

The Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest



The Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest

Where “WWW” means “Wretched Writers Welcome”

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2004 Contest Winners

Winner



- She resolved to end the love affair with Ramon tonight ... summarily, like Martha Stewart ripping the sand vein out of a shrimp's tail ... though the term “love affair” now struck her as a ridiculous euphemism ... not unlike “sand vein,” which is after all an intestine, not a vein ... and that tarry substance inside certainly isn't sand ... and that brought her back to Ramon. — Dave Zobel, Manhattan Beach, CA



A 42-year-old software developer and former National Spelling Bee contestant is the winner of the 2004 edition of the Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest. Dave Zobel of Manhattan Beach, California, won with his timely entry.

Runner-Up:

- The notion that they would no longer be a couple dashed Helen's hopes and scrambled her thoughts not unlike the time her sleeve caught the edge of the open egg carton and the contents hit the floor like fragile things hitting cold tiles, more pitiable because they were the expensive organic brown eggs from free-range chickens, and one of them clearly had double yolks entwined in one sac just the way Helen and Richard used to be. — Pamela Patchet, Hamilton Beaconsfield, Quebec, Canada

Grand Panjandrum's Special Award



- She sipped her latte gracefully, unaware of the milk foam droplets building on her mustache, which was not the peachy-fine baby fuzz that Nordic girls might have, but a really dense, dark, hirsute lip-lining row of fur common to southern Mediterranean ladies nearing menopause, and winked at the obviously charmed Spaniard at the next table. — Jeanne Villa, Novato, CA

Earliest Unintentional Submission



- 'Twas morning – the sun rose under the brightest auspices, and the thin, vaporous clouds that flitted in the heavens, continued gradually to flee away before the gentle morning breeze, that seemed wont to greet their golden visages with the soft rustle of its dewy wings – until not a hand's breadth of them were seen remaining to mar the spotless beauty of the ethereal blue. — Lyman Littlefield, "Sights from the Long Tree", Nauvoo Times and Seasons (November 15, 1841)

Winner: Adventure



- The legend about Padre Castillo's gold being buried deep in the Blackwolf Hills had lain untold for centuries and will continue to do so for this story is not about hidden treasure, nor is it set in any mountainous terrain whatsoever. — Siew-Fong Yiap, Kowloon, Hong Kong

Runner-Up:

- Lord Tarlington gazed upon the crazed Egyptian hieroglyphics on the walls of the ancient tomb of the petrified pharaoh, he vowed there would be no curse on him like on that other Lord, unless you count his marriage to Lady Tarlington who, when the lost treasure was found, will be dumped faster than that basket in the bulrushes. — Melissa Rhodes, Cherry Valley, CA

Winner: Children's Literature



- Jack planted the magic beans and in one night a giant beanstalk grew all the way from the earth up to the clouds – which sounds like a lie, but it can be done with genetic engineering, and although a few people are against eating gene-engineered foods like those beans it's a high-paying career to think about for when you grow up. — Frances Grimble, San Francisco, CA

Runner-Up

- When Cinderella saw that the Prince had sent the Duke to find the woman of his dreams, like some rich schoolboy who pays the smartest kid in the class to do his homework, or worse, like someone who has been on welfare so long that he has trouble doing any kind of work, she suddenly realized the spoiled nature of the King's son and stealthily slid the slipper back into her pocket. — Milton Combs, Kingston, WA

Dishonorable Mention

- As he entered the room within which so many a wild night of their sweltering love affair had been spent, the White Rabbit regarded her with benevolent eyes, her posture such that he suspected something was wrong, but before he could speak Alice unburied her face from her trembling hands and between her intense sobs he made out the words, "I'm late ... I'm late." — Cory Gano, Camas, WA

Winner: Dark and Stormy Night



- It was a stark and dorny night – the kind of Friday night in the dorm where wistful women/girls without dates ovulated pointlessly and dreamed of steamy sex with bad boy/men in the backseat of a Corvette – like the one on Route 66, only a different color, though the color was hard to determine because the TV show was in black and white – if only Corvettes had back seats. — David Kay, Lake Charles, LA

Runner-Up

- It was a dark and stormy night – actually not all that dark, but more dusky or maybe cloudy, and to say "stormy" may be overstating things a bit, although the sidewalks were still wettish and smelled of ozone,

and, truth be told, characterizing the time as night is a stretch as it was more in the late, late afternoon because I think Oprah was still on. — Gregory Snider, MD, Lexington, KY

Dishonorable Mention

- It was another dork and Stormy Knight – after snapping the last of his palm dampened dollar bills into the frazzled elastic of her G string – sent him packing precisely three-eighths of a mile down Highway 20 to the spot where she'd promised him a glorious glimpse of self-awareness, and where he would discover a slight depression in the asphalt and find himself quizzically contemplating the adjacent Department of Transportation sign that read simply: "Dip in Road." — Rick Sutherland, Depoe Bay, OR

Winner: Detective



- Detective Micky Blarke arrived on the scene at 2:14 am, and gave his cigarette such a severe pull that rookie Paul Simmons swore the insides of the detective's cheeks touched, but the judge indicated that that amount of detail was not necessary in his testimony, and instructed the jury to disregard that statement. — Joe Polvino, Webster, NY

Runner-Up

- The knife handle jutted from her chest like one of the plastic pop-up timers in a frozen turkey, but from the blood pooling around the wound, it was apparent that this bird wasn't done. — Alaine Sepulveda, Las Cruces, NM

Dishonorable Mention

- After several minutes, Detective Wilson, standing over the lifeless, tuxedo-clad corpse, the spandex tights it had been strangled with still around its neck, realized that the poor ringmaster had simply been a victim of circus dancers. — Jeonghyun Kim, Mount Waverley, Victoria, Australia

Winner: Fantasy Fiction



- Gringran Roojner had only gone to see the Great Warlock of Loowith to get his horoscope and he couldn't believe he'd been sent on a quest for the legendary Scromer of Nothleen to ask him for the answer to the Riddle of Shimmererer so that he could give it to the Guardians of Vooroniank, thereby gaining access to the Cave of Zothlianath where he would find the seldom seen Cowering of Groojanc, whose spittle was an absolute necessity in the making of the Warlock's famous pound cake, the kind with raisins. — Sandra Millar, Gowkthrapple, Wishaw, Scotland

Winner: Historical Fiction



- Galileo Galilei gazed expectantly through his newly invented telescope and then recoiled in sudden horror – his prized thoroughbred’s severed neck, threateningly discarded in a murky mass of interstellar dust (known to future generations as the Horsehead Nebula), left little doubt about where the Godfather and his Vatican musclemen stood on the recent geocentric/heliocentric debate. — Don Mowbray, San Antonio, TX

Winner: Fiction for the Erudite



- Clementine sat in the shade of a beech tree, of the family Fagaceae, the leaves of which were more or less ovate, being perhaps not quite as pointed as those of the North American, grandifolia species of the Fagus genus that are the color of a swimming pool that had been left too long without chlorine, but neither were they like those of Fagus sylvatica var. purpurea that are the color of dried burgundy stains on cream linen. — Geoff Beech, Cochabamba, Bolivia

Runner-Up:

- The cat’s whiskers twitched like the wings of a butterfly, not a large butterfly like a monarch, but a small one, like an Eastern Pine Elf, which camouflages wonderfully with the bark of trees, not just pine trees, but also elm trees, whose slender twigs wave in the early spring breeze, looking like the twitching whiskers of the cat, which I have just mentioned. — Megan Z. Dinerman, King of Prussia, PA

Dishonorable Mention:

- He heard a bang, well not really a bang but more of a crash with metallic overtones of platinum-encrusted steel alloys, hammering against unyielding iron and iridium plates; or maybe it was the clash of huge nickel-zinc rods hitting molybdenum fused sheets of tantalum, then he felt a stab of pain and heard another bang, and wished, instead of using his extensive metallurgy skills to try and analyze the sound, he would have run like hell when he first saw the gun pointed at him. — Ken Loomes, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Winner: Purple Prose



- The terrible news had whisked around the becolumned courthouse like a malevolent, stinking zephyr straight from the sewage works, and on the gum-besmirched footpath, the hunch of lawyers cackled and cawed like a group of very large, gowned, wigged, briefcase-clutching crows, or

perhaps ravens since they are of course the larger bird and some of these lawyers were fairly sizeable. — Georgia Gowing, Largs Bay, South Australia

Runner-Up:

- She was a tough one, all right, as tough as a marshmallow – not one of those soft sticky ones used in s'mores, cooked to a turn over a good campfire, or even like the stale chewy type covered in yellow sugar and found at the bottom of a three-week-old Easter basket – no, she was tough like a freeze-dried marshmallow in kid's cereal that despite being shaped like a little balloon and colored a friendly pink are so rock solid that they are responsible for the loss of more baby teeth than most older siblings. — Bridget Lyle, Walworth, NY

Dishonorable Mentions:

- The day was packing heat and cracking wise as the scorching sun torched the hot dry Santa Anas like fry on rice, crispy with a snap, crackle and pop, and poured into the surreal bowl of the Los Angeles Basin as the red winds rattled every dwelling from Bay City bungalow to Bel Air chateau like a china shop in a bullring, the whole stinking, teeming tinderbox as combustible as a drill sergeant at clown college, as unsettling as corn on the cob rationing at an Iowa Society picnic. — Gordon Hauptfleisch, San Diego, CA
- Students often said that Dr. Storm's lectures were duller than dishwater, not the dishwater after a holiday meal with brightly colored vegetable bits and shimmering glosses of vinaigrette, but the dishwater after a Wednesday night macaroni dinner, when the cheese has disintegrated into slime and the macaroni has become mush clogging the drain. — Alaine Sepulveda, Las Cruces, NM
- Stealth was the watchword as two shadowy figures trudged in moonlit silence along the narrow pathway superimposed upon a boulder-littered landscape, unwittingly approaching a slimy procession of slugs vulnerably creeping at a snail's pace, but heroically trying (quite unproductively, one does not wonder) to scamper away from the crushing footfalls of the insentient travelers who stumbled blindly toward a destination which would not bid them welcome. — David Finch, Grass Valley, CA
- Phoebe watched through the library window as the sun sank slowly in the west, glowing like a ball of molten butter; not the phony margarine kind of butter that left nothing but the taste of grease in your mouth, but the real kind that pumped up your cholesterol and gave you a coronary, when such heart-related musings forced her to glance down at Neville, determine from the blue coloring of his skin that he really was dead, and then pick up the telephone and say, "Operator, I believe my husband is having a heart attack." — Fran Abram, Overland Park, KS

Winner: Romance



- Looking up from his plate of escargots, Sean gazed across the table at Sharon and sadly realized that her bubbly personality now reminded him of the bubbles you get when you put salt on a slug and it squirms around and foams all over the place, and her moist lips were also like the slime on a slug but before you salted it, though after all these years Sharon still smelled better than slugs, but that could have been the garlic butter on her escargots. — David K. Lynch, Topanga, CA

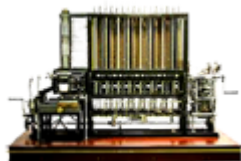
Runner-Up:

- I first saw her from across the crowded dance floor, cedar I think, (as if I can reference a specie of wood planks at a glance) I just know it wasn't that yellowish basketball court wood, the type with the glossy veneer (now THAT, I could recognize), anyway, she had the refined elegance and demure fragility of a really old Princess Leia. — Scott McIlhany, Bellingham, WA

Dishonorable Mention:

- As she eased from our impassioned doorway kiss to slip into something more comfortable, Julia's warm breath caressed my face like a hot winter blast from the foyer of a two-star restaurant where they try to warm you up real quick so you're more likely to go in all the way and eat their food, only they leave you hanging by the "Please wait to be seated" sign because they have to clean up your table from the previous customer. — Brian Nash, Derry, NH

Winner: Science Fiction



- The scorched pasture, with its charred and smoking remains of dead cattle, was the least of Jessica's worries, and as she pondered her shredded gown, newly shaved head, and the quickly disappearing spaceship in the Nevada twilight, she realized if she were going to hitchhike back to Carson City, she'd have to show a damn sight far more leg than she had ever intended. — Michelle Hefner, Bema, Victoria, Australia

Runner-Up:

- The huge intergalactic cruiser – type 4843-56B, class PVT/X – which was the color of an unripe blood-grapefruit (a sort of orangey-green like the skin, not the deep fuchsia of the flesh in the middle) edged its way carefully between the navigation buoys, which flashed intermittently like a pair of warning lights outside of a fire house, except they were more of a pinky-red rather than a dirty yellow. — Rob Wyatt, Concord, NC

Dishonorable Mention:

- Commander Svenson rolled quickly in the dirt, dodging the Pravakhian's arrow, firing his carbonizer pistol which projects high frequency electricity provided by a small laser through a copper sheathed carbon rod to produce a deadly projectile but it didn't work so he threw it away and reached for a rock that would. — Scott Palmer, Klamath Falls, OR
- Criminy, thought Francine as she left the birthing center, if the baby's an unknown life-form, it probably means Ricky wasn't really from West Hartford, either. — David Wyman, Goffstown, NH

Winner: Vile Puns



- Sleepless in Seattle, sleepless in Schenectady, and now – damn her bad luck – sleepless in this god-forsaken pit Brad assured her was a perfectly lovely out-of-the way and darling older, but totally updated and refurbished, accommodation flushed with sunlight and surrounded by swirling blue waters in Seward named the Tide Ebola Inn. — Pat Merrill, San Anselmo, CA

Runner-Up

- Hans sipped from his bottle of German Bru-hoff beer and idly read the label: “Bru-hoff, a heady-nosed Rhine beer has a slightly briny pose, and if you’ve ever drawn it, you would like the way it flows, but all of the other Rhine beers, Dusen lagers, and thick ales, they never beat our Bru-hoff in the yearly Rhine beer games.” — Roger J. McNichols, Pearland, TX

Dishonorable Mention:

- As Reynoldo lit the votive candle at the grotto for San Jose de los Platanos and prayed for the healthy delivery of his first child, he heard a disembodied voice say, “Your daughter will be 17 inches long,” to which Reynoldo replied, “Do you know the weight, too, San Jose?” — Tom O’Leary, Covina CA
- Alas, all he wanted was to be the best barber in the world, even if only by a hair, but, alas, he found his ambition thwarted by a headlong rush of fate and an unexpected side effect of his tonsorial skill – everyone he served became strangely calmer and less argumentative, and he discovered that people were coming to him only for his kinder cuts, this barber of civility. — Alan B. Combs, Austin, TX

Winner: Western



- “This town’s not big enough for the two of us,” growled Slim Jenkins, “but I think that if we can get the townspeople to agree to issue a bond to annex the Carter Ranch, we can then incorporate and there should be plenty of room for everyone.” — Patrick G. McNamara, El Dorado Hills, CA

Runner-Up

- It was hardtack and beans for the crouching cowboys in the lee of the chuck wagon that stormy night when the wind flared the fire and the light caught the trail boss’ leather-bound, barb-wire muscled face which might have said, were he not the quiet sort, “Cookie, we should have had more salads.” — Barry McAtee, Austin, TX

Miscellaneous Dishonorable Mentions

- The day dawned much like any other day, except that the date was different. — Geoff Blackwell, Bundaberg , Queensland, Australia

- The thing that goes back and forth inside the old grandfather clock swung like a pendulum. — John Brugliera, W. Lebanon, NH
- It was only a leaking pustule, but for Billy the Bacterium it was home. — Barry Nester, Jerusalem, Israel
- To her dismay, Julia found that her right hand seemed to be pulling her into an increasingly horizontal position; first her wrist and forearm, then her upper arm and shoulder, until her cheek lay on her shoulder, leaving her to surmise that the handrail of the airport's moving sidewalk progressed at a more rapid pace than the sidewalk itself. — Ann Harper, Phoenix AZ
- Her pendulous breasts swung first to the left, then to the right and finally in independent directions, much like semaphore signals, and although he couldn't understand semaphore, Kyle was sure they were saying, "Never ride the Tilt-A-Whirl with your grandma." — Randy Heil, Las Vegas, NV
- Kaitlynn looked like a woman who'd been used by more guys than a porta potty at a burrito festival yet I loved her madly even if she wasn't the kind of girl you'd take home to meet mom unless mom was at her monthly garden club meeting and dad was home alone mowing the lawn or cleaning out the garage. — Robert Salisbury, Spokane Valley, WA
- She was so delicate that her voice was a mere whisper and her hair drooped in thinly clumped strands around her pale face with skin as milky as a china plate painted the starkest white glaze and fired in a kiln over 940 degrees Fahrenheit. — Christine Wilson Brancazio, Weirton, WV
- Her breath came in short, urgent gasps as beads of sweat slowly coalesced and slipped hesitantly over her lightly-tanned skin, leaving glistening trails down a cleavage that was both feminine and primal while her wide eyes betrayed a mind still struggling to accept that her physical ordeal was over and that she had, in fact, caught the bus. — Ben Connelly, Canberra, Australia
- Africa: a land of deserts and jungles, a land of wars ancient and recent, ravaged by disease and famine and yet the source of nine-tenths of the world's diamonds, a land of gigantic waterfalls and the great Rift Valley, the very source of all humanity, a land 6000 miles away from where this story takes place. — Jason Dias, Colorado Springs, CO
- The first time a boy stuck his tongue in her mouth, Jenny surrendered completely to the invigorating intermingling of their spit – not the Polidental spit of old age, nor the salivary excretions of middle-age, with its tart hints of gingivitis even among those who floss daily, but the invigorating drool of youth – spittle that dazzled the uninitiated with its exquisite hints of promise, innocence, and bygone braces. — Sean Griffin, Tacoma, WA
- "Let's dance," he uttered perfunctorily, his voice sounding to Meg almost like tires on gravel, but more like tires on crushed shells, the kind they use for driveways in Florida and parts of South Carolina, and the tires being like big snow tires. — Paul Guyot, Los Angeles, CA
- Franz made his way through the boulder-strewn alpine landscape stepping warily over granite monoliths, some resting like bodies of wine-sodden derelicts asleep in a railway station and others seemed already like separable prefixes of German verbs lurking at ends of sentences like crones from a Grimm tale ready to clutch a reader by his Lederhosen and yank him back from the brink of reverie. — P.S.Hamilton, Pearland, TX
- Myra pursed her silicone-filled lips in a pouty, sultry smirk that whispered, "We have synergy, you and I," like a man and his dog that have begun to resemble one another after lazy summer days spent sharing a common food dish and an antique, metal comb. — Allison Hazen, Washington, DC
- Stamp, stack, stamp, stack, stamp, stack, Rodney was going insane from the monotony of the job and the cruel irony of being guest of the New Hampshire penal system forced to read the words over and over:

“Live Free or Die,” “Live Free or Die,” “Live Free or Die.” — Denise Hendsbee, Santa Cruz, CA

- “I’ve never done this before,” she said softly, and she was trembling, shaking really – shaking like a Harley-Davidson idling at a stoplight, one of the ones with the old Evo-style engine, where people’s dentures vibrated out as they rode – and yet when I touched her skin, it was smooth and inviting like one of the new Harleys, the ones that copy the Japanese engineering and use rubber mounts and counter-balancers ... not that I would know, because I ride a British bike anyway and haven’t been able to get it cranked in nearly six years, which is why I was shaking hands with her, because she owned a bike shop and had never touched a Vincent Black Lightning. — Mel Hughes, Jacksonville, FL
- After putting down her hometown newspaper from a small community in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan (which makes one wonder why it is the Upper Peninsula of Michigan since no part of their land touches the lower portion of the state and in actuality they are connected to Wisconsin which makes you think they should be the Upper Peninsula of Wisconsin but that is to be discussed another day), Linda needed to find a sympathy card to send to the family of someone she saw in the obituaries. — Michael Janicki, Middleton, WI
- Maynard Fimble was told that “you can’t compare apples and oranges,” but, he thought, they are both eatable, grow on trees, are about the same size, are good for you, have a peel, come in many varieties, and are approximately round in shape, thus, to his horror and guilt, he realized that he was comparing them and wondered what punishment awaited him and on whose order. — Charles Jaworski, North Pole, AK
- As Amy reached for the envelope her heart fluttered in anticipation like the wings of a fruit bat that has eaten a fermented peach, and even though she knew the statistic that you are more likely to be hit by a meteorite than to win the lottery, she was still quite surprised when opening the envelope to be hit by a meteorite. — Tim Lafferty, Horsell, Woking, U.K.
- “Call me Ishmael,” Joanna finally began, a scant fourteen hours before her book report was due, and she sympathized with him and reflected on the likeness of the vast paper tome in front of her to the cetacean antagonist immortalized within, or at least she would have if she’d had any idea what the book was about. — Don Laursen, Grand Rapids, MI
- As she pointed the car due north like a needle on a boy scout’s compass to head back to the frozen wasteland from which she had come, a light rain began to drizzle down, forming hundreds – no thousands – of small cat paw prints, as though a herd of invisible felines of all sizes and ages with wet feet were jumping on the windshield, totally oblivious to the fact that the car was traveling at a speed high enough to dislodge any small animals from the front of the vehicle. — Sandie Lester, Maumelle, AR
- Farmer Brown knew the moment he read the ransom note – the tiny, dirty footprints, childish scrawl, and a spray of seed debris among the angry peckmarks marring the paper’s surface – that the chickens had kidnapped his beloved Bichon Friese Fifi, and that the only man who could help him, George “The Chicken Whisperer” Fitzpatrick, was sleeping off a killer hangover in the outdoor privy behind the pigpen. — Debra Mann, Subbury, ON Canada
- As he pressed his heaving, moist, ineffable manhood closer to her trembling porcelain bosom, Reginal Pompilious-Pomfret, Duke of Sufferingdale, wondered, not for the first time, whether this Lady Ashdown might not, in fact, be his sister, and resolved to confront mater about the subject directly he finished slaking his Jovian lust upon her ladyship. — Catherine Martin, Boston, MA
- It was 11:59 A.M. according to the clock located on the lower right hand side of his desktop display on his task bar (for Microsoft Windows XP was the standard Operating System in use at his office) and life was effectively over, as his one true love, his eternal soul mate, called him from her Nokia 3130 cell phone by depressing and holding the three key, using the soon-to-be-erased quick dial feature, to let him know their passionate and tumultuous relationship had to end. — Thomas Mills, Lorton, Virginia

- The dead make good neighbors; I mean, they don't trot over at all hours and beat upon one's domicile door for a bit of sugar or whatnot; they don't accost one after church and press ragged tickets upon one for some bally fete or another, nor bung off to Bath after dropping their beastly pets for me to watch; no, as a whole, your graveyard corpse is a quiet, peaceful sort of Johnnie. — Karl Moeller, Tucson AZ
- Keith's popularity as the first openly gay daredevil was rising quickly; in fact, it was said he ate danger for breakfast, followed by a light brunch of lemon scones, quiche, and the occasional Mimosa, and then he was back to eating danger. — Nathan Murray, San Diego, CA
- If thoughts were threads, Melvin could have woven a multi-hued Persian carpet that would have encircled the Equator 11.7 times over, because that was how often he thought of Shelly, the girl he met at the library, who was taking something out of her locker. — Sharlini Nambiar, Kuala Terengganu Malaysia
- Johnny's first kiss with Melissa knocked him back on his heels like the bass line of the "Theme from Peter Gunn" – an odd sensation since Johnny wasn't born until 1972 and Peter Gunn was over because Blake Edwards, who created Peter Gunn, had begun the Pink Panther movies starring another Peter, Peter Sellers, best remembered for his performance as Chauncey Gardner in "Being There" but whose truly great role was in "Dr. Strangelove" co-starring Slim Pickens who rides an atomic bomb to earth where it explodes – and that was what Melissa's first kiss was really like. — Kent Neely, Edwardsville, IL
- "Where to hide?" was Ovinia's only thought as she raced madly across the field outside Aberdeen and up a grassy incline, frantically seeking escape from the man who was hell-bent on possessing her, on making her his and his alone, having succumbed to her beauty, drawn into near madness by the watery depths of her brown eyes and lured by the exotic perfume of lanolin and newly-mown hay which wafted from her thick coat as she grazed. — Leslie Neumann, Ballston Spa, NY
- It was a dark and stormy night, not so dark that one couldn't see a hungry Wallaby in a patch of wild gooseberries at fifty paces, nor stormy enough that a severe weather watch had been issued by the National Weather Services Department, but a dark and stormy night nevertheless. — Allan Newell, Toronto, ON Canada
- As he felt the baseball bat connect firmly with the six-pointed Bar Mitzvah pinata, spilling its glorious load of chocolate dreidels and packages of neatly rolled polyester socks over him, Miguel Valdez Liebermann knew that, at long last, he was finally a man. — Lawrence Person, Austin, TX
- Sheila walked into the room, flaunting the kind of body that made grown men wish they were teenagers, made teenagers wish they were grown men, made toddlers wish they were preteens, made preteens wish they were young adults, and made everyone wish editors swung blue pencils the same way she swung her hips as she crossed the threshold of both the room and bad taste, her breasts swaying like dual house-trailers on a windy overpass. — Marx Prewett, Dallas, TX
- It was a bright, yet sunless day, which left a gray cast to everything as Michelle, who went by Shellie because there were seven other girls in her homeroom named Michelle, although three of them went by Shellie also, looked for her pepper spray in her messy yet extremely fashionable back pack. — Joanne Rawson, Toledo OH
- The barren windswept plains beckoned to her like a forlorn lover, calling, "Come here, come here," but she thought, "Am I really dressed right for this occasion, in my black Christian Dior business suit and high heels, or should I run home real quick and change into something more Little House on the Prairieish, like a gingham skirt, white ruffled blouse, and high-button shoes?" — Ellen Rhudy, Marriottsville, MD
- On the eerily quiet morning of Friday the 13th, a strong Sixth Sense told Bobbie-Jean it was time to quit her job as Quality Control Manager at the Cracker Jack Plant, with which her other five quickly agreed that she had smelled, touched, tasted, seen and heard enough of the stuff to last an entire lifetime. — Juliet Toland, Ban Tinkhao, Muang Thailand

- I woke up in Shirley's father's dog's house – or at least most of me did, because the house was ranch style as near as I could figure it and Shirley's father's dog Tracey was one of those little terrier types with the sardonic overbite and the haunted eyes of a Flamenco dancer. — Jim Waples, Wauwatosa, WI
- I will tell you a tale of great adventure like in "Treasure Island," with some smiles and some tears like in "Lassie Come Home," some treachery and some heroism, again, like in "Treasure Island," some romance and some betrayal like in lots of Shakespeare ("Romeo and Juliet," for example), and even – if the reader doesn't mind – some philosophy, but like the Chicken Soup books not like Spinoza or Plato or anything. — David Wyman, Goffstown, NH
- Their eyes met across the crowded room and Morag smiled the smile of a single, endearingly clumsy thirtysomething female with an unfulfilling career, a gay best friend, a weakness for chocolate, and a talent for accessorizing who had found Mr. Right but needed to break-up and have fantastic make-up sex with him a couple of times before finally realizing he was the one. — Siew-Fong Yiap, Kowloon, Hong Kong

Fans, Stalkers, and Others

Mariann Simms, winner of the 2003 contest, [writes about the BLFC in her blog](#). (April 2006)

Celine Shinbutsu: [Fantasy Category winner's blog from Japan](#).

[Suite.101.com interviews 2008 Winner Garrison Spik](#) (August 16, 2008)

[Suite.101.com interviews the Grand Panjandrum](#) (August 16, 2008)

[Guillaume Destot interviews the Grand Panjandrum](#) (2002)

["The Great Bulwer-Lytton Debate"](#) (Manchester Guardian)

[Sticks and Stones](#) (a "new" contest, last updated August 2010)

[Bulwer-Lytton's Ancestral Estate](#)

Bulwer-Lytton's Bicentennial Birthday Celebration at Knebworth House. [With pictures](#). (May 20-23, 2003)

[Literary Locales](#): Over 1,350 picture links to places that figure in the lives and writings of famous authors

[The Eye of Argon](#) (a Sci-Fi conference classic)

[Dead White Guys](#)

[Dead Dogs](#)

[Shakespearean insult?](#)

[Bad Sex in Fiction Award](#)

[It Was a Dark and Stormy Night — the game for people who love to read](#)

[Dickens or Bulwer?](#)

"Dark and Stormy Night Cocktail" from the [Swig Bar](#) in San Francisco: Pour ginger beer into a highball glass and top with Zaya rum.

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WHERE WWW MEANS 'WRETCHED WRITERS WELCOME'