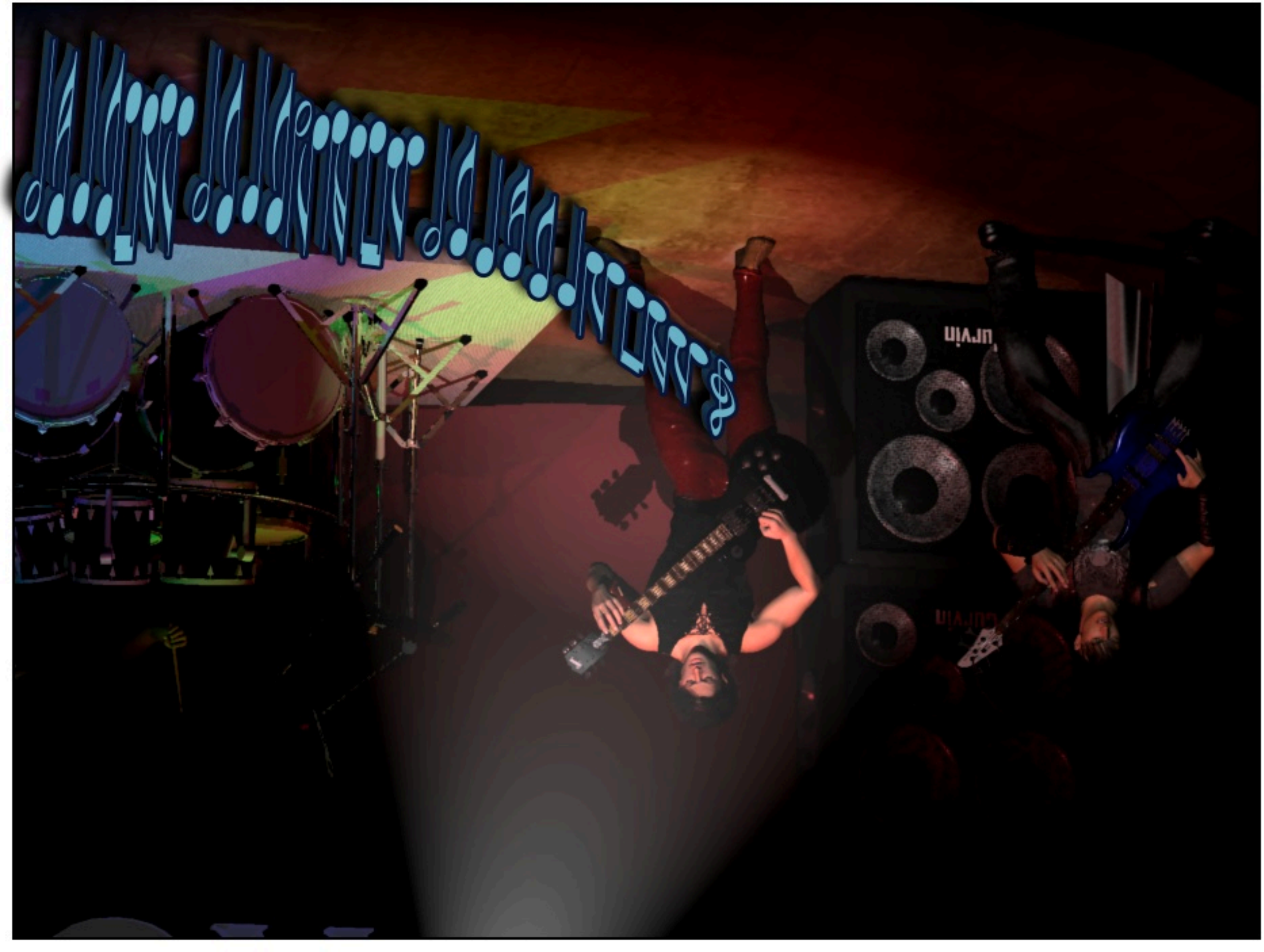
CLAP

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!

Main Menu Images








Curvin


Curvin
Curvin


Curvin



I'M NOT THINKIN', 'BOUT MY BREAD, I'M NOT THINKIN' 'BOUT, WHAT THEY SAID, I DON'T CARE 'BOUT, WHAT THEY'RE DUE...


I CAN'T THINK OF NO ONE ELSE BUT YOU!

I DON'T WORRY, 'BOUT MY JOB, DOESN'T MATTER, IF I'M ROBBED, FRIENDS ALL WORRIED, THEY AIN'T GOT A CLUE...

'CAUSE I CAN'T THINK OF NOTHIN' ELSE BUT YOU!

YOU CAUGHT MY EYE WITH THOSE JEANS THAT YOU WEAR SO TIGHT! YOU GOT ME LOST IN THOSE EYES, OH BABY, WHAT A SIGHT!

AND WHEN YOU HOLD ME CLOSE I LOSE ALL SELF-CONTROL...

'CAUSE I'M ALL YOURS, BABY... BODY AND SOUL.

At that very moment, just off-stage...

AH, MR. GENTRY! THERE YOU ARE!

SECURITY

CAN IT WAIT? MY GIRL IS OUT THERE SINGING HER HEART OUT!


WELL, YOU DID ASK ME TO TELL YOU IF WE CAME UP WITH ANY LEADS ON THAT EQUIPMENT TAMPERING LAST WEEK!
YOU FOUND SOMETHING?!

YEAH! SECURITY CAMERAS CAUGHT THE WHOLE THING, BUT THE TAPES GOT SWAPPED OUT BEFORE ANYONE KNEW WHAT THEY WERE LOOKING FOR!

WHEN CAN I SEE THE VIDEO?

SECURITY

RIGHT NOW! I FIGURED YOU MIGHT WANT TO SEE THEM, SO I DOWNLOADED THEM RIGHT HERE!

OH MY GOD!!

IT'S BRIAN!!

THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT! BUT WHY THE HELL WOULD HE MESS UP HIS OWN EQUIPMENT LIKE THAT?


OH... I HAVE A PRETTY GOOD IDEA!

I'M NOT THINKIN' 'BOUT, MY NEXT MEAL...


I'M NOT WORRIED 'BOUT MY NEXT DEAL...


I DON'T CARE IF THEY DON'T HAVE A CLUE...

'CAUSE I CAN'T THINK OF NO ONE ELSE BUT YOU!




WHOA!!! MEGA-HOT STUFF!!
YEAH!!!
ROCK 'N ROLL WITH ME, BREE!!
CLAP CLAP!!
CLAP CLAP!!
CLAP CLAP!!
CLAP CLAP!!


I COULDN'T HAVE CONCEIVED A BETTER PERFORMANCE TO FINISH THIS CONTEST OFF WITH! I AM TRULY ASTOUNDED BY YOU TWO!
NOT ONLY THE GUITAR WORK AND VOCALS, BUT THE CHEMISTRY BETWEEN YOU TWO UP THERE IS PERFECT!

EXACTLY! IF I DIDN'T KNOW ANY BETTER, I'D THINK YOU TWO HAD BEEN PERFORMING TOGETHER FOR YEARS!

AND BREE...! I THOUGHT YOU WERE ALL DONE SURPRISING US! AND NOW THIS!


BLOODY HELL, STEVEN! IF BREE HAD SUNG TO ME LIKE THAT, I'D BE A POOL O' GOO BY NOW!
YOU'RE EITHER MADE OF STRONGER STUFF THAN ME OR GAY AS A THREE-POUND NOTE!


SHE DOES LEAVE YOU KINDA BREATHLESS, DOESN'T SHE, NIGEL?


THE PHONE LINES ARE NOW OPEN FOR YOU TO CAST YOUR VOTE FOR YOUR FAVORITE GUITARIST AND VOCALIST IN TONIGHT'S SHOW!
WE'LL HAVE THE RESULTS IN EXACTLY THIRTY MINUTES!

IN THE MEANTIME, WATCH THESE HIGHLIGHTS AND OUTTAKES FROM THIS SEASON'S, ARE YOU READY TO ROCK!


SAY, BREE! CAN I HAVE A WORD WITH YOU? IN PRIVATE?
UMMM... WELL, I DON'T KNOW, SKIP! I WAS GOING TO MY DRESSING ROOM, AND...


IT'S VERY IMPORTANT! I'LL MEET YOU IN YOUR DRESSING ROOM IN FIVE MINUTES!


WELL... OKAY! IF YOU INSIST!

Are You Ready To



Chapter Seven

by CBlack

Five minutes later, Bree reluctantly meets with her visitor...

SO, WHAT DID YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT, SKIP?

I JUST WANTED TO REMIND YOU OF OUR "DISCUSSION" LAST WEEK!

HOW COULD I FORGET? YOU SAID YOU'D KEEP SOME "INFORMATION" ABOUT ME QUIET IF I SHOWED YOU MY "APPRECIATION"! I DID AND YOU HAVE! SO, WHAT'S LEFT TO TALK ABOUT?

WELL, THE SITUATION HAS CHANGED DRAMATICALLY!

LAST WEEK, THERE WAS ONLY A SMALL CHANCE YOU MIGHT SUCCEED, BUT AFTER YOUR PERFORMANCE TONIGHT, YOU'RE ON THE BRINK OF STARDOM!

WELL, I HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT! BUT WHAT ARE YOU GETTING AT?

CONSIDERING THE *MAGNITUDE* OF WHAT'S AT STAKE, I THINK I NEED A LOT *MORE* "APPRECIATION" TO KEEP THIS INFORMATION QUIET!

YOU KNOW, SKIP! LAST WEEK, I WAS SCARED AND CAUGHT OFF GUARD, BUT NOW THAT I'VE HAD A CHANCE TO THINK ABOUT IT, THERE REALLY ISN'T ANY "INFORMATION" ABOUT ME... IS THERE?


SO WHAT IF THERE ISN'T? AS EXECUTIVE PRODUCER OF THIS SHOW I CAN MAKE OR BREAK YOUR CAREER WITH JUST A WORD TO THE RIGHT PEOPLE!


UNLESS I GET A LOT MORE FROM YOU!


I... I GUESS I DON'T HAVE MUCH OF A CHOICE THEN, DO I?
NO! NO, YOU DON'T!


WELL... OKAY THEN!
NOW YOU'RE BEING A SMART GIRL!


DID YOU GET ALL THAT?!

EVERY WORD, BREE! CLEAR AS A BELL!

WHAT THE HELL?! WHAT'S GOING ON?!


YOU SET ME UP, YOU BITCH!


SHE ASKED ME IN HERE! SHE TRIED TO SEDUCE ME!


STUFF IT, SKIPPY! I'M STILL "MIKED"! WE HAVE EVERY WORD ON TAPE...


YOU SON OF A BITCH!!
SMACK!!

HE WON'T GET TOO FAR! I'VE ALREADY CONTACTED THE AUTHORITIES!

FEEL BETTER?

INFINITELY!


NOW, CAN I FINALLY HAVE A MOMENT ALONE TO FRESHEN UP?
OF COURSE, MY DEAR!

And finally, the big announcement... with a conspicuously absent MC...

WELCOME BACK, EVERYONE! YOUR VOTES AND OURS HAVE BEEN TALLIED AND WE'RE READY TO ANNOUNCE THE WINNERS!

OF THE HUNDREDS... NO, THOUSANDS OF CONTESTANTS, IT'S FINALLY COME DOWN TO JUST ONE GUITARIST AND JUST ONE VOCALIST!


FIRST OFF, THE WINNER OF THE LEAD GUITARIST COMPETITION...!


IT WAS CLOSE! A LITERAL TOSS-UP BETWEEN TWO OF THESE FABULOUS GUITARISTS! BUT IN THE END, THE WINNER, AND NEW GUITARIST FOR OUR GROUP IS...


STEVEN BILLINGS!


WOO-HOO!!
YEAH, STEVEN!!
CLAP CLAP!!
CLAP CLAP!!
CLAP!! CLAP CLAP


AND THE WINNING VOCALIST CONTEST WASN'T EVEN CLOSE!


YOUR FAVORITE... OUR FAVORITE... AND ESPECIALLY MY FAVORITE...


BREE SUMMERS!!
CLAP CLAP!!
CLAP CLAP!!
CLAP CLAP!!
CLAP CLAP!!


GO ON UP AND SHARE THE CENTER STAGE WITH YOUR NEW BANDMATE, LUV!


GO GET 'IM, BREE!!
WHOA!!!
CLAP CLAP!!
CLAP CLAP!!
CLAP CLAP!!


Oh my God!
I guess I got a little carried away! I'm so sorry, Steven!


I'M NOT!


YEE-HAW!!
ATTA BOY, STEVEN!!

ROCK!!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!

A few breathless minutes later...

SO, GIRLFRIEND... HOW DID IT FEEL?!

WHY, IT.. IT'S INCREDIBLE, OF COURSE! I ACTUALLY WON, AND...

THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEAN AND YOU DAMN WELL KNOW IT! I'M TALKING ABOUT YOU AND STEVEN OUT THERE!

THAT... WAS AN ACCIDENT! IT WASN'T SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN AND IT SHOULDN'T HAVE HAPPENED!


REALLY?! YOU MEAN THE KIND OF ACCIDENT WHERE YOU "ACCIDENTALLY" RUN OVER SOMEONE AND THEN "ACCIDENTALLY" BACK UP AND RUN OVER THEM AGAIN!?
THAT KIND OF "ACCIDENT"?
I DIDN'T MEAN TO KISS HIM! I WAS JUST GOING TO HUG HIM...


AND YOUR LIPS SLIPPED! YEAH, THAT HAPPENS TO ME ALL THE TIME!
LOOK! I JUST GOT CAUGHT UP IN THE HEAT OF THE MOMENT! WE BOTH DID!


AND YOU LIKED IT, DIDN'T YOU?
WELL... I...


LOOK! WHETHER I LIKED IT OR NOT DOESN'T MATTER! LIKE I SAID, IT WAS JUST AN IMPULSE THAT I SHOULDN'T HAVE ACTED ON!


THAT IS PURE, GRADE-A BULLSHIT! AND YOU KNOW IT!


LOOK! I JUST HAVEN'T FIGURED OUT HOW TO DEAL WITH ALL THE CHANGES IN MY BODY YET! AND HOW IT REACTS TO... TO...
STEVEN?!


THIS CAN'T HAPPEN! ON SO MANY LEVELS... IT JUST CAN'T HAPPEN! HE HAS TO UNDERSTAND THAT!


AND I HAVE TO CONVINCE HIM OF THAT! OR EVERYTHING I'VE WORKED FOR IS RUINED!


Clubhouse
Clubhouse
Clubhouse
Clubhouse
Clubhouse
Clubhouse
Clubhouse
Clubhouse
A few hours later, at the post-production party...

Considering the way Steven's been looking at you the whole way over here, I take it you haven't talked with him yet!

He's worked his whole life to get where we are tonight! I don't want to ruin that for him!


I'll tell him tomorrow... or the next day...
Uh-huh!


GET READY FOR THE CHEESECAKE POSES, HON! WE'RE HERE!

LOOK! THERE SHE IS!!

OVER HERE, BREE!!

EXQUISITE ARRIVAL, MY DEAR! YOUR STAR IS ON THE RISE... AND IT SHOWS!


ALL THANKS TO YOU, MALCOLM! I WOULDN'T BE HERE IF IT WEREN'T FOR YOU!!


THE SHOW'S NOT TOO SHABBY FROM BACK HERE EITHER!
WATCH IT, YOU!

BREE AND STEVEN... SINCE THIS PARTY IS FOR YOU TWO, I THINK IT ONLY APPROPRIATE YOU SHOULD ENTER TOGETHER!

I WOULDN'T HAVE IT ANY OTHER WAY!


MAY I?
WHY, THANK YOU, KIND SIR!


SO... ARE YOU READY FOR THIS?
I THINK SO!


LOOK OUT!
SMASH!!..
screeeech!!

SOMEONE... GET THE TAG NUMBER!

5AOJ230

VROOOOOOOOOOOM

OH MY GOD! BREE!!


ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, BREE?!
I... I THINK SO! JUST A LITTLE OUT OF BREATH!


OUCH!!
THAT DOES IT! I'M CALLING AN AMBULANCE!
WHAT IS IT?!


NO, NO! I'M FINE! REALLY! PROBABLY JUST BRUISED A RIB OR SOMETHING!
BUT A DOCTOR SHOULD CHECK YOU OUT... RIGHT NOW!


HOLD ON A SECOND, SON! I AGREE SHE SHOULD BE LOOKED AT, BUT TO AVOID A MEDIA CIRCUS, LET ME CONTACT HER PERSONAL PHYSICIAN, OKAY?


WELL... ALL RIGHT! BUT I'M NOT LEAVING YOUR SIDE TILL I KNOW YOU'RE OKAY!

OH... UH... YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THAT, STEVEN! REALLY! WE'LL SEE SHE GETS TAKEN CARE OF! YOU GO ON INTO THE PARTY!

WITHOUT BREE? FORGET ABOUT IT! I'M STICKING WITH HER... PERIOD!


BUT...!
IT'S OKAY, AMY! I... I WANT HIM TO COME WITH US!


ANOTHER LIMO IS ON THE WAY TO TAKE US TO THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE! HE'LL MEET US THERE!


WHAT THE HELL WERE YOU THINKING WHEN YOU PUSHED ME ASIDE LIKE THAT?
YOU COULD'VE BEEN KILLED! YOU KNOW THAT, DON'T YOU?!
HEY, JUST THINKING OF THE BAND AND PROTECTING MY PARTNER, THAT'S ALL!


HMMM... "PARTNER", HUH?
THAT'S ONE WORD FOR IT! FOR NOW, AT LEAST!


HOLD THAT THOUGHT, STEVEN! YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOU'RE GETTING YOURSELF INTO!


BUT, THEN AGAIN, NEITHER DO I!


Two months later in Bree's new apartment... just over a week before the band starts its concert tour...


WELL, IT WAS BOUND TO HAPPEN SOONER OR LATER!
WHAT?!

THAT LITTLE WEASEL, DEL, HAS CRAWLED OUT FROM WHATEVER ROCK HE'S BEEN HIDING UNDER AND STARTED A SLUR CAMPAIGN AGAINST BREE!

WHAT'S HE SAYING?

WELL, HE FINALLY GAVE UP ON THE "BRIAN WAS REALLY JUST BREE" SCENARIO SINCE IT SEEMS HE HAD TROUBLE PROVING THAT BRIAN WINTERS NEVER EXISTED!

Bad Girl

HMMM... GO FIGURE!


SO NOW HE'S SWITCHED IT AROUND AND CLAIMING THAT BREE SUMMERS WAS AND STILL IS BRIAN WINTERS!
Bad Girl

ANY HARD PROOF?

NOPE! JUST SPECULATION AND PHOTOS FROM THE TV SHOW! HE'S GRASPING AT STRAWS REALLY!


WELL, I WAS HOPING WE'D NEVER HAVE TO DO THIS...


BUT I THINK IT'S FINALLY TIME TO PUT AN END TO THIS ONCE AND FOR ALL!

I KNOW WE'D TALKED ABOUT THIS, BREE, BUT ARE YOU *SURE* YOU WANT TO GO THROUGH WITH IT?

NO! BUT IT'S TIME TO SHUT DEL UP FOR GOOD!

YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO, MEDIA MANAGER!

AYE, AYE, MON CAPTAINE!

Bad Girl

A few nights later, on the hottest entertainment talk show, hosted by Dan Forsythe...

Forsythe Tonight!

I PROMISED YOU ALL A *HOT* *SHOW* TONIGHT! WELL, IT DOESN'T GET MUCH *HOTTER* THAN THIS!


ON THIS STAGE, WE'LL HAVE THE HOT YOUNG STARS THAT WON "ARE YOU READY TO ROCK"! THEY'RE JUST A DAY AWAY FROM STARTING A CROSS-COUNTRY TOUR WITH THEIR NEW BAND, TABULA RASA.


AND, INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH, THIS IS THEIR FIRST PUBLIC APPEARANCE TOGETHER SINCE THE NIGHT THEY WON!


SO, GIVE IT UP FOR STEVEN BILLINGS AND BREE SUMMERS!


YEAH!!
CLAP CLAP!!
CLAP CLAP!!
WOO-HOO!!
CLAP CLAP!!


STEVEN, HOPE YOU DON'T FEEL PUT OUT WAY OVER THERE ON THE SOFA, BUT... AW, HELL! CAN YOU BLAME ME?


NOT AT ALL, DAN! IT'S PERFECTLY UNDERSTANDABLE!
EXCUSE ME, GENTLEMEN! ANY CHANCE I CAN GET IN ON THIS CONVERSATION?

OF COURSE, BREE! LET ME GET RIGHT TO IT! THERE ARE *RUMORS* OUT THERE ABOUT CERTAIN MEMBERS OF YOUR BAND...

AND WE HAVE YET TO HEAR ANY OFFICIAL WORD FROM *ANY* OF YOU REGARDING THEM!

"RUMORS"? "CERTAIN MEMBERS"? THIS IS THE FIRST I'VE HEARD OF ALL THIS, DAN!

OH, LIKE ANYONE'S GOING TO BUY THAT, STEVEN!

HEY, I TOOK A SHOT!

ASK AWAY, DAN! IT'S *TIME* TO CLEAR ALL THIS UP!

LET'S START WITH THE RUMORS THAT *YOU*, BREE SUMMERS, ARE REALLY A *MAN*! WHAT'S *THAT* ALL ABOUT?


WELL, WE BELIEVE THE RUMOR WAS STARTED BY ONE OF THE GUITAR CONTESTANTS FROM THE SHOW WHO HAD AN AXE TO GRIND!
NO PUN INTENDED!

OF COURSE IT WAS! HOW COULD I RESIST?

OH, YES! DEL SPRINGS... WHO WAS KICKED OFF FOR DRUG USE! HE REALLY TOOK THE LOW ROAD AFTER THAT, DIDN'T HE?

I'M AFRAID SO!

WELL, I'M NOT SO SURE THIS "RUMOR" IS JUST *INNUENDO!* WOULD YOU MIND INDULGING US ALL WITH ANOTHER LOOK, BREE... JUST TO MAKE SURE, THAT IS!


OH... I SUPPOSE SO!

WELL, YOU KNOW, NOW THAT I LOOK MORE CLOSELY, I CAN *DEFINITELY* SEE THOSE TELL-TALE *MASCULINE* FEATURES!

THAT PESKY FIVE O'CLOCK SHADOW ALWAYS GIVES ME AWAY!

OH YEAH! AND YOU DEFINITELY PLAYED FOOTBALL IN COLLEGE! THOSE ARE THE LEGS OF A DEFENSIVE TACKLE, RIGHT?

DEFENSIVE? PLEASE, DAN! I WAS ON THE OFFENSIVE LINE!


WELL, I'M CONVINCED, BUDDY! WANNA GRAB A FEW BREWSKIS AND HIT A STRIP JOINT AFTER THE SHOW, PAL?


SURE, DAN! I'VE GOT A WHOLE BUNCH OF ONES BURNING A HOLE IN MY PURSE!
YEAH... NO DRUG ABUSE IN THAT GUY'S SYSTEM! RIGHT, FOLKS?

NOW, I'M SURE YOU CAN GUESS WHAT MY NEXT QUESTION'S GOING TO BE ABOUT!

HONESTLY, DAN! I THOUGHT I'D PUT THAT STREAKING INCIDENT BEHIND ME! I WAS IN HIGH SCHOOL, FOR CRYING OUT LOUD!


NICE TRY, BREE! ALTHOUGH, I'D LOVE TO REVISIT THIS STREAKING INCIDENT SOME OTHER TIME!
BUT I'M SURE EVERYONE OUT THERE IS DYING TO HEAR WHAT YOU HAVE TO SAY ABOUT THOSE PICTURES THAT'VE GONE VIRAL ON THE INTERNET!
WERE THEY "PHOTOSHOPPED", OR ARE THEY REALLY YOU?

SIGH
OKAY, FINE!
YES, THEY'RE
REALLY ME!

WOW! YOU
HEARD IT HERE,
FOLKS! STRAIGHT
FROM THE
SOURCE!

NOW, WITH YOUR PERMISSION, OF COURSE, WE'D LIKE TO SHOW A FEW OF THOSE PHOTOS!

ARE YOU INSANE?! HERE?! ON TV?! YOU CAN'T!


SURE WE CAN! THIS IS CABLE! DON'T WORRY, WE'VE "SANITIZED" THEM ENOUGH TO MAKE OUR CENSORS HAPPY!


OH, WHAT THE HELL! IT'S NOT LIKE EVERYONE HASN'T SEEN THEM ALREADY!
GO AHEAD, DAN!

NOW, WHERE DID THESE COME FROM? WHO TOOK THEM? AND HOW'D THEY END UP ON THE INTERNET?


WELL, AFTER THE "ACCIDENT" THE LAST NIGHT OF THE SHOW, I DECIDED TO HAVE A LITTLE "WORK" DONE UP HERE, SINCE I WAS ALREADY IN THE HOSPITAL FOR THOSE CRACKED RIBS!
AND WE'LL GET TO THAT STORY IN A FEW MINUTES... I PROMISE!

ANYWAY... I HAVE A GOOD FRIEND WHO'S A WONDERFUL AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHER, SO WE WERE JUST TAKING SOME "AFTER" SHOTS AND WE GOT A LITTLE CARRIED AWAY!


AND I'M SURE THERE ARE COUNTLESS MEN AROUND THE WORLD WHO APPRECIATE THAT, BREE!
BUT HOW DID THEY END UP ON THE INTERNET?


ONE OF OUR ENTOURAGE FOUND THEM ON BREE'S LAPTOP AND UPLOADED THEM! IN HIS DEFENSE, HE SAID HE DID IT TO CONTRADICT ALL THAT CRAP THAT DEL WAS PUTTING OUT THERE!
IN HIS OWN WAY, HE WAS SHOWING HIS LOYALTY!


WELL, AS ANYONE WHO'S SEEN THE "UNCENSORED" PICS ON THE INTERNET CAN CLEARLY SEE, DEL'S CLAIMS ARE COMPLETELY UNFOUNDED!


WHOA!
AND YOU CAN REALLY TELL IN THAT ONE!
OH MY!

OKAY, ONE FINAL QUESTION BEFORE YOU GO...

SHOOT!


SKIP BANCROFT! YOU'VE NEVER SAID ONE WORD PUBLICLY ABOUT HIM SINCE THE SHOW!

WELL, YOU KNOW ABOUT THE SEXUAL HARASSMENT CHARGES STILL PENDING AGAINST HIM...

THANKS TO THE TAPE YOU SUBMITTED TO THE DA'S OFFICE!


BUT, TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, I REALLY HAVEN'T GIVEN HIM MUCH THOUGHT SINCE THAT NIGHT!


YEAH, SINCE HIS "HIT AND RUN" CONVICTION FROM THAT NIGHT, I HEAR HE'S MADE ALL KINDS OF NEW FRIENDS AT HIS NEW DIGS IN CHINO!

OUCH! WELL, THAT'S ALL THE TIME WE HAVE! THANKS AGAIN TO STEVEN BILLINGS AND BREE SUMMERS FOR STOPPING BY! GOOD LUCK ON THE TOUR!


THANKS DAN! IT WAS A HOOT!
YES, THANKS FOR EVERYTHING, DAN!


Later that night, back at Bree's apartment...


YES, MALCOLM! I THOUGHT IT WENT GREAT, TOO! OF COURSE I WAS TERRIFIED AT FIRST...

BUT WHO WOULDN'T BE, WEARING THAT LITTLE NOTHING MY WARDROBE MANAGER INSISTED I WEAR!

HEY, JUST MAKING SURE THERE WERE NO LINGERING DOUBTS OUT THERE REGARDING YOUR GENDER, HONEY!


I THINK THE PICTURES YOU "LEAKED" TOOK CARE OF THAT QUITE WELL, THANK YOU VERY MUCH!


YOU'RE WELCOME VERY MUCH!


WHAT? YES, MALCOLM... I WILL GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP BEFORE THE CONCERT TOMORROW!
I PROMISE! SEE YOU THEN!

WELL, I'LL BE HEADING OFF, TOO! BIG DAY TOMORROW, YOU KNOW!

OKAY! BYE, HONEY! AND THANKS!


IS AMY GONE ALREADY?
YEP, SHE JUST LEFT!


DAMN! I WANTED TO THANK HER AGAIN FOR ALL HER HELP LATELY!
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, HONEY! SHE KNOWS!

I KNOW YOU'RE PROBABLY GETTING TIRED OF ME ASKING THIS, BUT... ANY REGRETS?

NOT A ONE! I WAS NEVER REALLY SURE OF WHAT I WANTED UNTIL THAT NIGHT AT THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE WHEN YOU FOUND OUT THE TRUTH ABOUT ME...

...AND DIDN'T EVEN FLINCH!


I KNEW RIGHT THEN AND THERE WHO I WANTED TO BE FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE... AND WHO I WANTED TO SPEND IT WITH!


SO... CARE TO SPEND A LITTLE QUALITY TIME WITH THE NEW GIRL ON THE BLOCK?
HEY, DIDN'T I HEAR YOU PROMISE MALCOLM YOU'D GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP TONIGHT?


YES... AND I WILL! BUT I HAVE TO DO MY "EXERCISES" FIRST! DOCTOR'S ORDERS, YOU KNOW!


WANNA HELP?

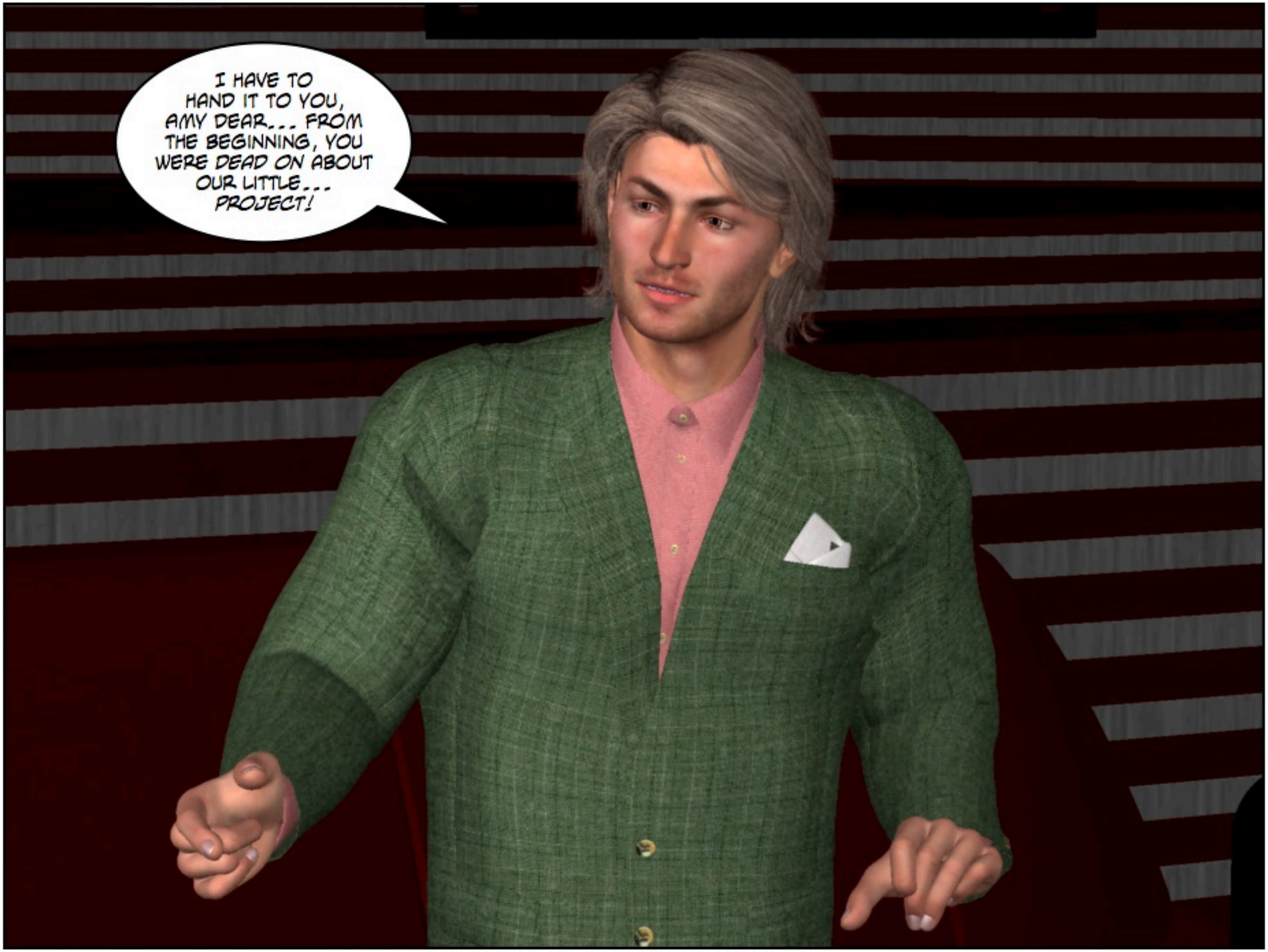

DON'T I ALWAYS, BABE?


OH, THE THINGS I'M FORCED TO DO FOR MODERN MEDICINE!

At right about the same time, at a familiar club...

I TOLD YOU THIS WOULD TURN OUT GREAT FOR THE BOTH OF US!

BUT TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, I *REALLY* DIDN'T THINK IT WOULD TURN OUT *THIS* WELL!

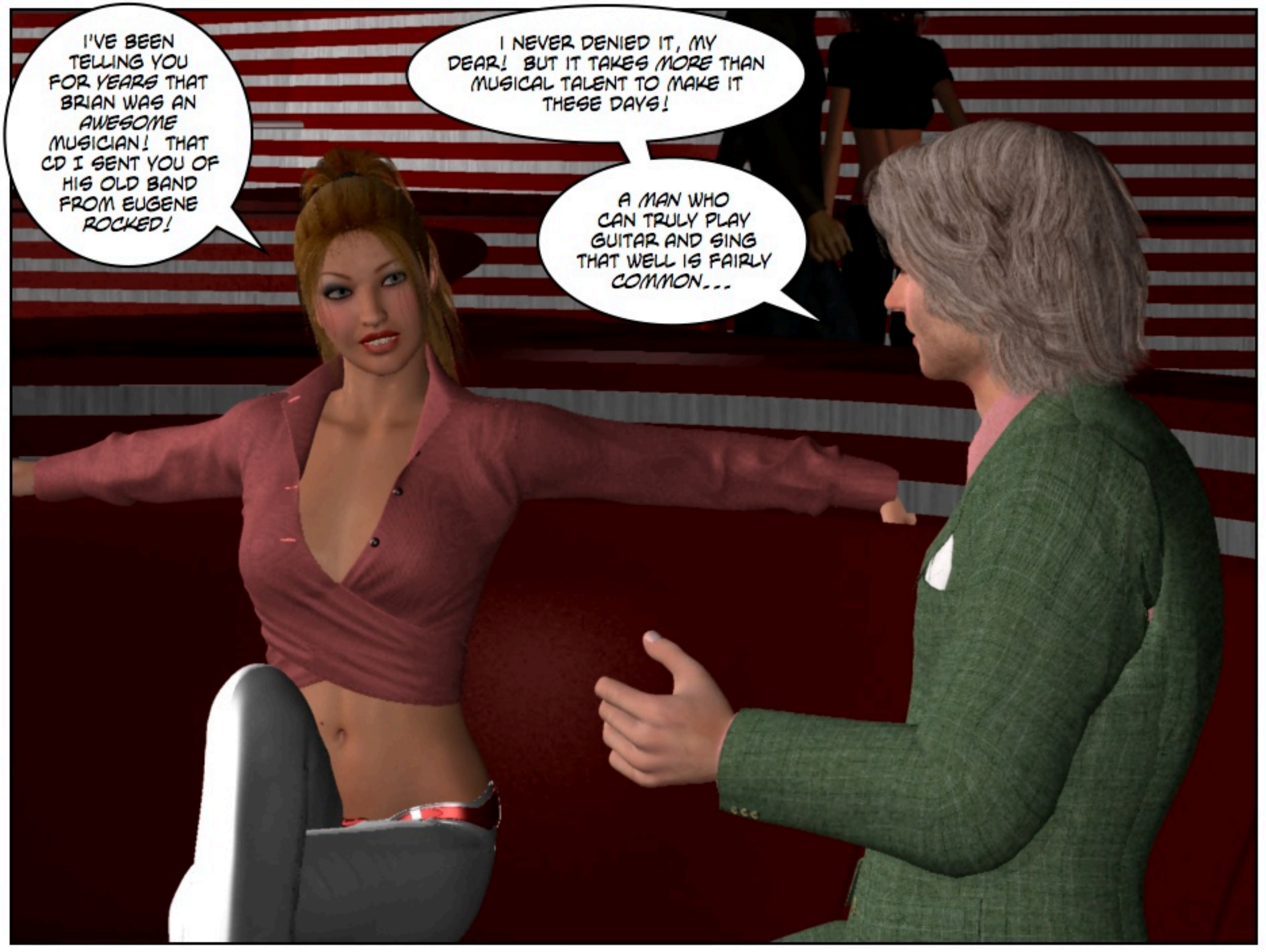

I HAVE TO HAND IT TO YOU, AMY DEAR... FROM THE BEGINNING, YOU WERE DEAD ON ABOUT OUR LITTLE... PROJECT!

HEY, I'VE KNOWN BRIAN FOR YEARS, AND I'VE ALWAYS HAD THIS "FEELING" ABOUT HIM!

BUT AS SOON AS I FOUND OUT ABOUT "BREE", I HAD TO SEE JUST HOW FAR SHE'D GO!

I KNOW I WAS A LITTLE *SKEPTICAL* WHEN YOU FIRST CONTACTED ME AND ASKED FOR MY HELP REGARDING BRIAN AND HIS *"UNIQUE"* SITUATION IN THE CONTEST...


BUT ONCE I FOUND OUT IT WAS BRIAN WHO SABOTAGED HIS OWN GUITAR, WELL, I KNEW BREE WAS HERE TO STAY!
AND THAT WE HAD A REAL SHOT AT MAKING HER INTO AN EXTREMELY LUCRATIVE ASSET IN THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY!


I'VE BEEN TELLING YOU FOR YEARS THAT BRIAN WAS AN AWESOME MUSICIAN! THAT CD I SENT YOU OF HIS OLD BAND FROM EUGENE ROCKED!
I NEVER DENIED IT, MY DEAR! BUT IT TAKES MORE THAN MUSICAL TALENT TO MAKE IT THESE DAYS!
A MAN WHO CAN TRULY PLAY GUITAR AND SING THAT WELL IS FAIRLY COMMON...


BUT A GIRL WHO LOOKS LIKE BREE, A GIRL WHO CAN DO BOTH THINGS AT SUCH A HIGH LEVEL...WELL, SHE'S ONE IN A MILLION!
I'M JUST GLAD YOU THOUGHT OF ME WHEN THE TIME CAME!


NOW, WHO ELSE WOULD I POSSIBLY COME TO...
UNCLE MAL!


tabula
rasa
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!! THE MOMENT YOU'VE ALL BEEN WAITING FOR...!

tabula rasa

TABULA RASA!!!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!

CLAP CLAP!!


I NEVER DREAMED I'D END UP LIKE THIS
I'M UNDER THE LIGHTS I JUST CAN'T RESIST... THEIR ALLURE... ALL THE GLAMOUR


IT USED TO BE AN EIGHT TO FIVE GRIND
WAITING TABLES ALL DAY, PERFORMING AT NIGHT...

JUST FOR TIPS...
NOTHING MORE...

Curvin


BUT NOW I'VE GOT TO HOLD ON TO WHAT I'VE GOT


I'VE BURNED TOO MANY BRIDGES TO EARN THIS SHOT

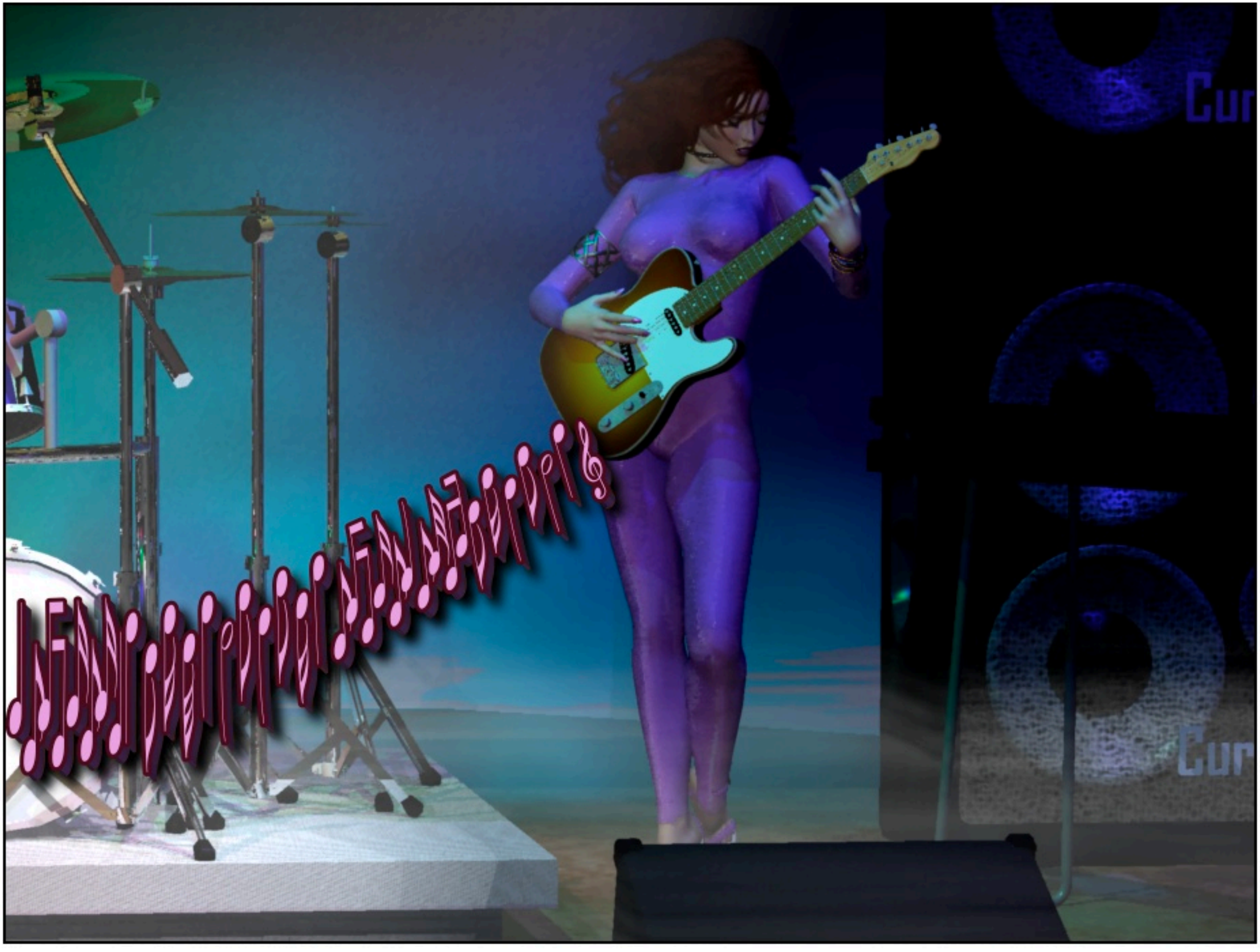
I'VE DONE WHAT I HAD TO AND THAT'S A LOT BUT NOW... I'VE GOT WHAT I WANT!

OHHH... I'M DANCING ON AIR. OHH... OH... LIFE WITHOUT A CARE..

MY LIFE BEFORE IT JUST CAN'T COMPARE... OHH... OH... LIFE WITHOUT A CARE!

LIFE WITHOUT A CARE...!












YEAH!
WOO-HOO!!
BREE ROCKS!!
CLAP CLAP!!
CLAP CLAP!!
TABULA RASA RULES!!
CLAP CLAP!!
CLAP CLAP!!
CLAP CLAP!!


Tabitha Rasa
The Scarlet Stanza