

*Baylorian*

*2013*



# ***Baylorian 2013***

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## **Paper and Ink**

*Amanda Pate*

Lovers in the night and in the day.  
They share secret embraces behind scarlet drapes  
and passionate kisses by the light of the moon.  
Their furtive laughter of language,  
their play on words  
wrapped behind allusions and symbolism.  
Irony his brother,  
Foreshadow her mother.  
Lovers don't last, they say.  
The attraction is fleeting.  
Excitement fades with time.  
Yet these two are lovers still.  
Ink mixing with paper in a never-ending  
sensuous dance of swirls and rhythms.  
The music of their love is a person's inspiration  
as the pen rouses the ink to create Imagination's picture.  
Their romance constructs a realm of beauty and passion  
with dark calligraphy and twisting buttresses.  
The renowned couple clashes into each other boldly  
as if such a union were only expected.  
They share their most intimate secrets,  
their desires, their dreams.  
Such sacred earth they tread.  
What soft churchyard grounds.  
Some say they will be separated.  
Others say never.  
Yet forever will they continue to be  
together and for all eternity.

## Spectrum

*Maria Martin*

I wake to the sound of a color  
hovering beyond my grasp,  
inviting me  
to bind her resolute Red  
as shield against the dawning  
dissonant crash,  
as if a life can be saved by a color,  
drained by the taste of disdain,  
or drowned in the sound of a smile.

My love walks in a sense's shadow.

I imagine he hears the shuddering ache  
that wracks my selfish core  
as he dances  
*around*  
*around*  
*around*  
while they laugh charmingly, but  
too carefully,  
shamed to benevolent joy  
unburdened by sense,  
else they would hear how his circles  
*thrum thrum*  
to silence the feel of their voice.

*around*  
*around*

Love, I would burn all the earth down  
*down*  
down to indifferent dust  
for you, and build us up with a whispered prayer.  
Red would echo delicious,  
we would dance to the taste of normal  
and fall whenever we wished.

*For my son, who sees the world as it is while the world sees  
a broken mind.*

## **We're All Running from Something**

*Faith Forester*

Eddy had run away once before. He was five, and it was entirely on accident. He had just started walking, and didn't stop until a fat lady who smelled like unwashed body odor and cigarette smoke pulled up beside him and asked him where he was headed. Eddy had paused and contemplated for a bit before saying "Don't know. Guess I should go home. Can you take me?"

"Sure, hop in, kiddo. Where you live?" Her voice sounded like someone had shoved straw down her throat, but it wasn't unkind.

Eddy scooted as close as he could to the passenger side door and stuck his head out the window. The crumbs in the front seat made his skin crawl. "Back thataway. It's a big blue house."

"Okay. Just point when you see your house." She turned the minivan around and slowly drove back the way Eddy had come. Eddy was filled with a deepening sense of dread the closer they got to his neighborhood.

He lifted a finger. "In there."

The lady turned into the subdivision, and Eddy watched the houses slowly trickle by. "That one."

The lady looked over at him skeptically. "Are you sure? You don't sound so sure, kiddo."

Eddy didn't like the way she called him kiddo. She said it the same way that momma did when she called him "little buddy" on her happy days. Eddy silently offered a prayer to Jesus Lord and Savior that this lady was having a happy day, or at least a happy moment, until he could make his escape. He breathed through his mouth. "No, that's my house. Thank you."

She pulled a bit closer to the curb, and Eddy hopped out of the van. He froze by the mailbox when he saw her: momma lurched out of the house and sprinted towards him.

"Edward James! Where on earth have you been?" She scooped Eddy up and squeezed him protectively. Eddy

coughed and shifted his face so he didn't breathe in hair. He felt nauseous. Momma peered around Eddy's head at the fat lady distrustfully.

The lady immediately explained herself. "I found him over there on the main road, about a mile down. He was just tootling along like he was on a mission. He told me this is his house. You his Momma?"

Eddy could tell by her voice that she didn't care much. She probably had already disowned him and was ready to move on. Momma probably had that dark look in her eyes that made people smile and walk away as quickly as possible.

"Thank you," momma said in a stiff voice as she nodded vigorously. Eddy was enthralled by the emotion he heard in momma's voice. The lady told momma to have a nice day, and she quickly tapped her accelerator while lighting another cigarette. Momma muttered something about white trash and she turned around and started back towards the house.

Eddy began to wiggle, suddenly desperate to release himself from her grasp. He was afraid, like always. Momma gripped him even tighter as she kicked the front door shut behind her. Her fingertips dug into his ribs. She stumbled into the living room and sank into her sage green rocker. She was shaking. Eddy swallowed back bile. Then he heard it: momma was crying. Eddy stopped struggling.

"Oh, I thought I had lost you, little buddy! I thought I was never going to see you again. Oh sweetheart, I'm so glad you're back..." momma cried harder and loosened her grip. Eddy hesitated, then leaned back to examine her. Tears streaked down her face and her eyes were red, and for a moment she seemed beautiful to him. He put chubby hands on either cheek, using his thumbs to clean up the mascara underneath her eyes.

"Don't cry, momma. I'm still here." He allowed a bit of childishness into his voice, a bit of vulnerability. Then he leaned back in, wrapped his legs around her waist, and buried his face into her hair. It smelled like Pert shampoo. He briefly wondered why momma hadn't been looking for him. Hadn't he been gone hours and hours and hours?

It wasn't even the next day before she hit him again, but

those few hours of love were enough to keep Eddy hoping, even for another ten years.

Momma homeschooled Eddy and his older sister, Christine, and neither of them had many friends. They weren't part of a co-op, and Eddy didn't fit in with the kids at church who made fun of his high-water khaki pants. He considered books to be his friends. He knew it sounded like a bad cliché, but it was true. He had learned to read in kindergarten and learned faster than anyone momma had ever taught. Momma considering reading to be "redeeming the time" as opposed to wasteful activities like watching cartoons and playing computer games, so it was perfect for Eddy. They had Library Day every Wednesday in the Arnold household.

Those were always Eddy's favorite days. He would finish his homework early in the morning, then they would go up to the big public library in Independence and momma let Eddy and Christine spend an hour browsing. Eddy picked as many books as would fill the duffel back he had, and checked them out with his very own library card. He had applied for it when he turned ten, and signed the back of it. He kept it in his back jeans pocket at all times. It made him feel identified.

The same lady always checked him out at the front desk. She had spiked platinum white hair and wore severe eyeliner that reminded him of the pictures in the books he had read about Egypt. The pictures had creeped him out, but she was nice. She would always greet him by name and smile sadly as he placed stack after stack of books on the counter. She would always provide commentary for his choices.

"The Robe, huh? Wow, that is an old book. I don't think I've ever read it. Oh, I've read *Wuthering Heights*. But I read that in high school for an assignment." She looked up at Eddy. "How old are you again?" She asked every week, as if she didn't believe him.

"Eleven, ma'am," Eddy answered like clockwork. Then he paused. "Well, I guess I'm twelve now. My birthday was last week." Momma didn't let them celebrate birthdays because it encouraged greediness.

The lady grinned, making her Egyptian eyeliner crinkle

up. Some of it flaked onto her cheek. “Twelve! Well, my stars, you’re still mighty young to be reading such big people books! When my kids were your age they were still reading little chapter books!”

Eddy just stared at her and remained silent. He thought it best not to say that he had not read those since he was in second grade.

The lady seemed not to notice his silence. “Have you heard about the new book that’s out for kids just your age? It’s about a boy wizard named Harry Potter!”

Eddy shook his head firmly. “Momma says we can’t read books like that. She says witchcraft is evil and God will get mad at us for supporting the devil.”

The library lady tilted her head and seemed about to say something, but then paused. Eddy knew his momma had walked up behind him. He felt a cool hand on top of his head, running fingers through his curls. The lady smiled brightly over Eddy’s head.

“Well, those will be due back in two weeks! Let me know how you like *The Robe*, Eddy!” She waved with the tips of her fingers, and the sad smile once again returned.

Eddy gathered up his novels and placed them carefully, stack by stack, inside his duffel bag. He wondered briefly why her face always changed emotions whenever momma was around. Momma had that effect on everyone. “Goodbye, Ms. Harmon. See you in two weeks.”

Momma herded Christine and Eddy out to the van. Christine jumped in the backseat and pulled out one of her Christian romance novels. She was three years older than Eddy, and had some sickness momma called “hormones.” Ever since she’d come down with it she had been downright mean to Eddy. He would try to hug her or ask her to ride bikes and she would throw his arms off or tell him to bug off. Eddy learned quickly to avoid Christine, like his avoided momma. He settled in the middle seat.

Momma peered at Eddy in the rearview mirror. He pretended as if she wasn’t watching him, and instead pretended to be engrossed in *Wuthering Heights*. He had finished the third page when momma finally spoke. “You know

you're know supposed to talk to strangers, Eddy."

Eddy looked up immediately, confused. "What are you talking about?"

"The library lady. I don't want you talking to her."

"But that is Ms. Harmon. She's not a stranger, we see her every week!" Eddy protested.

"Eddy, people like that are the reason I keep you both home and teach you at home. People like that are the reason the world is corrupted."

Eddy couldn't help himself. "Ms. Harmon is the nicest lady I've ever met! You don't know anything!"

Momma snarled her lips. "What have I told you about talking back, Edward? You that that is not honoring to your Mother." Her tone was dangerous.

"You don't give me much reason to honor you," Eddy muttered to himself.

"What was that, Edward?" She narrowed her eyes like a feline, practically purring, daring him to repeat himself.

"I said, you don't give me a reason to honor you," Eddy glared back into her slitted blue eyes. Moments passed.

Suddenly, momma jerked the steering wheel, sending the van careening to the shoulder of Highway 24 and jolting into park, gears grinding. Momma unbuckled her seatbelt and reached around to swing at Eddy. She had a bad angle and just clipped him on the side of the head. Christine started screaming at Eddy to get away from momma. Momma grabbed one of her own books from the passenger seat and hurled it at him. It hit him on the cheek and instantly drew blood. "I will teach you to honor me, you useless disappointment!" she bellowed and climbed back over the center console to hit him again.

Eddy checked the sutures in the mirror. Momma had told the nurse in the ER that Eddy had tripped and hit his face on the car door. No one asked any questions. He got his ten stitches and they were sent on their way. They itched. It had been two weeks since the last Library Day. Momma, unsurprisingly, had told Eddy to stay at home while she took Christine to the library. Christine hadn't made her mad. Eddy

wondered if Ms. Harmon would miss him. Probably not.

Eddy swung slowly on the dilapidated swing set in the backyard of his family's blue house in the suburbs of Independence. The tree house roof was sun-bleached and ripped in places. He dug his feet into the sand beneath his toes and remembered how he and Christine used to make sand castles. They would dig moats and fill them with water from the hose. The sand eventually absorbed the water, but for a few minutes, he and his sister were masters of engineering. Eddy spent a lot of time out on the swings, especially during summer. The humid Missouri heat bothered him slightly, but he preferred it to the icy blasts of the AC unit that momma kept running.

Eddy was fifteen now. Christine had left for college yesterday, and now Eddy was alone with momma. His dad had left soon after the "library incident" as Eddy took to calling it. He didn't take Eddy and Christine with him, and they hadn't heard from him since. Christine called him her "sperm donor," but Eddy wasn't sure whether to hate his father for the abandonment, or to pity him for the weakness and inability to protect his family. He usually hated him, for what it was worth.

Eddy spent a lot of time thinking, and a lot of time ruminating, to the point where he wasn't sure if he lived mainly in the past, present, or future. Right now the past occupied his mind. He wrote a few lines in his notebook about his first haircut, which was precipitated by the McDonald's lady's perpetual forgetfulness that he was a boy, not a girl. His hair used to be long and curly, down to his shoulders. Eddy reread his few paragraphs, and thought that a child psychologist might find this very useful. But that didn't matter. The memories were immortalized on a water-wrinkled page with purple ink. He wouldn't forget it again. He didn't always remember things. He wasn't sure if it was the result of a faulty memory, or repressed memories. Hell, it could even be brain damage, as many times as momma had hit him in the past few years. The older he got, the worse it was. She hated Eddy even more when dad left.

One time, she had punched his scar so hard that it had

burst open. She refused to take him to the hospital and he was forced to tape it shut until it healed. He was homeschooled. He never went anywhere. No one ever saw.

No one was ever going to save him. He'd given up on that idea a long time ago. When Ms. Harmon died, he felt like he'd lost the only person who might have saved him. Now it was just him and momma.

Eddy started kicking the sand, swinging harder. He started to think about the day that he had run away the first time. He thought about that day more often than not. Those few moments of vulnerability he had allowed himself were ruinous. They kept him hoping that someday momma would change and love him all the time. Nevertheless, he knew: she hadn't even been looking for him when he'd run away the first time. Why should he stay now? When was he going to stop hoping?

He jumped, feet spraying sand up around him in spatter. He grabbed the book he had brought outside, climbed into the treehouse, and started reading it. The book was *Gone with the Wind* and it was heavy so he propped it between his knees crossed Indian-style. It was brightly sunny and humid outside. His eyebrows were soon wet with perspiration and the beads threatened to drip onto his novel. He used an index and his thumb to squeegee the sweat to either side of his face, and the liquid ran down his cheeks like tears. He felt the droplets slide down his skin, leaving little trails of coolness. He set the book down, squeegeeing more sweat, and thinking. He looked down at the book and saw it: a blotch of rusty brown on the corner of the cover and first half of the pages. It was the book momma had thrown at him in the car. He touched the rippled flesh on his cheekbone.

He stared at it a few minutes. Then he got up, walked to the shed, and found his bike behind the mower. He pulled it out, brushed off the cobwebs and dead flies, and hopped on. He rode through the neighbor's backyard before trailing the property line to the street. Once on the asphalt, Eddy started pedaling, taking the same route he had ten years ago. The wind picked up, the sweat evaporated. He thought he smelled a drift of Pert shampoo.