



# Eddie's Bastard

*William Kowalski*

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In this rich, deeply resonant literary debut, twenty-eight-year-old William Kowalski explores the power of family, the meaning of history, and the bonds of individuals united and shaped by love--a wondrous novel in the grand storytelling tradition of John Irving and Wally Lamb.

"Eddie's Bastard" is one William Amos Mann IV, fondly known as Billy, the illegitimate blue-eyed son of "Ready Eddie" Mann--a legendary golden athlete and brave pilot killed in Vietnam--and an unknown mother. The last in a line of proud, fiercely individualistic Irish-American men, Billy is discovered in a basket on the doorstep of the once grand farmhouse that is his ancestral family home, now a dusty, haunted mansion. The sole inhabitant is Billy's grandfather, Thomas, a bitter and lonely recluse who will raise Billy on love, fried baloney sandwiches, and the fascinating lore of the Mann family itself. While his birth may have been inauspicious, Billy's life is destined for greatness. He is a Mann, Grandpa reminds him daily, the progeny of an indomitable family scarred by success and tragedy.

Through the whisky-tinged tales of his grandfather, Billy learns how the clan's fortune was discovered by his great-great-grandfather and namesake, Willie, a hero of the Civil War, and how it was lost by Thomas himself, a veteran of World War II, in a scheme known as the Great Ostrich Fiasco of 1946. As he matures into adolescence, Billy will eventually capture these stories on paper, a tradition begun by his great-great-grandfather, who confessed his secrets in a journal he kept throughout his life.

Through the tales of his ancestors and his own experiences, Billy learns of bravery and cowardice, of life and death, of the heart's capacity for love and for unremitting hatred, eventually grasping the meaning and true beauty of family and history and their power to shape destiny.

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