

# Becoming a Queen - Part 1

**For SpaceBanana**  
**By TheSpiralledEye**

*Ants begin producing a strange new pheromone which has unforeseen consequences for John and many other men across the country.*

John sighed in disappointment. Three days of checking all the sites hourly and still no sign of the Ryzen 9 5950X graphics card; he'd been saving what little money had for months to afford it and now the damn thing wasn't available anywhere! Feeling defeated he ran his hands across the tower of his current PC, The Ryzen 7 he had was good, but a few years outdated, for some this might not seem like a big deal but when you sat at the same desk all day every day having the best and latest pieces for his computer was key to his quality of life. He should have just taken the plunge and got it last month, it wasn't as if he had much else to spend his money on. His parents still covered bills and food, all he paid was the, admittedly fairly steep, internet bill since he was always online. A small ping at the bottom of his screen.

**Kevin:** *Any Luck?*

**John:** *Not yet.*

**Kevin:** *Have you tried PC Picker again?*

**John:** *Obviously.*

**Kevin:** *Dang, Well, you could always get the 5900? It's not that big a difference.*

**John:** *To the average joe maybe but to us? It's a whole Hz weaker.*

**Kevin:** *Well, just keep trying then I guess, you can always come over and use mine some time.*

John ached with jealousy; for two months now Kevin had been using the very graphics card he sought. He'd not seen it in action yet though, his best friend lived several blocks away and with no car to speak of, it was nearly a forty minute walk, something he was completely incapable of. His mother was always saying more exercise would do him good and deep down, John knew she was right. Even now as he looked at his PC tower, he could see the rotundness of his belly. But really, what was the point in losing weight? It wasn't as if he went anywhere and saw anybody besides Kevin in their occasional video chats. With his work

located at home on the very computer he was trying to upgrade, the further he ever had to travel was the front yard to get his mail. Even then, only when his mother didn't bring it down to the basement for him.

John sighed again, sinking lower into his office chair and listening to it squeak in protest, yet another reminder of his weight. A depressive cloud floated over his mind, a not uncommon occurrence as he took in his surroundings.

**John:** *Do you ever just look at yourself and go, is this it?*

**Kevin:** *...Damn dude, you high?*

John rolled his eyes. He loved Kevin, really he did but having a serious conversation with him was like pulling teeth sometimes. Were it up to him they would both live in the world of sunshine and rainbows all the time, ignoring the obvious issues in their lives. Most of the time John didn't mind it, it helped keep him distracted and out of blue moods like this one but right now it was just frustrating.

**John:** *You know what I mean.*

**Kevin:** *I guess, but honestly dude? We've sort of got it made in the shade, you especially. No rent, cushy job you can do in your sleep, great PC, what more could you need?*

"A girl might be nice." John said aloud to himself, "Or...a boy."

He didn't type that though;

**John:** *Yeah you're right. I was just being dramatic :)*

That little smiley face had never looked so artificial and fake.

**Kevin:** *That's the spirit! Now, How about a round of League? Or if you are feeling nostalgic we could bust out the DOTA? I'm in a MOBA mood.*

**John:** *No thanks, I really have to get these spreadsheets done for work, I told the big man I'd have them done today.*

**Kevin:** *Can't you just write a script to organise all that? It's just data entry.*

John smirked, the truth was he'd done that years ago when he first got the job. The truth was, most data entry and organisation positions were able to be fully automated these days with just a little bit of know-how when it came to spreadsheets and programming; but John

wasn't about to tell his boss that. He'd turned a full eight hour work day into one hour max, most of which was spent adding in a few mistakes here and there to make sure there was an element of human error, while still keeping himself in the top percentage for yearly bonuses.

**John:** *Yeah but this is an important one, end of financial year coming up and all. I'd better double check it all.*

**Kevin:** *Yeah ok, come join me when you're done then! Remember to drink and eat! No getting caught up in work!*

John blushed, a small warm heat swirling in his stomach.

**John:** *Thanks mate.*

He clicked the window closed and began idling browsing; regretting his decision to turn down a gaming session more and more each passing minute. At least then he'd have a distraction. He knew better though; whenever he was in a rubbish mood, Kevin made it worse, not because he was a base friend but because his presence was like rubbing salt in a wound. They had been two peas in a pod since they met in highschool, the only two plus sized kids in their year and the only two who cared about IT class. It was only natural that they became friends. The only major difference between then and now was that at the time, Kevin had been Kelly.

When he had finally come out as trans, John had been excited. Mostly because he wanted his friend to be happy in their body and live their truth. But he'd be lying if he said he didn't have a selfish reason for supporting him as well. If his friend was a man, surely those funny warm feelings like butterflies in his stomach would disappear. They did not. It had taken him a long time to accept that he was bi, or at the very least, Kevin was his exception. Then he had patiently waited for those unrequited feelings to fade. Only to have them grow stronger each year despite the knowledge that Kevin was and always had been, exclusively into girls.

Now, they say most people would do anything for love and when he thought about it, John realised there were many things he would do for Kevin. But getting a sex change just to have a shot with his best mate struck him as pretty crazy and so he had resigned himself to being lonely for the rest of his life. Or at least until he finally got over Kevin and then magically managed to find a partner; neither of those being likely to happen any time soon. Or at all.

Light flooded the basement, waking John with a start as the door slammed against the wall. He was still dazzled by the sudden onslaught of sunlight that he'd barely managed to sit up when something soft hit his chest.

"Enough of this moping, out you get."

"Mom? Wha-?"

His vision finally cleared and he found his mother standing over his bed, hands on her hips, lips in a thin line. Uh Oh. He knew that posture; that was his mothers 'you're doing exactly what I say or else' look. She hadn't used it on him since he was a teenager but to his great surprise, it was just as effective.

"I haven't seen you in three days!" She huffed, "Living in the same house! It's ridiculous John. Judging by the smell down here, you've been eating instant noodles all day every day for that time. You're getting up with me and having a proper breakfast, in the kitchen and having a shower."

John groaned; not another attempt to get him to be more active. His mother tried this every few months, spending an agonising few days trying to encourage him to go out into the sunshine or go out to town before giving up and leaving him be again. Though judging by the serious look on her face, she was more determined than ever this time.

"Mom, I was sleeping."

"It's past noon, for goodness sake. I expect you to be at the breakfast table in five minutes."

Ten minutes later when he had reluctantly showered his mother sat a bowl of what looked like rabbit feed in front of him with a satisfied smile. With an awkward smile he took a bite and grimaced.

"What even is this?"

"Granola." His mother beamed, "Just the thing to give you plenty of energy."

“You’re wasting your time, maria.” His father sighed from behind his morning paper, “The boy has made his choices very clear.”

John winced, he hated how his father still called him ‘boy’ like a child. He was in his thirties for crying out loud, it was demeaning. The man looked over his paper at his son and John shrunk back in his chair. How was it that fathers were always intimidating even when they were in their sixties?

“It’s never too late to make a change for the better, Tim.” His mother argued, “You’ll see John, you just need a little push and you’ll be my healthy little guy again.”

“You’re coddling him. What he needs is a swift kick to the gut. If he had to fend for himself a little more...”

John tucked into his granola and staunchly ignored the words passing back and forth. His parents only ever argued when it came to him, that somehow made it worse. Like he was the one blight on their relationship. It wasn’t his fault though, he’d given it his all when he was younger and got nothing in return, what was the point in trying when he knew the outcome already? He just hoped this little phase with his mother ended quickly and he could get back to his basement.

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The air was cool and fresh, the sun was warming the back of his neck and the sound of sparrows chirping in the nearby tree was the only sound breaking the otherwise tranquil silence. John hated it. He felt sweaty and gross and though he had a pair of thick gardening gloves on he swore he could feel the dirt beneath his fingernails. For the fourth time the trowel slipped and sprayed dirt up into the air and he swore.

“How long do we have to do this?”

“It’s only a few bulbs, John.” His mother sighed, “And we’ve only been out here five minutes.”

He’d never had a green thumb; how anybody, his mother included, could spend hours willingly digging in the dirt for the sake of some flowers he would never understand. He looked down the line of the garden bed, it seemed to stretch on for an eternity. Already his

hands were coated in sweat inside the gloves and he could feel his shirt sticking to his back. Two young women around his own age strolled past, a white poodle on a leash between them. He watched, cheeks burning with heat and shame as they looked him up and down, then to one another. They didn't laugh but John could see the judgement in their eyes.

*'Look at that fat, whale of a man.'* they said silently, *'who does he think he's fooling out here trying to look like he's healthy and exercising. How pathetic.'*

A moment later they were gone but even after they had turned the corner John swore he could still feel their eyes boring into him. Judging him. Hating him. The humiliation combined with the eat and manual labour had him red and blotchy all over. He'd never felt uglier. Or itchier. He'd been so distracted by the two women staring that he didn't even realise the itchiness at first. It started around his hands and feet mostly but now it felt as though it were crawling up his back.

"Mom, I think I'm allergic to your flowers." He complained, trying to pull the gloves off his sweaty hands to scratch at them.

"You're just sweating." She shook her head, "Push through, a little hard work never killed anybody."

"That is very much untrue!" He countered, the glove had adhered to his hand with sweat but finally, he managed to pull it off and shrieked.

His mother was right, he was not allergic to the plants at all. The itching was caused by ants! Dozens of them, having somehow slipped inside his glove. A chill went down his spine; he was suddenly hyper aware of the crawling, itching sensation all over his body, especially his back. With a shriek he was on his feet, swatting and brushing at his skin to try and get them off.

"Oh for goodness sake, John!" His mother huffed, "They're just everyday black ants! They don't even bite."

"Easy for you to say, they're not all over you!"

His mother pursed her lips and came over to help, swatting them off without a care in the world. Not even flinching as she squashed the disgusting bush against his skin. Now that he'd noticed them, John could see them everywhere he looked. Hundreds, perhaps thousands of ants all crawling through the garden, in some places there were so many it almost looked like the dirt itself was moving. He pulled a face in disgust; he may have been a bit of a slob but he'd never let pests roam his personal space.

"There are a lot of them, I will say that." His mother mused, "Odd, perhaps we should go to the store and get some spray."

The last thing he wanted to do right now was go out in public; stinking of sweat and dead ants. He hated the smell they made, that awful, sour stink that bugs always made when you squashed them. He could feel it soaking into his skin, disgusting.

“You can, I’m getting back in the damn shower.”

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Turns out his mother was a more patient woman than he had given her credit for. She was waiting for him when he got out of his second shower of the morning, arms crossed with the car keys in hand. John could count on one hand the times he’d been to a hardware store, while he could take apart a PC or phone and rebuild it no problem, when it came to things like gardening and household renovations he was as green as they came. Despite his father’s best efforts when he was younger; there was something about working class men like his father; who spent years toiling under sinks and climbing rooftops that made them grumpy in a unique way when it came to people who they deemed ‘lazy’. His father treated his inability to change a faucet as if it was some great shame upon his family, despite the fact that when the roles were reversed and John had to fix the modem, he got barely any recognition at all. How a gardener and a plumber had ended up with a child who excelled in neither was a constant source of confusion for his parents and irritation for John.

As they walked into the massive warehouse he was immediately hit with the smell; wood, paint and chemicals all mixed together and John felt his nose scrunch. How his mother complained about his bedroom smelling musty without this bothering her was beyond him.

“Good afternoon!” Smiled the greeter, addressing him without giving his elderly mother so much as a sideways glance, “What can we help you find today sir?”

“I am after some pest spray.” His mother said quite clearly, “Something organic, with decent coverage.”

John gave the greeter an awkward smile; being shown up by an old woman at a hardware store was...embarrassing. He knew it was sexist, to assume that all men were handy and all women not and so, he shouldn’t feel any shame that he was about as useful as a fifth horseshoe but still, he did. He could feel the judgement in the greeter’s eye as he pointed them to the correct aisle.

*‘What sort of man needs his mother to tell him how to maintain a house?’*

“Oh do stop slouching John, your posture is bad enough.” His mother hissed, walking quickly down the massive concrete aisle, her speed had him wheezing in seconds.

Today, John decided, was a write off. The second he could he was going back to his room and gaming till his eyes bled; he’d earned it. When they reached the spot the greeter had mentioned John groaned; the giant shelves were empty. Not only were all the large industrial size bottles and sprayers gone, but even the everyday fly sprays had been snatched up.

“That’s odd.” His mother mused, “We’ll have to go to another shop.”

“Really, mom? Can’t we just go home?”

“No, that number of ants means there’s a nest and I don’t want them crawling all over my kitchen counters in a few days.”

*‘You were fine with them crawling all over me though.’* He thought bitterly.

The next hardware store was the same; right down to the smell and lack of bug spray. Even the regular super markets they visited had nothing, though at least there he could stand and lean against the frozen fridges to try and cool off. John was aware he was likely creating a spectacle, his fat, sweaty ass waddling through each shop. He was sure everybody was staring, that the minute they walked out everybody who saw him was laughing at the red faced, butterball of a man breathing heavily from a light walk.

At their final supermarket they were met with yet another shelf of empty bug spray and this time even his mother swore under her breath.

“What on earth is going on? HAs the entire world decided to fumigate today?”

“Sort of.”

They both spun around, well, his mother spun, John turned slowly still trying to catch his breath. A woman in her forties with curly brown hair and deep black eyes gave them both a sympathetic smile.

“It’s the ants, right?”

“Yes! How did you know?” John’s mother gasped.

“It’s all over the news.” The woman shrugged, “Some strange imbalance in ant pheromones has them breeding like crazy and they all stink to high heaven of course. So everybody is trying to cull the numbers before it gets out of hand.”

“Oh great.” John groaned.

“Looks like we will just have to try tomorrow, John.” His mother sighed, “Or maybe you could order something off the internet?”

Oh my God why had he not suggested that hours ago?

“Yes! I can definitely do that,” He said almost too eagerly, “Let’s get home and I will do it right away.”

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**Kevin:** *That Sounds like hell.*

**John:** *You have no idea.*



John had never been so happy to sit down at his computer as he was that afternoon. Even getting ant spray online was proving difficult. A quick google search proved that the woman at the shops was right, ants really were becoming a national problem. Fortunately, they were not the biting or stinging kind but millions of tiny crawling insects all over the place were going to cause problems one way or another. Nobody was quite sure what had set it all off; most entomologists best guess was pollution, the amount of chemicals in the air and skies these days were confusing the insects delicate receptors and all of a sudden their pheromones have gone crazy. A breeding frenzy had started and not only were queens producing more young but more queens themselves, resulting in the nests popping up left and right.

**Kevin:** *If you get your hands on spray let me know? They have started appearing in my kitchen and it's a nightmare. No sugar in my coffee tomorrow that's for sure!*

John winced, at least the ants were just in his yard.

**John:** *That's harsh. Maybe you can uber coffee?*

**Kevin:** *I hope so!*

**Kevin:** *Fuck! They got into my biscuits as well!*

**John:** *Sorry man.*

**Kevin:** *Sorry, I don't think I can play tonight, if I can't spray them I will spend all night squashing the little buggers, I don't care. I won't be able to sleep till I know I wont wake up with them crawling on me!*

John just laughed.

**John:** *Good luck!*

Kevin had a point though; John shivered at the memory of those tiny little bugs crawling up his back. Hopefully his mother would not insist on him helping out in the garden again tomorrow, once was enough. He tried to game but every time he started to get lost in a level, his skin would start to itch. He swore he could feel tiny legs on his skin but each time he jumped or swatted at the feeling, he found only plain skin. Soon it was too much, he had to shower. He'd spent all day talking about ants and now they were infecting his mind as well.

He pushed away from his desk and walked into the little ensuite his father had built down in the basement for him years ago. The water heating was shoddy but it still beat going upstairs to wash. Part of him, the bitter part, was sure his father had made the hot water weak on purpose to try and motivate him to learn how to fix it.

He stripped off with a sigh and stepped under the lukewarm spray, letting the water wash away the itching sensation and gratified to see not little black specks of ant in the water pooling at his feet. John felt his brow furrow; his belly was still there round and fat as ever except...no, it wasn't as fat as ever, it was ever so slightly smaller. Had walking around today really made that much of a difference? He grabbed at the skin in wonder before turning off the water and opening his bathroom cupboard. It took some time to dig out his old scale from the very back, buried beneath abandoned towels and such with a thick layer of grime across it. He'd thrown it in there years ago and decided watching the weight tick up

was pointless. He winced, stepping on the scale for the first time in years, eyes scrunched closed for a moment before he dared to open them.

He'd...lost weight?

Not a lot, a pound or two but...he hadn't lost weight since he was a teenager! And he knew from experience that just walking a bit didn't get results like this! Maybe he had slowly been slimming down over time? For the first time since he could remember, John smiled as a burst of self confidence filled him. It dissipated soon after, looking at himself naked in the mirror and seeing nothing but flab. But hey, that was a small victory? If nothing else today gave him that tiny spark of happiness. Quickly he towelled off and sat back down, excitably tapping away at the keys.

**John:** *You won't believe it, I lost two pounds!*

**Kevin:** *What? Dude, that's awesome! How?*

John smiled, it was just like Kevin to be happy for him without feeling jealous. Even though he was a bigger guy as well and most in his situation would use the opportunity for a self deprecating comment, Kevin was just supportive.

**John:** *No idea, maybe I have something to thank the ants for lol*

**Kevin:** *Did you just type 'lol'? What are you 15?*

**John:** *I live by my own rules!*

**Kevin:** *Yeah you do! So proud of you. Congrats again!*

That warm fuzzy feeling in his stomach went haywire, like a bunch of butterflies racing. It felt...really nice to have Kevin say that, he sort of wished he'd voice called so he could have heard the cadence of his voice. Then again, just thinking about that sent a shiver down his spine and an all together different sort of heat to pool in his groin. He bit his friend goodnight and settled into bed, falling asleep with a soft smile on his face for the first time in years.