

The Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest



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Where “WWW” means “Wretched Writers Welcome”

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2012 Contest Winners

Winner



-  As he told her that he loved her she gazed into his eyes, wondering, as she noted the infestation of eyelash mites, the tiny deodicids burrowing into his follicles to eat the greasy sebum therein, each female laying up to 25 eggs in a single follicle, causing inflammation, whether the eyes are truly the windows of the soul; and, if so, his soul needed regrouting. — Cathy Bryant, Manchester, England

The winner of the 2012 Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest is Cathy Bryant of Manchester, England.

Grand Panjandrum's Special Award



-  As an ornithologist, George was fascinated by the fact that urine and feces mix in birds' rectums to form a unified, homogeneous slurry that is expelled through defecation, although eying Greta's face, and sensing the reaction of the congregation, he immediately realized he should have used a

different analogy to describe their relationship in his wedding vows. — David Pepper, Hermosa Beach, CA

Winner: Adventure



- The stifling atmosphere inside the Pink Dolphin Bar in the upper Amazon Basin carried barely enough oxygen for a man to survive – humid and thick the air was and full of little flying bugs, making the simple act of breathing like trying to suck hot Campbell’s Bean with Bacon soup through a paper straw. — Greg Homer, Placerville, CA

Runner-Up:

- The shallow cave behind the mighty river’s thundering waterfall seemed more like a damp, cold, misty, poorly lit hallway leading from the shower room in some cheap-dive gym under the Elevated train where mugs who couldn’t crack the glass jaw of some washed-up palooka on their best sober day still deluded themselves that they could be somebody; and yet, Bill thought, “at least it’s got runnin’ water.” — Warren Blair, Ashburn, VA

Winner: Children’s Literature



- He swaggered into the room (in which he was now the “smartest guy”) with a certain Wikipedic insouciance, and without skipping a beat made a beeline towards Dorothy, busting right through her knot of admirers, and she threw her arms around him and gave him a passionate though slightly tickly kiss, moaning softly, “Oooohh, Scarecrow!” — David S Nelson, Falls Church, VA

Winner: Crime



- She slinked through my door wearing a dress that looked like it had been painted on ... not with good paint, like Behr or Sherwin-Williams, but with that watered-down stuff that bubbles up right away if you don’t prime the surface before you slap it on, and – just like that cheap paint – the dress needed two more coats to cover her. — Sue Fondrie, Appleton, WI

Runner-Up

- “Chester and Harry, you don't have the stomach for this, but Dick and I do,” the leggy blonde said in a throaty voice as she headed back in to finger – and hopefully nail – the brains and muscle of the strong-arm syndicate, the heel that gutted her niece. — Bill Hartmann, Dallas, TX

Dishonorable Mentions:

- Inspector Murphy stood up when he saw me, then looked down at the lifeless body, crumpled like a forlorn Snicker's candy wrapper, and after a knowing glance at Detective Wilson pointed to the darkening crimson pool spreading from the stiff's shattered noggin, and said, “You settle it, Gibson; does that puddle look more like a duck or a cow?” — Carl Stich, Mariemont, Ohio
- The blood seeped out of the body like bad peach juice from a peach that had been left on one side so long the bottom became rotten while it still looked fine on the top but had started to attract fruit flies, and this had the same effect, but with regular flies, that is not say there weren't some fruit flies around because, after all, this was Miami. — Howard Eugene Whitright, Seal Beach, CA
- The smooth hand I was caressing felt as if it belonged to a Persian monk that had been rubbing moisturizing body oils on his fellow monks all day (but not in a gay way, come on, he's a monk for God's sake), when in all actuality the hand belonged to a body that I had just pulled out of the Potomac for forensic investigation. — Kevin Bruemmer, San Antonio, TX
- Bishop threw back the shot of bourbon and reflected on his career as a private dick, a profession he always thought of as perfect for a man named Richard who kept to himself and was often unkind to others. — Jon Maddalena, Mesick, Michigan

Winner: Fantasy



- The brazen walls of the ancient city of Khoesand, situated where the mighty desert of Sind meets the endless Hyrkanean steppe, are guarded by day by the four valiant knights Sir Malin the Mighty, Sir Welkin the Wake, Sir Darien the Doughty, and Sir Yrien the Yare, all clad in armor of beaten gold, and at night the walls are guarded by Sir Arden the Ardent, Sir Fier the Fearless, Sir Cyril the Courageous, and Sir Damien the Dauntless, all clad in armor of burnished argent, but nothing much ever happens. — David Lippmann, Austin, TX

Runner-Up

- Truly, twas Gimoneus the wise, grand sorcerer of Elantorfan, keeper of the ancient rune of Turgochit, came nearest to slaying the mighty dragon of Ralmorgantorg; for he was old and sinewy, and the wretched beast near choked to death on his femur. — Warren Wol, Livermore, CA

Winner: Historical Fiction



- The “clunk” of the guillotine blade’s release reminded Marie Antoinette, quite briefly, of the sound of the wooden leg of her favorite manservant as he not-quite-silently crossed the polished floors of Versailles to bring her another tray of petit fours. — Leslie Craven, Hataitai, New Zealand

Runner-Up:

- Primum non nocere, from the Latin for “first, do no harm,” one of the principal tenets of the Hippocratic oath taken by physicians, was far from David’s mind (as he strode, sling in hand, to face Goliath) in part because Hippocrates was born about 100 years after David, in part because David wasn’t even a physician, but mainly because David wanted to kill the sucker. — David Larson, San Francisco, CA

Winner: Purple Prose



- William, his senses roused by a warm fetid breeze, hoped it was an early spring’s equinoxal thaw causing rivers to swell like the blood-engorged gumlines of gingivitis, loosening winter’s plaque, exposing decay, and allowing the seasonal pot-pouris of Mother Nature’s morning breath to permeate the surrounding ether, but then he awoke to the unrelenting waves of his wife’s halitosis. — Guy Foisy, Orleans, Ontario

Runner-Up:

- Corinne considered the colors (palest green, gray and lavender) and texture (downy as the finest velvet) and wondered, “How long have these cold cuts been in my refrigerator?” — Linda Boatright, Omaha, NE

Dishonorable Mentions:

- Haley’s crystal eyes surveyed the vista that stretched in front of her like a vast comforter tossed over the form of a slumbering giant to the hills that arose abruptly like the hastily drawn up knees of the giant when he has to reach down and rub the cramp out of his foot that he experiences when he’s stretching underneath his vast comforter. — Robin Siepel, Bakersfield, CA
- The drugged parrots pelted the village like a hellish rain of feathered fanny packs stuffed with claws and porridge, rendering Claudia’s makeshift rabbit-skin umbrella more symbolic than anything else. — Jeff Coleburn, West Chester, PA

Winner: Romance



- “I’ll never get over him,” she said to herself and the truth of that statement settled into her brain the way glitter settles on to a plastic landscape in a Christmas snow globe when she accepted the fact that she was trapped in bed between her half-ton boyfriend and the wall when he rolled over on to her nightgown and passed out, leaving her no way to climb out. — Karen Hamilton, Seabrook, TX

Runner-Up:

- “Your eyes are like deep blue pools that I would like to drown in,” he had told Kimberly when she had asked him what he was thinking; but what he was actually thinking was that sometimes when he recharges his phone he forgets to put the little plug back in but he wasn’t going to tell her that. — Dan Leyde, Edmonds, WA

Dishonorable Mention:

- Tucked in a dim corner of The Ample Bounty Bar & Grille, Alice welcomed the fervent touch of the mysterious stranger’s experienced hands because she had not been this close with a man in an achingly long time and, quivering breathlessly, began to think that this could be the beginning of something real, something forever, and not just a one-time encounter with a good Samaritan who was skilled at the Heimlich Maneuver. — Mark Wisnewski, Flanders, NJ
- Chain-smoking as he stood in the amber glow of the street lamp, he gazed up at the brownstone wherein resided Bunny Morgan, and thought how like a bunny Bunny was, though he had read somewhere that rabbits were coprophages, which meant that they ate their own feces, which was really disgusting now that he thought about it, and nothing like Bunny, at least he hoped not, so on second thought Bunny wasn’t like a bunny after all, but she still was pretty hot. — Emma DeZordi, Dollard-des-Ormeaux, Quebec
- Their love began as a tailor, quickly measuring the nooks and crannies of their personalities, but it soon became the seamstress of subterfuge, each of them aware of the others lingual haberdashery: Mindy trying to create a perfectly suited garment to display in public and Stan only concerned with the inseam. — D. M. Dunn, Bloomington, IN

Winner: Science Fiction



- As I gardened, gazing towards the autumnal sky, I longed to run my finger through the trail of mucus left by a single speckled slug – innocuously thrusting past my rhododendrons – and in feeling that warm slime, be swept back to planet Alderon, back into the tentacles of the alien who loved me. — Mary E. Patrick, Lake City, SC

Runner-Up

- The real problem with the “many universes” interpretation of quantum mechanics is that if it’s true, then somewhere, in some universe, anything you can possibly imagine has already happened, which means that

somewhere, another version of me has already finished writing the rest of this science-fiction novel, so I'm not feeling real inspired to do it myself. — Steve Lauducci, Bethlehem, PA

Winner: Vile Puns



- Though they were merely strangers on a train, as she looked North by Northwest though the rear window, Marnie knew beyond a shadow of a doubt the trouble with Harry was that he was a psycho – his left and right hand middle fingers (formerly extended in the birds position) were menacingly twisting a rope in the form of a noose; certain of her impending death as surely as she could dial M for Murder, she was overcome by intense vertigo. — Amy Torchinsky, Greensboro, NC

Runner-Up

- The two power-hungry, 20-something biographers met with me incognito and settled on penning my memoirs, one on a percentage of future sales and one on upfront remuneration; so there is one yuppie I pay, one yuppie I owe, ghostwriters in disguise. — Peter Bjorkman, Rocklin, CA

Dishonorable Mention:

- Professor Lemieux had anticipated that his latest paper would be received with skepticism within the small, fractious circle of professional cosmologists, few of whom were prepared to accept his hypothesis that our universe had been created in a marijuana-induced industrial accident by insectoid aliens; nevertheless, he was stung when Hawking airily dismissed it as the Bug Bong Theory. — Alan Follett, Hercules, CA
- Milton's quest for the love of Ms. Bradley was a risk but no sorry trivial pursuit yet he hadn't a clue why she had a monopoly on his heart's desires – in fact, it boggled his mind and caused him great aggravation because, in his checkered and troubled careers, he had always scabbled hard and it drove him bonkers that she considered life just a game. — Linda Boatright, Omaha, NE
- "Damn!" cursed Shep as he realized that the cattle had busted down their corral again and all the bulls were a splittin'. — Lynne Marie Waldron, Spokane, WA

Winner: Western



- They still talk about that fateful afternoon in Abilene, when Dancing Dan DuPre moonwalked through the doors of Fat Suzy's saloon, made a passable reverse-turn, pirouetted twice followed by a double box-step, somersaulted onto the bar, drew his twin silver-plated Colt-45s and put twelve bullets through the eyes of the McLuskey sextuplets, on account of them varmints burning down his ranch and lynching his prize steer. — Ted Downes, Cardiff, U.K.

Runner-Up

- He got down from his horse, which seemed strange to him as he had always believed that you got down from a duck or a goose. — Terry L. Johnson, Tularosa, NM

Miscellaneous Dishonorable Mentions

- Ronald left this world as he entered it: on a frigid winter night, amid frantic screams and blood-soaked linens, while relatives stood nearby and muttered furious promises to find and punish the man responsible. — Rebecca Oas, Atlanta, GA
- Many years have passed since the events related here, but I remember them almost as well as if I had really been there, because I think about them frequently, turning them over and over in my mind, changing the facts to make me into more of a hero than I actually might have been, had I been there to do half the things I claim I did. — Thor F. Carden, Madison, TN
- Her skin was like flocked wallpaper and her eyes had seen better days, but when her bloodless lips murmured “Hi, Sailor,” my heart melted from the inside out like one of those chocolate-covered ice cream bars on a summer day that runs down your arm and gets all over your new shirt. — James Macdonald, Vancouver, B.C.
- Her fixed gaze at dinner reminded him so much of an owl that he found himself wondering when she would regurgitate her meal into a pellet and told the waitress they didn’t need a dessert menu. — Leah Sitkoff, New York, New York
- The syncopated sound of the single-cylinder steam motor, designed by Mier Vander, reminded Mier of the time his father took him to the Mollen Bros travelling circus to see the “Corpulent Lady” and to sit upon her lap immediately following her lunch of sauerbraten and ale. — Jim Tierney, Murrieta, CA

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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