

“God is working on it.
He’ll let us know when
He’s done...”

Rebecca Flores

backspace



*A Musical
Adventure*

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amazon.com

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“Play it, April... like it’s the last song
you are ever gonna play...”

Lucas Talcott

“What... in God’s name, do we do
now?”

Abigail Foster

“Like the kid once said...
‘dumbass’...”

April Robinson

“Did we really do all that?”

Jeremiah Tarahonso

“I’m still trying to figure out how I
got stuck with the girls...”

Chase Gray

PROLOGUE

①

“Good morning!” rings out through the church.

“It most certainly is, Pastor!” the lone occupant replies.

“And how do you know I’m the Pastor?”

“Would have to be all the faith oozing out of you, of course!” the older guy replies, standing and holding out his hand to the young man, as he stops next to the pew he is in.

“Well, as you are here in the church before most people are awake, I’m thinking you are a fairly faith-bound person yourself, Mr.?”

“Maxwell. But everyone calls me CJ.”

“Well now, CJ, I’m pretty sure you aren’t a member of my congregation – well... yet, anyhow.”

“No sir, just passing through. I tend to stop whenever possible, and go over life’s itinerary with Him,” he pauses, and points upward, “every so often, so he knows I’m still listening.”

“Interesting...” the young man replies, holding out his hand to indicate CJ should sit. “If I can be nosey, how in the world did you end up in Wauneta, Nebraska?”

“Truth be told, I’m looking for something and I’m fairly certain the best place to find it will be in rural America.”

“Might I ask what it is you are in search of?”

The very moment the pastor poses the question, the church is filled with the astonishingly beautiful sound of a piano.

With a huge grin on his face, CJ waves his arms, and calmly replies, “That...”



②

I’d been talking to James – the Pastor – for about thirty minutes when God decided to end my search. Interestingly enough, He decided to do it in one of His houses.

In the middle of a sentence, the church was filled with someone playing the piano. No sooner than I smiled at the Pastor, the most phenomenal voice I’d ever heard – *period* – made my heart stop. The look on my face immediately gave me away.

“HA! She got you too!” James blurted out, following it with a laugh.

“Yes,” I replied, “Yes she did.”

“That would be Miss Flores. She’s also the one playing the piano.”

“What are the chances I can meet her?” I asked, hoping for a positive response.

“Well, just don’t make a big deal out of her abilities. It’s a weird sort of touchy thing with the kid. That’s why she practices so early in the morning.”

“Let’s see if we can rectify that little issue, shall we?” I asked, standing as I did.

Looking a bit confused, he stood and led me to the back of the church, around a corner, and into a large room that was probably a meeting room at one time. I found it full of musical instruments, and one bubbly kid, gently stroking

the keys of a large Steinway Grand Piano and singing her heart out. The moment she saw us, she stopped.

“Pastor James?” she blurted out, appearing nervous.

Before he could answer, I did.

“While your playing is amazing in itself, young lady, I have to believe that *He*,” I paused, took a seat on the bench next to her, and pointed straight up with my index finger, “has His hands in that amazing voice.”

The child’s response was so strange, that even the pastor seemed shocked by it. All her nervousness seemed to drain out of her in a single heartbeat, and she smiled.

“Yeah, you’re probably right, Mr.?”

“Maxwell. CJ Maxwell, at your service, Miss Flores.” I held out my hand, she took it and gave it a gentle shake.

“Don’t forget that you need to leave for school in twenty minutes, Rebecca,” James offered. Seconds later he turned and disappeared out the door.

“Wow! I guess my heart was right,” the kid offered, as she turned and made eye contact with me.

“About?”

“Must be a reason Pastor James felt comfortable with leaving me alone with you.”

“Probably the same reason I made myself turn around a mile down the road, and come back here this morning,” I replied, grinning.

We stared at each other for a few seconds, and when we smiled at the same time, we each pointed up with our index fingers...



③

It took me close to a year to find her, and another seven months of gentle persuasion to convince her, that I wasn't crazy. The first time I heard her sing one of the songs, I knew I had my vocalist.

Now, all I had to do, was build a band...



④

My name is Maxwell. CJ Maxwell. I could tell you my full name, but everyone who knows me uses my initials – CJ. If you follow the story, you'll eventually find out what the C and J are for.

Now, about the story. It's about an idea I had a few years back, and what came of it.

With a little effort, I found a means to act on this idea, which eventually ran totally rampant, and inevitably, got entirely out of control which, in this case, isn't a bad thing.

Ultimately, my idea became *backspace*. They're a band. If you've ever watched music videos on YouTube, you've probably seen them – more so, during their brief 'famous' period.

They were essentially, a cover band – something a lot of people seemed to find puzzling. I suppose that if they were to put their minds to it, they could have easily created some original material, but that's not a direction any of them were interested in traveling. For each of the six of them, music was – and still is – simply a passion. None of them wanted to make it a 'career'.

The really interesting thing about *backspace* – none of the members ever made a dime off what they did. The truth of the matter is, they gave a lot of money and ‘stuff’ away to *the kids*. Their audiences made out via donations to their school’s music programs.

However, I’m going to let them explain it to you – one at a time.

The five musicians who eventually become *backspace* will be doing the narrating for the most part. The person this story is actually about – Rebecca Flores – will turn up eventually.

Rebecca is, bluntly put, a miracle. Everyone involved in this escapade feels fortunate on a scale we can’t explain, to have had her pass through our lives. The four years we were exposed to her were a life lesson – one that none of us will ever get to repeat.

So, all that being said, in the words of the bass player, which are borrowed from one of the more popular songs *backspace* covered, let’s *ROCK THE MIC!!*





Saturday, April 25th

Ft. Collins, Colorado

Joe's Café

April Robinson

People are constantly telling me that they can ‘notice’ someone, for no particular reason. Maybe it’s a face in a crowd, or someone’s eyes, or perhaps, just how they were walking. That’s not me. I’m not sure if I’m weird, or just too focused, but unless there is some kind of definitive encounter between us, the chances I will ‘notice’ you, are slim to none. I’ll apologize now if that makes me sound shallow or even superficial. Thing is, I’m at a point in my life, where ‘purpose’ is all I seem to see. I’m going to be a doctor, and for now, it is the all-consuming thing in my life.

The reason I just explained all that, is because, for the first time in my life, I am about to ‘notice’ someone.

And it pretty much weirds me out.

My name is April, and I live in Ft. Collins, Colorado. I’m a senior at CSU – Colorado State University – and in about a month, I’ll graduate and move on to medical school. At least, that’s the plan.

My epiphany occurs in the most unlikely of places – a small café near the campus. My one single non-education related passion is music. Over the years, I’ve become what a lot of people would call very proficient at playing guitar – simply because I wanted to. It’s also my means of release.

Whenever life stresses me out, I find a quiet place and I play. Other than hearing my grandfather's voice, it's the one thing that can calm me in a matter of seconds.

So, my epiphany. It's Saturday afternoon, and a friend talks me into playing acoustic backup for her, while she sings at the weekly open mic night. They let us set up and practice a bit in the afternoon, and the performances start at 6:00 p.m. I'm strumming away, working on one of the songs Megan is going to sing when, for the first time, I 'notice' someone. He's sitting at a table alone, typing away on a small laptop. I never do catch him looking at me, but I somehow sense that his presence has something to do with me.

Weird, right?

When we are finished rehearsing, I look around and find that he's gone.

Five hours later, he again gets my attention.

Megan always tries to open the show, to keep from having to follow some of the truly talented people that perform here. Halfway through our two-song set, I see him – table six, in the center of the room. His eyes are closed, and he seems to be rocking – or maybe the term should be 'folking'? – out to our song. I glance at him on and off between songs, and he is once again typing away on his laptop. At one point, we make brief eye contact, and I'm certain he actually smiles at me!

Once the lights go out, we get a pretty energetic round of applause (Megan is a regular here) and I start putting my guitar away. Megan hugs me and then disappears into the crowd of performers waiting their turn. I make my way off stage, and then hesitate, as I glance around the room, looking for *him*. He's not at his table, and the laptop is gone as well. I find myself disappointed by his absence. I'm also smart enough to realize that this whole incident will probably drive me nuts for the rest of the night.

“Hey, April!” comes from behind me. I turn and find Pamela – one of the waitresses – walking toward me. She stops, hands me the glass on her tray, and then laughs. “I never knew you were into ‘older guys’.”

“Huh?” I ask, taking the glass and giving her a ‘look’.

“He,” she pauses, turns towards the bar, and points, “bought you the drink. I asked him if there was a message to go with it, and he just cracked up.”

My eyes follow her finger and find my mystery man, sitting on the last stool, at the end of the bar. I feel myself smile, as he blatantly winks at me. I lift the glass to my lips and am not even slightly surprised – Seagrams and Seven Up. Go figure.

“Thanks, Pammy! I suppose I should introduce myself, huh?”

“You don’t know him?”

“Not yet.”

I take another sip of the drink, turn, and head for the bar.

“Good evening, Miss Robinson.”

“*Miss Robinson*? Everyone thinks I’m dating you, so if you keep calling me Miss, you’re gonna kinda blow that myth,” I reply taking the stool next to him. When all he does is stare at me, I laugh and take another sip of my drink. “Well, strange look. Was it your intention to ask me out?”

“Only in my dreams, young lady,” he replies, giving me a *seriously* devious smirk.

“Well, not only do you know who I am, but what I drink as well. Care to reciprocate?”

“CJ Maxwell, at your service. *And...*” he lifts his glass and rattles the ice, “Seagrams ginger ale, on the rocks.”

I crack up laughing – I simply can't help myself. About this time, the next act starts their set, and as it gets louder, I lean in close to my new friend. He meets me halfway.

"Wanna get a table outside, where we can hear?"

He smiles at me, finishes what's in his glass, and then holds out his hand.

"After you!"

He follows me out, and down the front of the building to the last sidewalk table – at the end opposite the stage. He even pulls out my chair, which makes me smile.

"So, what's going on?" I ask as he takes a seat across from me.

"I need a guitarist."

"*Huh?*"

"I need a guitarist. The thing is, I need a really good guitarist."

"And you're talking to me because?"

"Really?" he shoots back at me, laughing as he does.

After a second, I join him, and I too, start laughing.

"You've been playing that thing," he pauses and points at my case, on the ground at my feet, "since you were ten. However," He pauses and gives me the most sincere smile I think I've ever seen in my life, "unlike a lot of musicians, *it's not your life*. It's simply become *the passion* that helps you deal with your life."

"*How in God's name do you know that?*" I blurt out.

"I know all about you, April. But relax, it's just a lot of public knowledge – honest."

I suck down what's left in my glass, put the glass on the table, and then look him in the eyes. When he smiles at me again, I simply relax. I don't even know why.

“Am I going to need another one of those?” I point at the empty glass and laugh.

“Only if you want one. All you need do is say the word, young lady, and I’m out of here. It’s not my intention to freak you out or pressure you – I swear.”

“Why do you need a guitarist?”

“For a band, you doofus. What else?”

Again, he makes me crack up. There is just something so totally... well... ‘comfortable’ about the guy.

“When?”

“As soon as you are available. Your education comes first.”

“Finals are in two weeks, and then there’s the inevitable fallout afterward.”

This time he laughs.

“Where is all this going to happen?” I ask.

“Right here.”

“Really?”

“Yep.”

“Do I know any of your other ‘recruits’?”

“Nope. But then, there are still some unresolved issues in that area. You were on my ‘not sure how she’ll react’ list, so I kinda started with you.”

Although I already know the answer, I force myself not to seem over-anxious, and I bite my lip.

“Can I think about it?”

“Absolutely! *Think about it* isn’t *no*, so I can work with that.”

“What else can you tell me?”

“Nothing. Everyone finds out the specifics at the same time.”

“This is going to prove interesting,” I blurt out, without thinking.

He falls out laughing so hard, that the people at the other tables start looking at us.

“And the ‘think about it’ part?” he asks, as he winks at me.

“Just hush, damn it. You knew you had me ten minutes ago....”

And so begins the most amazing adventure I will ever have in this lifetime.





Friday, May 1st
Ft. Collins, Colorado
Praeludium Music
Lucas Talcott

I saw the guy waiting on me, even before Sarah told me about him. Older guy, with short gray hair, clean shaven, and typing away on a small laptop, since he arrived. The only time he stopped was when I was showing Kimberly a technique on the piano. He lifted his head, closed his eyes, and didn't move until I stopped playing. I noticed because the piano faces the door, which has a big window in it.

"Okay, Kim, see you next Friday, right?"

"Yes, Mr. Talcott."

"And make sure you do the exercises. I'll be able to tell. Besides, your mom will rat you out if you don't."

I open the door, and as she goes out, she's laughing. I cross the waiting room and drop into the chair next to the guy waiting on me. He continues typing for another twenty seconds, then stops and offers me his hand.

"CJ."

"Lucas."

"I appreciate your taking the time to talk to me, Lucas. I can see how busy you are."

"Ehh, not that big of a deal. Most of them are fulfilling high school credits. Any chance to get out of school, even if it is a music lesson." I offer, laughing.

“Well, I’m not buying that one. Twenty-four, business owner, supports all the public schools in the area, as well as CSU, amazing business reputation with the community, and still finds time to personally teach kids to play. Sorry dude, that *definitely* constitutes ‘busy’.”

His demeanor, as well as the conviction and strength in his voice, make me pause and pay attention. I sit up and face him.

“How much trouble am I in?” I ask.

“Trouble?”

“Well, if you know that much about me, you’ve done a bit of research. Question is, for what?”

He laughs – rather loudly.

“Pretty astute. And truth is, I need a keyboard player.”

“Seriously?”

“Yep.”

I find myself suddenly intrigued.

“For?”

“A band. Thing is, I need a really good one.”

“I see. Well... I’m not sure...”

That’s as far as I get. He smiles, closes the laptop, and stands up. Then he holds out his hand to me.

“Well then, I’m sorry to have interrupted your day. Thanks for at least listening to me.”

Stunned to silence, I hesitate taking his hand and feel my face wrinkle into a frown.

“That’s it?”

“Mr. Talcott...”

“Lucas... please. I have tons of school kids doing the whole ‘Mr.’ thing on a daily basis.”

“Lucas, I’m the most low-pressure person you will ever encounter. Unlike your busy and full life, nothing in mine

is even close to ‘mission-critical’. You give the impression that you aren’t interested, and with everything else on your daily ‘plate’, I’m more than prepared to accept that. It’s just a goofy idea, conjured up by a silly old fart, with too much time on his hands.”

I stand and look him in the eyes. Something in the deep vastness of them tells me I need to listen to whatever he has to say – God only knows why. I glance at the clock on the wall, then smile and turn back to face him.

“Next lesson is in forty-seven minutes. You’ve got that long to share this idea.”

“Nicely played, sir. And a very good start.”

“Meaning?”

“You said ‘share the idea’, instead of ‘convince me’. We both know that only you can convince Lucas of anything.”

“Yeah, CJ, I think we are going to get along.”

I hold out my hand and follow him to the front of the store, stopping at the counter.

“Sarah, Mr....” I turn and look at him.

“Maxwell,” he quickly offers.

“...and I, are going to get some coffee and have a chat about a band. I’ll be back before Ross gets here.”

“A band? Which band?”

All I do is smile, which generates the exact response I anticipated.

“*omg*,” she mumbles as she turns to face Mr. Maxwell. “You absolutely have the right guy, Mr. Maxwell!”

“We’ll know that, one way or the other, in about forty minutes, Sarah. And it’s CJ. Everyone calls me CJ.”

“Follow me,” I say, as I turn toward the door. “The best cup of plain old coffee in Ft. Collins is just three doors down.”

Riley Mitchell

backspace

“You’re speaking my language, dude,” CJ replies.
I have no idea how drastically life is about to change.

