

# The Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest



## The Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest

Where “WWW” means “Wretched Writers Welcome”

- [Home](#)
- [Contest Winners](#)
- [Books](#)
- [About](#)
- [Contact BLFC](#)

## 2005 Contest Winners

### Winner



- As he stared at her ample bosom, he daydreamed of the dual Stromberg carburetors in his vintage Triumph Spitfire, highly functional yet pleasingly formed, perched prominently on top of the intake manifold, aching for experienced hands, the small knurled caps of the oil dampeners begging to be inspected and adjusted as described in chapter seven of the shop manual. — Dan McKay, Fargo, ND

Dan McKay, a 43-year-old quantitative analyst for Microsoft Great Plains, is the winner of the 23rd running of the Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest. A resident of Fargo, North Dakota, McKay is currently visiting China, perhaps to escape notoriety for his dubious literary achievement. His entry, extolling a subject that has engaged poets for millennia, may have been inspired by Roxie Hart of the musical “Chicago.” Complaining of her husband’s ineptitude in the boudoir, Roxie laments, “Amos was ... zero. I mean, he made love to me like he was fixing a carburetor or something.”

### Runner-Up:

- When Detective Riggs was called to investigate the theft of a trainload of Native American fish broth concentrate bound for market, he solved the case almost immediately, being that the trail of clues led straight to the trainmaster, who had both the locomotive and the Hopi tuna tea. — Mitsy Rae, Danbury, NE

### Grand Panjandrum’s Special Award



- India, which hangs like a wet washcloth from the towel rack of Asia, presented itself to Tex as he landed in Delhi (or was it Bombay?), as if it mattered because Tex finally had an idea to make his mark and fortune and that idea was a chain of steak houses to serve the millions and he wondered, as he deplaned down the steep, shiny, steel steps, why no one had thought of it before. — Ken Aclin, Shreveport, LA

### Winner: Adventure



- Captain Burton stood at the bow of his massive sailing ship, his weathered face resembling improperly cured leather that wouldn't even be used to make a coat or something. — Bryan Semrow, Oshkosh, WI

### Runner-Up:

- It was high noon in the jungles of South India when I began to recognize that if we didn't find water for our emus soon, it wouldn't be long before we would be traveling by foot; and with the guerilla warriors fast on our heels, I was starting to regret my decision to use poultry for transportation. — Eric Winter, Minneapolis, MN

### Dishonorable Mention:

- When the great Italian archeologist, Giovanni Battista de Rossi, broke through the centuries of choking rubble and rock in the abandoned catacombs under Rome and the dust cleared, he held his blazing torch high, pickup a flat, dirt-encrusted object with a row of teeth, examined it with his educated eye, and exclaimed, "By the saints, I do believe I've discovered another ancient kitty comb." — Mitsy Rae, Danbury, NE

### Winner: Children's Literature



- The woods were all a-twitter with rumors that the Seven Dwarves were planning a live reunion after their attempted solo careers had dimly sputtered into Z-list oblivion and it was all just a matter of meeting a ten-page list of outlandish demands (including 700-threadcount Egyptian cotton bedsheets, lots of white lilies and a separate trailer for the magic talking mirror) to get the Princess Formerly Known As Snow White on board. — Shelby Leung, Dulwich Hill, NSW, Australia

## Runner-Up:

- When Mr Bilbo Baggins of Bag End announced that he would shortly be celebrating his eleventy-first birthday, his children packed his bags and drove him to Golden Pastures retirement complex just off Interstate 95. — Stephen Farnsworth, Manchester, U.K.

## Dishonorable Mentions:

- Because of her mysterious ways I was fascinated with Dorothy and I wondered if she would ever consider having a relationship with a lion, but I have to admit that most of my attention was directed at her little dog Toto because, after all, he was a source of meat protein and I had had enough of those damn flying monkeys. — Randy Blanton, Murfreesboro, TN
- The children of Hamelin were led away by a pied piper (it's common knowledge) to parts unknown; whither they went is now herein revealed, however the precise location is cloaked in accordance with International Fantasy Regulation IFR.02.3a governing site specifics as, for example, in any Harry Potter story the locations are indeed identified, but just you try and find them. — P.S. Hamilton, Pearland, TX
- “What are you doing in my bedroom at this time of night, Ernie, and why are you grinning at me with those sharp teeth and how come you’ve been spending so much time with the Count lately, and why has Big Bird disappeared, and you should really do something about that breath, or my name isn’t Bert the muppet.” — Vicki Nunn, Gladstone, Queensland, Australia

## Winner: Dark and Stormy Night



- It was a dark and stormy night, although technically it wasn't black or anything – more of a gravy color like the spine of the 1969 Scribner's Sons edition of “A Farewell to Arms,” and, truth be told, the storm didn't sound any more fierce than the opening to Leon Russell's 1975 classic, “Back to the Island.” — Kevin Hogg, Cranbrook, BC, Canada

## Winner: Detective



- Patricia wrote out the phrase “It was a dark and stormy night” exactly seventy-two times, which was the same number of times she stabbed her now quickly-rotting husband, and the same number of pages she ripped out of “He's Just Not That Into You” by Greg Behrendt to scatter around the room – not because she was obsessive compulsive, or had any sentimental attachment to the number seventy-two, but because she'd always wanted to give those quacks at CSI a hard time. — Kari A. Stiller, College Station, TX

## Winner: Fantasy Fiction



- “Why does every task in the Realm of Zithanor have to be a quest?” Baldak of Erthorn, handyman to the Great Wizard Zarthon, asked rhetorically as he began his journey to find the Holy Hammer of Taloria and the Sacred Nail of Ikthillia so Baldak could hang one of Zarthon’s mediocre watercolors, which was an art critique Baldak kept to himself unlike his predecessor, whom Zarthon turned into the Picture Frame of Torathank. — SSG Kevin Craver, Fort Polk, LA

### Runner-Up:

- The dragon cast his wet, rheumy eyes, heavy-lidded with misery, over his kingdom – a malodorous, rot-ridden swamp, with moss cloaking brooding, gloomy cypresses, tree trunks like decayed teeth rising from stagnant ponds, creatures with mildewed fur and scales whom the meanest roadside zoo would have rejected – and hoped the antidepressants would kick in soon. — Constance Barrett, Ruby, NY

### Winner: Historical Fiction



- Sphincter, the gladiator, girded his loins in preparation for today’s games, glad to be part of the season opener since he hadn’t been sure until yesterday that his contract would be renewed, given his slump during the Germans-versus-lions series but he knew that swatting Germans into the lion’s pit was trickier than it looked and he told the officials that they should look at his other stats, not just Huns batted in. — Robert Peltzer, Baltimore, MD

### Runner-Up:

- A column of five hundred Roman foot soldiers – a column held together by the plaster of courage – advanced on a teeming sea of rebellious slaves – slaves who had, ironically, built most of Rome’s columns, although they actually used lime and not plaster to cement the structures, and though it is perhaps more historically precise to describe the soldiers’ column as bound by the lime of courage, that doesn’t really have the same adventurous ring to it. — Mark Hawthorne, Rohnert Park, CA

### Dishonorable Mention:

- Wet leaves stuck to the spinning wagon wheels like feathers to a freshly tarred heretic, reminding those who watched them of the endless movement of the leafy earth – or so they would have, if only those fifteenth-century onlookers had believed that the earth actually rotated, which they didn’t, which is why it was heretical to say that it did – and which is the reason why the wagon held a freshly tarred heretic in the first place. — Alf Seegert, Salt Lake City, UT

### Winner: Purple Prose



- Horatio Keelhaul sailed buoyantly up Cutter Street ironclad in his resolve to torpedo the reviewer of his literary launches who threatened his Titanic reputation with accusations of relying solely on nautical parlance to propel his gondolaic characters through the sinuous canals of his plots. — Rick Holinger, Geneva, IL

### Runner-Up:

- She walked toward him, her dress billowing in the wind – not a calm and predictable billows like the sea, but more like the billowing of a mildewed shower curtain in a cheap motel where one has to dance around to avoid touching it while trying to rinse off soap. — Kristin Harbuck, Bozeman, MT

### Dishonorable Mentions:

- The night resembled nothing so much as the nose of a giant Labrador in excellent health: cold, black, and wet. — Devery Doleman, Brooklyn, NY
- After months of pent-up emotions like a caffeine-addict trying to kick the habit, Cathy finally let the tears come, at first dripping sporadically like an old clogged percolator, then increasing slowly like a 10-cup coffeemaker with an automatic drip, and eventually pouring out and noisily wailing like a cappuccino maker complete with slurping froth. — Chris Bui, Pensacola, FL
- After she realized the man she had fallen in love with was her long lost twin brother and they must break up immediately, they shared one last kiss that left a bitter yet sweet taste in her mouth – kind of like throwing up after eating a Junior Mint. — Tami Farmer, Rome, GA
- The rising sun crawled over the ridge and slithered across the hot barren terrain into every nook and cranny like grease on a Denny's grill in the morning rush, but only until eleven o'clock when they switch to the lunch menu. — Lester Guyse, Portland, OR
- Mitzi's wet T-shirt clung to her torso like paint on the nose cone of a jumbo jet. — James Macdonald, Vancouver, B.C., Canada
- Coincidentally, just as Rose hung out the third sheet out to dry, it started to rain down in sheets and not the soft kind like a fine 400-count Egyptian cotton, but more harsh like a cheap poly blend but even so, Rose didn't notice as she was three sheets to the wind. — Barbara Bridges, Sierra Madre, CA
- The golden-haired dawn curled back the fading face of night in a perpetual coiffure like an Ace comb in God's hand parting the day, making pompadours of mountains, crew cuts of Kansas wheat fields, and trendy cuts of the oceans' rolling waves. — Gordon Grant, Savannah, GA
- As the sun sank low beyond the glistening horizon, even that far into the dusk, the violent rays shot up from below, lighting up the undersides of the clouds in magnificent oranges and golds, turning the owls and bats and starlings black against the sky and sending chills through Myrna, who paused from squeezing the last lactic acid from the dripping curds inside the cheesecloth. — Ed Buhrer, Louisa, VA
- Our fearless heroine (well, mostly fearless: she is deathly afraid of caterpillars, not the fuzzy little brown ones but the colossal green ones that terrorized her while she was playing in her grandmother's garden

when she was just five or six years old, which, coincidentally, was also when she discovered that shaving cream really does not taste like whipped cream) awakened with a start. — Alison Heft, Lititz, PA

## Winner: Romance



- Billy Bob gushed like a broken water main about his new love: “She’s got long, beautiful, drain-clogging hair, more curves than an under-the-sink water trap, and she moves with the ease of a motorized toilet snake through a four-inch sewer line, but what she sees in me, a simple plumber, I’ll never know.” — Glenn Lawrie, Chung-buk, South Korea

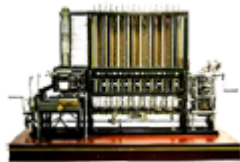
## Runner-Up:

- “Oh my God!” Amber whispered as the compressor throbbed to life, shuddered rhythmically towards its inevitable conclusion, and shot ninety pounds of sultry air through custom-bored, cold-drawn, boss-lock-fitted crimp-couplings as Chuck Key glanced up with a smile that only tire shop guys can smile. — Jere Hudson, Ashland, OR

## Dishonorable Mention:

- Sandra had waited and wished for Gary to come sweep her off her feet, feeling just like Lois Lane waiting for her handsome, masculine Superman to come fly her away from the humdrum of everyday life, but Gary had never come, and so she’d ended up with Herman, a man as bald as Lex Luthor with worse eyesight than Clark Kent and the maturity level of Jimmy Olsen. — Mary P. Potts, Bradenton, FL
- Looking sideways at Thomas, Mireille slowly removed her scarf, waiting ... hoping ... praying that when he came close enough to smell the delectable fragrance of her long, luscious waves that he wasn’t going to start sneezing or sniffing or rubbing his eyes, because those were tell-tale signs of his allergies acting up, and if they did, he would know that she had been out rolling around in the lavender fields with Luc again. — Keriann Noble, Murray, UT
- Garwood dearly loved his time spent in the goat-house, where he could court Thordia – regaling her with his prowess at treating goat-udder growths, shoveling manure like a nuclear chemist trying to bottle the Christmas spirit, and making the precious fermented limburger of the lactate goat secretions. — Brendan Wright, Portland, OR

## Winner: Science Fiction



- Long, long ago in a galaxy far away, in General Hospital born I was, and quite happy were my parents, but when a youngling still I was, moved we did. — Mary Potts, Oneco, FL

## Winner: Spy Fiction



- The double agent looked up from his lunch of Mahi-Mahi and couscous and realized that he must escape from Walla Walla to Bora Bora to come face-to-face with his arch enemy by taking out his .30-.30 and shooting off his nemesis' ear-to-ear grin so he could wave bye-bye to this duplicitous life, but the chances of him pulling this off were only so-so, much less than 50-50. — Charles Jaworski, North Pole, AK

### Winner: Vile Puns



- Falcon was her name and she was quite the bird of prey, sashaying past her adolescent admirers from one anchor store to another, past the kiosks where earrings longed to lie upon her lobes and sunglasses hoped to nestle on her nose, seemingly the beginning of a beautiful friendship with whomsoever caught the eye of the mall tease, Falcon. — Jay Dardenne, Baton Rouge, LA

### Runner-Up

- Max thought the night-time burglary at the California surfing museum would be a safe caper, but that was before he spotted the security cop riding a bull mastiff, blond hair blowing in the wind, and noticed the blue-and-white sign wired to the cyclone fence, “Guard dude on doggy.” — Jim Dehn, Clovis, CA

### Winner: Western



- As soon as Sherriff Russell heard Bradshaw say, “This town ain’t big enough for the both of us,” he inadvertantly visualized a tiny chalk-line circle with a town sign that said “population 1,” and the two of them both trying to stand inside of it rather ineffectively, leaning this way and that, trying to keep their balance without stepping outside of the line, and that was why he was smiling when Bradshaw shot him. — Keriann Noble, Murray, UT

### Runner-Up

- It was high noon as Dusty rode into town, slumped low in the saddle on a horse so blinded by thirst from their long days in the desert that you could follow their slow shuffle to the local tavern by the hollow sound of a horse head against the worn clapboard buildings that lined the town’s only road. — Chip Haynes, Clearwater, FL

## Miscellaneous Dishonorable Mentions

- For the fifteenth time that evening my narcoleptic lover opened his eyes, smiled at me, and said, “Good morning!” — Becca Mallary, Bradford, VT
- The assassin drew his dagger – a simple line drawing in black ink on rose-tinted vellum. — Mike Bender, Portland, OR
- Inside his cardboard box, Greg heated a dented can of Spaghetti-O’s over a small fire made from discarded newspapers, then cracked open his last can of shoplifted generic beer to celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his embarkation on a career as a freelance writer. — Lawrence Person, Austin, TX
- Derwin Thoryndike vowed to place a 14-carat engagement ring on the finger of Glenda-Sue Ellington, so now all he had to do was save up enough money to buy the ring, get it inscribed, and then locate a person named Glenda-Sue Ellington and convince her to marry him. — Harvey McCluskey, Vancouver WA
- James found “Spider-Man 2” to be quite an average movie, like a superhero episode of “Dawson’s Creek,” but not from the excellent first season, nor from the horrible final seasons, but rather from somewhere in the mid-run of the show, when it wasn’t as good as it used to be but it didn’t totally suck yet. — Edo Steinberg, Beer-Sheva, Israel
- Rocko Gallante was as slick as a broken egg on a linoleum floor and as polished as a Washington apple that had been spit on and rubbed to a gleaming finish on the tail of a very clean shirt. — Claudia Fields, Santa Barbara, CA
- I peeled my body off the alcohol-soaked carpet, spat the cigarette butts out of my mouth, licked my lips with a tongue that felt and tasted like a rat that had been lightly sauteed in lighter fluid, and after struggling to what a quick visual inspection confirmed were apparently my feet, decided that the next time a seven-foot tall Lebanese fisherman called Bottomless Mary challenged me to an ouzo-drinking contest I wouldn’t wear suede shoes. — Geoff Blackwell, Bundaberg QLD Australia
- They ask me if it was dark that night the hyenas showed up and ate the little beagle as he sat typing away on his dog house and then ate all the little round-faced kids, and I tell ‘em, “no,” it was not even stormy, kind of a calm, half-moon lit night where you’d sit on your deck having some peanuts, until the hyenas arrived of course and then it got so noisy you had to go in the house. — Bill Crowley, Santa Rosa, CA
- It was Angela’s 96th birthday party, and as she leaned over to blow out the candles on her cake and thought back on her long, long life, the children she’d given birth to, the man she had married and then sadly buried, she thought to herself, well no matter what at least I’ve grown old with dignity, then the nursing home attendant pointed out that her breasts were dipping in the trifle bowl again. — Micheal Rossiter, Usworth, Washington, Tyne and Wear England
- A warning to the reader: Tom dies in the end of the story so don’t get too attached to him. — Sam Gerring, Lexington, KY
- “So you see,” concluded Lance, “there are certain things that every woman regardless of personal situation should do at least once in their lives and I am foremost amongst these things.” — Hywel Curtis, Abercarn, Caerphilly, Wales
- During the entire exhilarating, bright and lively day in the summer of the year, when the clouds passed like cotton puffs high in the heavens, I had been passing alone, in my Alfa Romeo, through exceptionally appealing countryside; and finally found myself, in the gloaming of the day, within view of the cheery prospect of the House of Sol Asher, my old friend and haberdasher. (Apologies to E.A.P.) — Gordon Grant, Savannah, GA



- Charles stuck his head out the window, not fully realizing that the salt air and warm breeze would have no beneficial effect on a head severed and shrunk in Borneo and sold on a stick to tourists in Bali, and with little thought of the irony of the former missionary's vacant gaze on a nude beach with at least two couples in the missionary position. — Mark D. Harmon, Knoxville, TN
- Anyone with a less refined air of unabashed insouciance would not have been able to so easily slip through the security cordon, charm their way past the armed guards, breeze through the marbled reception area and blithely enter the inner sanctum of the UN Security Council and there successfully negotiate an end to all conflict in the Middle East, but that was the sort of man Nigel Simpkins was. — David Lindley, Sheffield, England
- We crossed America that week, the red states melding into the blue states like stomped grapes along our route, leaving our tires with a stain not unlike the stains on Lucy Ricardo's feet when she stomped grapes during the "I Love Lucy" episode in which the Ricardos and the Mertzes visited Italy. — Audrey Jordan, Hope, IN
- You could tell it was going to be a perfect beach day, maybe the best one all summer – when the air is the temperature of a gymnasium locker room and the sea sways over the dunes like a yoga instructor doing the downward facing dog. — Rita Kasperek, Oakland, CA
- She was standing weepily at her father's grave in the old family cemetery, where the ancient headstones tipped and tumbled like a flock of spring lambs, when she raised her weary eyes to see a shirtless man, his mighty thighs clutching the loins of a raging steed whose breath came hot as a desert wind, and made a mental note to get her hairdryer repaired. — Nancy Lee, Chapel Hill, NC
- The wheel of love had left its treadmarks in his chest once too often, like a knobby mud tire on a monster truck, or like a really big ponce wheel, the kind that tailors use to punch little holes in patterns and that would leave lots of nasty little welts if you were to run it up and down your arm. — Peter Loughlin, Santa Rosa, CA
- She was independent and impetuous and winning her heart would be like capturing lightning in a bottle, not the plastic kind that is prevalent everywhere today but the glass kind that I used to buy crème soda in at the service station, when they were actually SERVICE STATIONS, two blocks from my house back in the 50's and early 60's and I would return them for two cents deposit which was a quick source of income back then because my allowance was only ten cents a week. — Mario Martinez, San Jose, CA
- In considering the wisdom of entering upon an affair of the heart with the redoubtable Miss Ffiona Sensuosa, MacFadden Perfidy weighed the undeniable erotic advantages of such a confluence of physiologically coinciding characteristics against the demonstrably unfortunate fact of her exhibiting pronounced advantages over him in terms of wealth, intelligence and personality, and concluded that their union could possibly be inadvisable. — Stuart K. Allison, Driffield, East Riding of Yorkshire, England

## 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.

Did this site give you a smile? [Perhaps you would like to give a child a smile](#).

---

[home](#) | [contest winners](#) | [books](#) | [about](#) | [contact blfc](#)

[design info](#)

THE BULWER-LYTTON  
FICTION CONTEST  
WHERE WWW MEANS 'WRETCHED WRITERS WELCOME'