

MY UNEXPECTED LIFE by Jennifer Gasner EXCERPT

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

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Despite my fixation, I knew nothing about the history of Dave Matthews Band.

Dave walked out wearing a long-sleeved, striped shirt. A shorter, kind of shaggy man followed. They picked up the acoustic guitars from their stands and started strumming as a cue to the crowd to return to their seats. Blank stares and heavy concentration seemed to overtake the audience.

My stomach grew more and more tense as the applause surged between each tune. I was surprised to see the onlookers sit with respectful silence while the two men executed their setlist. Their skill and adeptness with their guitars impressed me.

For the third song of the encore, Dave and Tim played a song that spoke to me from the first chord even though I had never heard it. The lyrics were muffled, but I discerned they asked about someone feeling healthy and finding love. A ripple of compassion seemed to be emanating from the stage.

After the encore, the screams and adoration began.

“Thank you all very, very much. I’ll see you again,” Dave said.

I took a slow, deep breath to help calm the uptight feeling inside me.

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After the show, Paul and I went to the front of the auditorium and joined a small collection of fifteen or so people with backstage passes. Adrenaline rushed through me. I did my best to check my excitement.

“Okay guys, come this way,” a black-clad man said.

The group walked into a small room with oak walls. A few stacks of banquet chairs were in the corner, and a couch sat in the center.

Kevin had made his exit before the encore, leaving Paul and me to finesse our way to talk to Dave. I hoped the slur in my voice wouldn’t come out more when I met him. My knuckles ached from my grip on Ner’s handles.

A scruffy, dishwasher-blond gentleman approached me and said, “You must be Jen. Kevin has been talking about you all day.” Those words made me feel warm on the inside. The man explained that he was Dave’s tour manager, Michael.

Smiling, I responded, “Well, he’s very kind. I guess this means I owe him some money.”

In an instant, a hand appeared in my line of sight, reaching out for an introduction. “Hi. I’m David. You have to be Jen. We’ve heard a lot about you.”

I scanned up to find the face the hand led to. I saw a charcoal gray shirt, a black necklace with a pendant, and a warm smile I felt unworthy of. It was Dave Matthews. His eyes sparkled under his damp hair. My heart was ready to burst out of my chest and fall to the floor. I was delighted that I would not have to explain myself, yet I had to tell myself to speak.

“Uh, hi,” I replied as I melted on the inside. “Correction...I owe Kevin a lot of money.”

I sensed others’ eyes on me, as if they wondered who the hell I was.

Paul snuck in and offered a handshake to Dave as he declared, “That was a great show.”

After some small talk I lowered my eyes and asked for a new entry in my pristine autograph book. Dave obliged. To my delight, he scrawled for a bit.

“Thank you,” I said and took the book. I didn’t want to look until Paul and I had left.

“Can we get a picture?” I asked.

Paul and I made a Dave Matthews sandwich and showed off our teeth for the camera. Like most young fan girls, I thought, *Oh my God. I am going to die.*