

Adam Dellavecchia

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## **Les and I**

Here I am. Immersed in a moment I've been waiting for since the first time I heard 'My Name is Mud' back in my sophomore year of highschool. The reason I picked up the bass lies right before my eyes. I'm sweating and tapping my feet uncontrollably and twiddling my thumbs and grabbing at my black t-shirt and twisting my long dark hair nervously. I can't stop grinning. The cold air of the empty theater inflates tiny goosebumps all over my skin. But are the goosebumps from the cool air or from the fact that I am about to meet my musical and creative idol, Les Claypool. God I just love everything that this man creates. From Primus, to Oysterhead, to the South Park theme song, everything that comes out of this man's brain speaks to me in ways that any other human being is incapable of doing. I mean the way that he slaps and taps and plucks that Carl Thompson bass of his is unlike anything I've ever heard before. He annihilates that fucking instrument. As a young creative who has decided to try to make a career out of art, I admire the living shit out of Les. He's weird and quirky and undoubtedly does not have his head screwed on quite the same way everybody else does. But he's an artist. And he wouldn't be the most talented bass player of all time and the most unconventional musician of the past half century if he was any other way. He's weird and he's perfect. I can seriously say that I love him. Not in the same way I love my family of course. But frankly, I would not be who I am today if it wasn't for Les Claypool.

And here he is, right before my eyes. Oh yeah, and I have his face tattooed on my arm.  
I cannot wait for this picture.

*Oh man. I really hate these things. No matter how hard I try, no matter how hard I try to be responsive and crack a few laughs and let everybody know what my favorite album or musician or biggest inspiration is, I can't help but think to myself that I'd rather be alone. I mean that one guy was a fucking asshole, and this kid with the long dark hair and the black t-shirt is eyeing me like a hungry tiger stalking its prey. He's giving me the creeps man, sheesh. The line is moving pretty fast so hopefully this will be over in about 5 minutes. I never understood what's so cool about taking pictures. I mean what is it really, we both smile and look at a smartphone camera and then say an awkward goodbye. I just wanna get on to the show man. This whole meet and greet thing is not my cup of tea. But tonight it feels like I asked for tea and was served the darkest and most bitter coffee in the world. If tonight was coffee, that kid in the black shirt with the stupid grin is about to be the grounds stuck in between my teeth. I can just feel it. He'll probably ask me some question he thinks is going to save his life or make him a millionaire. I mean shit, I didn't ask for all this to happen. All I've ever been is myself. Fishing, writing, boating, working, being a family man. What's the difference between me and half the people here anyways? Picture time with the big guy with the Pink Floyd shirt. Cheese.*

Jeez I really should do something nice for my Mom. I mean, shit, she bought me back stage passes to see the Claypool Lennon delirium and now I am about to meet fucking Les Claypool. There's gotta be about 35 of us here but the line is moving fast. Man Les looks like he's worn out. That asshole from the Q and A session probably pissed him off. I mean all that interrupting and asking to trade guitar picks? Pretty weird if you ask me. Hey that guy's got a cool Pink Floyd shirt. God damn his little thumbs up is gonna have nothing on my picture. I bet out of all the pictures that Les has taken with fans on this tour, none of them will be more memorable than his with me. He's gonna remember me forever. His biggest fan. Oh my god the line is moving so fast. One, two, three. Three more meet and greets and then it's my turn. Oh wow. This is really happening. I can feel my excitement bursting out of my skin like a water balloon that's been run over by a bus. I can't wait till he sees my tattoo. Holy shit I'm next. What do I say, what do I do. Here's my fucking idol and inspiration for everything art and music right before me. I had all these questions and funny jokes to say planned out in my head and now all of a sudden I can't think of anything. God why does this always happen. Oh shit I have a tattoo of his face on my arm. Fuck, here I go.

*Fuck, here he comes. Man this kid has been eyeballing me since he was in the back of the line and now his eyeballs are popping out of his head. I can already tell this is gonna be bad. I can feel myself running out of nice things to say. I mean how many times can you really act surprised when someone tells you they own all your albums or they've seen you 20 times. I mean, my own kids won't even say hi to me in the morning.*

*Sometimes I wish these people would just see me as their Dad. Unimportant and boring. Because let's face it, I am. What the hell is this kid doing?*

I have no idea what to say. But I lift the sleeve up from my shirt and flex my arm at him and let my smile that is ripping my face to shreds do the rest of the talking. Here I am Les, your biggest fan, in the flesh. My legs start running towards him against my will as I hold my sleeve up and look up at him in astonishment. Wow, there he is.

“Hi, Les.”

“Woah, uhhh hey.”

Why isn't he smiling? Why isn't he cracking a joke or saying my tattoo is ugly or something like I've seen in all the Youtube video interviews? Les, I mean isn't it obvious I love you? Your face is on my fucking arm. Why aren't you being more responsive? This isn't how this was supposed to go. You were supposed to laugh and tell your wife to come look and ask for a picture on your phone.

*I knew it. Oh man I really hate these meet and greets. You never know what kind of crazy fan you're gonna meet. But this, this is a bit much, even for me. I mean doesn't this kid realize he isn't gonna be listening to my music in a year? That's all music taste really is anyways, a rotating cycle of phases. It's a good tattoo, don't get me wrong. But something about that rubs me the wrong way. Like, it's personal man. That's my body*

*on your body and you didn't even ask. You don't even know me kid. Why not get your Mom's face on your arm, kid? That's my face on your fucking arm. Jesus christ kid. What did he just say? I'm just gonna bounce this one off Sean, I can't talk to this kid.*

*"I'm like, your biggest fan man. I love your music."*

*"Now you've gotta get him on your other arm."*

I've gotta get Sean on my other arm? Is that all he has to say? Not even asking my name or where I'm from or if I like the new album? Man, this is disappointing to say the least. All of a sudden I feel like I just got dumped. I feel like I love someone and I've been slapped across the face with the reality that I am nothing to them. Les and his music is everything to me and I'm nothing to him. Why isn't he laughing or even smiling. Dude. It's your face on my arm for crying out loud. Okay I guess it's picture time now.

*Cheese.*

Cheese.