

AMANDA

BY MATTHEW LEDREW

Presented Digitally by Engen Books, St. John's

Copyright 2008 Matthew LeDrew

NO PART OF THE FOLLOWING TEXT MAY BE REPRODUCED OR TRANSMITTED IN ANY FORM OR BY ANY MEANS, ELECTRONIC OR MECHANICAL, INCLUDING PHOTOCOPYING OR RECORDING, OR MY ANY INFORMATION STORAGE OR RETRIEVAL SYSTEM WITHOUT WRITTEN PERMISSION FROM THE AUTHOR, EXCEPT FOR BRIEF PASSAGES QUOTED IN A REVIEW.

This story, although based on the author's memories, is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are products of the author's imagination or are used fictitously. Any resemblance to actual events or locals or persons living or dead is entirely coincidental.

Provided by:

Engen Books

38 Pearson Street, Suite 149

St. John's, NLA1A 3R1

First electronic publication: March 2008

ISBN-13: 978-0-9784342-2-9

This story is for Amanda,
who I have sadly lost contact with.

I hope she reads this and it
makes her smile.

From the Author

I've spent the last several minutes mulling over the pros and cons to doing a 'from the author' section to a digital publication that only a few people are going to see... but I enjoy doing these frank little inserts, so I'll take my pleasures where I can.

This is a short story I wrote when I was nineteen, living in Calgary and more than a little homesick for my friends and family back home. It was originally written for a Creative Writing group that I speak of extensively in the forward to *Transformations in Pain* and will not bore you with here.

This is a kind-of-true but not-really-true account of my high-school prom. For those of you looking for sexcapades, look elsewhere. Or pick up *Black Womb*. Either way, you won't find it in the next few pages. This is one of the few pieces where I'm honest enough to tell it from the first person: the person talking is me for once, not Xander or Mike or Rob or whoever.

Timeline wise, this novel was written about the same time as the second *Black Womb* book. It was a bit of a dark time in my life but I managed to get through it relatively unscratched, which is something I owe in no small part to this story, this memory, and the people in the both of them.

Once again I'd like to thank Amanda (*last name being withheld for privacy issues*), who I have lost contact with but hope to see again somewhere down the road when we can both look back on this and laugh.

Thanks for listening!
-Matthew LeDrew, author

* * *

She's sitting on my bed right now, and I find myself fighting to take my eyes off of her every five seconds just because I'm worried she'll think I'm weird. Funny how that works out, huh? The one person on the planet that accepts me for who I am, completely and without prejudice, and I still feel the stupid need to hide from her. I love her, she's my best friend. Why shouldn't I stare at her?

She's listening to 'What we're all about' by Sum 41, off of the Spider-Man soundtrack my father just gave me for graduating. She's bouncing a little as she kneels there, singing along with the chorus and screaming every time she says the word 'Rock!'. She's such a punk, it's absolutely amazing. That's the only word I've ever been able to think of to describe her, and right now I feel justified in it. As she sings, her eyes look at mine from time to time, and she catches me staring at her. I blush, and a cute smile spreads over her thin, sparkling red lips. She tries to hide it, but it's there. I'm not sure if she's grinning because she caught me looking, or because I'm wearing this damn stupid tux that I just know I look like a penguin in. I do my quirky -one-sided smile' and my 'laugh like a leaky tire' that she always makes fun of, and that only makes me blush even more. Is she blushing? I can't tell. She's wearing pink blush anyway. I hate when she wears blush, or any kind of make-up. Don't get me wrong, she looks beautiful... there's no way she couldn't. It's just she looks so much more beautiful when it's just

her, none of that artificial crap on her.

The dress she's wearing suits her perfectly, a deep navy blue with sparkles shimmering down the lower half. She looks like magic. She doesn't look like magic, she is the magic. It's her. They define each other. I'm rambling.

Her sea-green eyes glance up at mine again as she continues bouncing. Of course, I'm making this sound like a long time. It's been maybe, what, three seconds since she started? But I'm trying to make every moment last as long as possible... we don't get as many as I'd like. A few locks of her carefully placed hair fall out of place, and she tisks and giggles slightly to herself as she tries to put it back up until I remind her that she looks gorgeous. She gives me the 'shut up before I slap up' look, and that spite just makes her even more gorgeous. I decide not to tell her that, because she works out and I have a low threshold for pain.

She's wearing a pendant around her neck, and it bumps clumsily off of her collar bone as she moves, shaking her head to the beat of the drums. What is it with her a drummers? I should become a drummer, then she'd notice me. How much do drums cost? She bounces again, so full of energy and life. Bounce. Bounce...

Okay, stop that. You can't do that, it's Amanda! But... you care for her, right? And you care for each and every part of her, right? So... theoretically, her breasts should get just as much attention as every other part of her body and soul right? I mean, I've been looking at her eyes a smooth, milky cheeks for like, five minutes now. It's time to give some other parts of her some coverage, before she catches me staring again. Plus there are two breasts, so they should get twice as much attention! Like kidneys! Yup, breasts and kidneys definitely need the most attention.

But, I'm rambling.

“What are you looking at?” she asks, trying not to laugh at me, and the obviousness at which I do things. She’s so graceful... we’re exact opposites, it’s amazing we actually get along.

I’m pretty sure my cheeks are catching fire as I reply, “Nothing?”

“If you’re eyes are open, than you’re looking at something...” she teases, her voice musical, like spring. She has a townie accent, but she’d kill me if I made fun of it. It’s so cute when she kills me.

A tingly feeling rises up from inside my chest when she speaks, and I have to close my eyes and sigh just to calm down enough to speak. “I’m looking at you.”

“Riiiiiiight.” she rolls her eyes. Those eyes. Her eyes make me hope that they perfect the picture-phone soon, so that I can look at them whenever I want. The way she talks, moves, looks, feels, even smells... it’s like that song by Santana and Rob Thomas. What is it? Smooth. That’s the word, right there. Smooth.

The song switches over to ‘Learn to Crawl’ by Black Lab. She reaches over onto my headboard where my CD player is positioned neatly, right where I put it when I cleaned for five hours before she arrived. She presses the back button and puts on her song again. She falls back onto my pillows, hugging into them. “Tired?” I ask, laughing at her. I’m beginning to loosen up, finally. She has that effect on me.

“Lil’ bit.” she chimes, her catchphrase. One of these days I’m going to record her saying that so I can listen to it whenever I’m sad. It’s by far the cutest thing she’s ever said, and it always makes me happy. She always makes me happy. “Volleyball really has me beat. They’ve been riding up so hard at try-outs.”

I frown as she snuggles into the jet black cushion, her cheek squashing against it. Her voice is so tired as she closes her eyes, and I feel guilty. Just because the

slightest thing is wrong, I feel guilty. If I told her that, she'd call me crazy. That there's nothing I can do about it, so don't worry. But what she doesn't get is that the reason I feel guilty is because there's nothing I can do about it. "Bed comfortable?" I snicker as she almost falls asleep as she's speaking, her voice slowly trailing into a mumble that I recognize all too well.

"Oh, it so is." she whines a little, knowing that we'll have to leave soon for the grad photos my mother insists on having. I despise pictures, and I'm tempted to tell my mother where to go and how to get there, just so that my Mandy can have a few minutes rest.

"You sure you can't stay? I'll sleep in the guest room if you like my bed better..."

"No, no. It's not that I don't want to, I just have more try-outs tomorrow."

"All right." I concede, resolving not to bring it up again. She drives herself so hard, it astounds me. She's like those people that climb Mount Everest 'because it's there'.

She opened her eyes and looks at me, giggling a little.

"What?" I ask, brushing off my arms to make sure there's nothing on them.

"Nothing." she shakes her head, reaching up to the CD player and pressing the button a few times until it's on the Default song, Blind.

I can't help thinking about the first time I laid eyes on her. It was at the Drama Festival a few years before. Dalgat had pointed her out to me, in those dark leggings and short, short denim skirt that I would never want to see her in again. I turned and looked at her, her black blouse tight against her perfect body as her laughed with her friends. I turn back to Dalgat, and scolding look on my face as I say, "Why point that out to me, man? We both know a girl like that would never even talk to a guy

like me.”

Not fifteen minutes later, we're watching a play. A guy I met last year... Chris, that was his name, he walks up to me and says 'hi'. Then he introduced me to his friend : Amanda. She brushes a strand of her short, auburn hair behind her me and speaks the first words I ever heard come out of her mouth : “Hi.”

That was it. I was in love.

I remember the first song we danced to. 'Thank you for loving me' by Bon Jovi. Looking back, I keep thinking how ironically appropriate that song was. I always feel the need to thank her for our time together, try to measure up to her. It's like I feel indebted to her for lowering herself to my level, which in many ways is true.

Gun-shy as I was, we didn't speak for months after that. I even ignored one or two e-mails she sent because I was too tongue-tied to know what to write. The next time she saw me was at a school dance that Lisa had invited me to. I was dancing with another girl at the time (carrying her, actually), but when Mandy came in, I literally dropped the girl. I walked over to her and she threw her arms around me, and I was hooked all over again, like the little worm I am. We dance to that song again, along with a few others, and I feel like the luckiest person on the face of the planet. Fuck planet, universe. I might as well have been god. I ignored every other girl there that night. Amanda was the only thing on my mind.

Now here she is.

Later that night, after the grad, I get ready to take her home. She changes out of the dress into some low hip-huggers and a flowery shirt that's tied in a knot to expose her belly and navel. I melt as soon as she steps out of the guest bedroom as see her, her hair down now and curly. She looks like an angel, yet still had her

devilish charm.

“Wow spelt backwards is still ‘wow’.” I mutter as I look her up and down, “Why don’t you spin for daddy?” I tease in a mock-vulgar tone of voice.

“Shut up.” she laughs, giving me a little slap, “I’m a mess.”

The weird thing is, she believes that. “You’re more gorgeous now than the last time I saw you.” I tell her and she rolls her eyes at me, “But then, you get more gorgeous every time I see you anyway.”

“Oh my gawd.” she huffs. She hates it when I quote lines. The only problem is : they’re not lines when I say them to her.

She is so beautiful, I don’t think I’ve made that clear enough.

I take her home and give her a hug and a kiss and promise to call her tomorrow night.

I go home and fall down on my jet black pillow, that still smells like her perfume. Like her. All those years later, I still can’t sleep without the pillow. I swear, it still smells like her sometimes, if I try hard enough.

But that’s amazing.

That’s Amanda.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Matthew LeDrew was raised in Norman's Cove, Newfoundland and is a graduate of the Journalism program at College of the North Atlantic Bay St. George campus in Stephenville, Newfoundland. He is unsure if he is going to pursue a career in journalism at this point in time, as he enjoys fiction writing much more. He currently works in tech support.

Amanda is the first short story written for the matthewledrew.engenbooks.com portion of the Engen Books website that he started in March 2008. He is currently writing a Newfoundland-based novel, tentatively titled *The End*, while doing final edits on *Smoke and Mirrors*, the third book in the Black Womb series.

His hobbies include writing, drawing, and playing poker. He also hopes to one day get all of the ideas for stories out of his head so that he can finally take a break and learn to relax... but he doesn't see that happening anytime soon.