

# Baylorian



# 2025

UNIVERSITY OF MARY HARDIN-BAYLOR

Baylorian

2025

# **Baylorian 2025**

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The Baylorian is produced by students in the Department of English at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor. Submissions are accepted from faculty, staff, students, and alumni each year.

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## ***Cover Art***

## **Flowers of NYC**

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## **Writer's Block**

Rachel Daughtery

Starting to write she thinks long and hard,  
However, nothing in her head seems to appear.

Try as she may, and try as she might to think,  
Words fail to show up on the page and appear.

In her brain there are entire worlds waiting to be  
free,  
But as she writes, those worlds never appear.

A story of a—a pillow fighting a dragon?  
No, that won't work. Her thought disappears.

What about a spider? Spinning a web?  
Boring. There is no story. She doesn't like the idea  
that appears.

The Princess runs away to a faraway kingdom,  
And falls in love with—poof. The story disappears.

Feeling lost, stupid, frustrated, and clueless  
At the lack of words that, in her head, fail to  
appear.

And here the writer sits, begging herself to write,  
And hoping the poem will, somehow, magically on  
the paper appear.

## Right Person, Wrong Time

Emma Smith

Five years earlier, nineteen-year-old Kelly sat in the old yellow truck sobbing. It was her dad's back then. Her dad sat as still as stone in the driver's seat, waiting for her to let it all out.

"What do I do? I can't do this! I can't pay for this *and* college, and Thomas just agrees with me on everything! Everything except college! He's so wishy-washy and it's obnoxious! I want to go to college and teach, and just because he doesn't want to go to college doesn't mean I shouldn't either! He thinks the wedding is more important and that college can wait but it can't because there's no way we could pay off the wedding if neither of us has a job! Ugh!" she groaned.

It was silent, bar Kelly's sniffing. Well, it was until her father let out a quick huff.

"I think you should call it off." He said.

Kelly blinked a couple times in disbelief.

"What?"

"I think you should call off the wedding."

"But I love him. We love each other, we want to be married." Kelly said.

Her father nodded. "I know. But I think you've got a case of right person, wrong time. You wanna go to college? Now is the time. You're young and willing to learn. Go to school," he said.

Kelly said nothing. Even when her father pulled the truck out and drove the two of them home,

she said nothing. When they pulled up to their driveway, they both got out and went inside without a word. And when Kelly went up to her bedroom, she sat for a couple hours more, awake, letting the gears in her head turn. And for the next few days she went about in this way, thinking, not getting much sleep. Thomas texted and called, and she managed to maintain a sense of normalcy for him, but the calls only lasted a couple of minutes, and the texts were always brief. After a month of this, Kelly had finally made a realization. She would not be getting married any time soon. She'd call off the engagement.

~Five Years Later~

Kelly's tiny apartment was full of neatly organized piles of lesson plans and folded stacks of laundry. In her bedroom, her bed was made and a scented candle burned steadily on her white bedside table. Kelly stood by her bed, getting dressed while talking with her mom over the phone.

"Look, Thomas has moved on, and I have too. Why can't you?"

Her mother scoffed. "You and your dad are always on me about this ... Alright, alright, I'll leave it alone," she said.

Kelly didn't believe her, but at least she was dropping it. For now. Dressed only in her nice slacks and a bra, Kelly informed her mom she'd

be right back and left her bedroom, going into the living room to check and see if the blouse she had prepared for tonight's assembly was dry. Her purple silk shirt rippled in the fan's breeze as it hung from a kitchen stool that she had moved to be in the middle of the rug in the living room. Despite the breeze, wet spots still dotted the shirt.

"Shoot," Kelly chastised herself softly. She'd have to find something else to wear. She returned to the bedroom only to discover her mother had hung up on her, leaving her a text in lieu of saying goodbye: "Had to run- hope your concert thing goes well! Love you!!" But this message was not half as intriguing to Kelly as the text she had received just before.

From Thomas.

It read: "Hey Kelly. I'm really sorry to bother you like this and I know we haven't talked to each other since ... a while. I was only texting because I needed to ask a favor of you. I know that's douchey of me but I honestly don't know who else to ask. So ... I don't actually own a car anymore and I heard you work at the school that my job is providing amps for tonight. The truck is only gonna be there to drop things off. Shop doesn't have enough money to keep it on for after the concert. Do you think maybe you could drive me back to my apartment afterwards? I get it if you wanna say no. Just lmk. Again, sorry to bother you. Thanks."

Kelly read the text a couple of times over

before throwing her phone back onto the bed and walking over to her cluttered closet. No time to think. Just get dressed. She wrenched a couple of shirts aside before pulling out one of her other nicer shirts: a blue, short-sleeved button up with a frilly trim around the bottom. She shrugged and put it on, along with some silver jewelry.

Kelly texted back: “No problem.”

Why? She wasn’t sure. But she did.

The concert was perfect—her students performed well and the audience was full of smiling faces. She always stayed a little later to talk to her students’ guardians and to brag on their progress to them, so only after they all left did Kelly meet up with Thomas at the back door. His familiar silhouette leaned against the wall of the hall. Had he grown since she had last seen him, or was he always this tall? It had been a few years. His broad shoulders stayed hunched over, as if he was constantly trying to make himself smaller. It didn’t help, though. He smiled as she approached.

“Hey,” he said.

“Hi.” She nodded in response as she looked out the doors’ windows at the rain pounding down onto the concrete. Inside, her heart fluttered. *Why?*

“Heh, it’s really comin’ down out there, huh?” Thomas chuckled. When Kelly didn’t say anything, he cleared his throat and tried again: “Your car’s the yellow one, right? Didn’t change it up on me?”

“Yup. Still got the pick-up. And it doesn’t look like this will let up any time soon, so I say we just make a run for it.”

Both of them ran as fast as they could through the pouring rain to Kelly’s old yellow truck. Kelly tried the handle once, then twice, then three times, but the door wouldn’t open. She yanked it a couple more times before huffing and bending over to dig through her briefcase for her keys. Of course, they weren’t there. The only other place they could be was inside the now locked up school behind them. Curse the steel slotted roof pergolas attached at every entrance! What good did that do anyone? Kelly slouched for a moment in frustration before yelling over the truck and the rain at Thomas, who stood on the passenger side:

“I left my keys in the school!”

“WHAT?”

“I left ... my keys ... in ... the school!” she huffed.

There was only the sound of rain pounding against the metal of the truck’s roof as Thomas jogged over to Kelly’s side, offering his jacket as he arrived by her. She took it, not wanting to seem rude. The inside of the jacket was warm and damp. It smelled like him, too, even through the rain. She huffed, not wanting to think about him right this second, and pulled out her phone, shielding it from the rain with her hand. Thomas politely pretended not to listen to her conversations, even though that

was impossible to do with nothing else to drown out Kelly's voice.

"I called Carl, er, the principal. He's on his way," Kelly said.

Thomas nodded. Kelly could feel her shirt sticking to her body and cursed herself for wearing such a thin top. Thomas's jacket helped. He wasn't looking at her. She took this time to look him over. He had on his ratty black converse that she knew for a fact he had owned since high school. His jeans were stained with paint and what she had to assume was grease, and his shirt had some obscure band logo on the front—something to do with werewolf rats—she couldn't be sure with how faded it was. His normally bouncy curly hair was plastered against his forehead and his squinty eyes told her he was deep in thought.

"Hey," Kelly said, pulling him out of it. He looked at her. "Since when have you worked for Soundwave City?"

"Oh. A couple months now."

"Oh. Did the singing thing fall through?"

"Yeah, they ended up going with someone else. I've been sort of bouncing around ever since."

"Oh."

"What about you?" He asked.

"Huh?"

"What about you? How do you like the school?"

Kelly looked up at him. He was looking

down at his hands. They were fidgeting, his fingers interlaced and doing dances around each other.

“It’s good I guess. I don’t think any of my co-workers like me though. I’m thinking about transferring.”

“Really? From what I saw while I was setting up the speakers, the kids seemed to really like you in there.” He looked at her.

She quickly averted her gaze to the ground.

“The kids are great but I just ...” she sighed.

What was she doing? She had told her mom over and over again she wouldn’t bother Thomas with her life. She had been following her dad’s advice to take a break from him. And yet, here she was complaining to him. Granted, it was his fault. He was the one who asked for a ride. Why *was* she giving him a ride?

“Whatever happened to your car?” she asked.

“Oh, Frances? Yeah, she got towed. I let Reggie use it and well, he’s not great at parking. I, uh, haven’t really saved up enough money to buy her back. It’s ok though. Walking is good for you, you know? It’s not that far from my apartment to work,” he said.

“Who’s Reggie? And why isn’t *he* paying for the car?” she asked with indignation.

“Oh, Reggie’s one of my roommates. He doesn’t have a job right now, so it’s just easier for me to pay it. And besides, it’s sort of my fault anyways. I was the one who let him borrow it.”

Kelly wiped the water away from her eyes in an attempt to hide her disbelief. Thomas never seemed to wear the pants in any relationship, did he?

“You have roommates now?”

“Well yeah, I work at Soundwave City. I make minimum wage, if that.” He joked.

She laughed at it, even though it wasn’t funny.

“Sorry, I should’ve guessed that. I just mean, well, I guess I never took you for the roommate type?” Kelly said.

He shrugged. “You gotta do what you’ve gotta do to make do,” he said with a somewhat dejected sigh.

Not long after, Principal Carl pulled into the parking lot. As he stepped out of his car, the rain slowed to a drizzly pace. The whole ordeal was solved within minutes. Finally, Kelly could get Thomas home and go to bed.

The drive wasn’t long. Turns out, Thomas’ apartment building wasn’t as far away from Kelly’s house as she had thought. She parked and turned on her hazard lights to let him out.

“Well, this is my stop,” he said. He turned to her, and she watched his hands begin to fidget once more. “Thanks for doing this. I know my text broke our talking deal, but I just,” he sighed. “I just wasn’t sure who else to ask.”

“Thomas, its ok, really. The no-contact thing

only meant to be temporary anyways.” Kelly reminded him.

He exhaled, looking back down at his hands. She was glad he hadn’t noticed how surprised she was at the words coming out of her own mouth. *She* had made the no-contact rule. Now *she* was saying it was ok to break it. Kelly decided her mom was a bad influence. She wouldn’t be thinking of Thomas at all if it weren’t for her mom’s persistent begging of Kelly to give him another try.

“Yeah, right. I guess I’ll head up now.” He said, unbuckling his seatbelt. Kelly nodded.

“Yep,” She said, watching him open the truck’s door. “Oh, Thomas?” she asked as he was about to close the door behind him.

“Yeah?”

“Good to see you.” He only smiled in response, shutting the door and heading up the stairs towards his apartment.

Maybe she was her own bad influence.

~

Soundwave City was a dismal little store. If there was a definition to ‘hole in the wall’ Soundwave City was it. The music store was as dark and dingy as a dungeon. The gray carpet and walls weren’t particularly uplifting, nor were the flickering florescent lights. The whole store looked like it was trapped in the 90’s. There were dust caked

stacks of CDs all over the store, and posters of artists like Metallica and Radiohead plastered across the sun faded wall. The instruments and amps displayed seemed to be the only happy things in the store, all cleaned and, as Kelly discovered by picking up a guitar and giving it a strum, nicely tuned. The guitar strum had evidently spooked the employee in the back, because the curtain that separated the back room of the store from the front counter rustled, and in a moment, Thomas stepped out and into the space behind the counter. He paused momentarily at seeing Kelly standing there. Kelly waved awkwardly at him, which snapped him back to reality.

“Sorry, I just didn’t expect to see you in here.” Thomas said, shaking his head.

He was wearing his Soundwave City employee shirt, which was a collared black short sleeve shirt. It seemed too small for him and, Kelly noticed, had some holes around the logo which rested over his heart. Kelly shook her head and shrugged as she stepped up to the counter.

“One of my students needed a new mouthpiece for their trumpet and I figured, well, since I knew you worked here now, I could come and grab it from here.”

He shrugged. “It’s a good a place as any. I bought my guitar from here a couple years ago,” he said.

She leaned back onto her feet and looked

around. "Thomas?"

"Yeah?"

"Don't you ever think about your singing thing?"

"Sometimes. I try not to though. Why would I—"

"Focus on the negative, yeah yeah, I know."

He scoffed. "Got me all figured out?"

"I used to." she said. *I used to have me figured out too.*

She sighed and looked once more around the store as though it had suddenly changed and become more interesting than it had been two seconds ago. And when her eyes landed on him again, he was looking at his hands.

"Do you ever think about us?" Kelly asked.

Thomas paused, clearly stunned by the unexpected question. Kelly shook her head, instantly regretting asking. "Sorry, I'm sorry that was rude. I call off the engagement then come back and throw it in your face all the sudden."

Kelly couldn't believe she had said it out loud. What was she thinking? Why would he ever think about them? Maybe out of spite, at the very least. They had both moved on, both not spoken to each other in years until that night in the rain a couple days ago. But it was all just a coincidence, a big mistake. Why would he *ever*—

"Yes."

What? Kelly looked back up at him. He was

looking right at her.

“All the time, yes.”

The world seemed to pause. The road outside became a parking lot, the music in the store suddenly stopped and Kelly wasn't even sure either of them exhaled in that moment. And it struck her then, right there and then, that Thomas was the right person, and this was the right time.

She cleared her throat and he quickly looked back down at the counter. Trying to find anything else to do but look at her, he picked up the dusty stack of CD cases that lay there and shuffled them in his hands.

“Thomas?”

“Hm?” he asked, looking up.

“When do you get off?”

## **The Symphony**

Jason Kelling

The vanished symphony of the stars,  
Once reflected in this fractured sea.  
The orchestration of smoldering skies,  
Shutting the heavens from all who see.

I close my eyes and let memory provide  
The sweet reflections of a quiet time.  
When the waters mirrored heaven's pride  
With points of hope in a darkening tide.

Your auburn hair became my shelter  
From crimson wounds that scarred the skies.  
Your almond gaze, a radiant glow,  
A shuttering beauty that defied.

Time's commandment—that all things must die,  
A lament from the now-fallen skies.  
A message, carried by the darkened tide:  
The vanished footsteps of my bride.

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