

# The Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest



## The Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest

Where “WWW” means “Wretched Writers Welcome”

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## 2011 Contest Winners

### Winner



-  Cheryl’s mind turned like the vanes of a wind-powered turbine, chopping her sparrow-like thoughts into bloody pieces that fell onto a growing pile of forgotten memories. — Sue Fondrie, Oshkosh, WI

The winner of the 2011 Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest is Sue Fondrie, an associate professor of Curriculum and Instruction at the [University of Wisconsin Oshkosh](#) who works groan-inducing wordplay into her teaching and administrative duties whenever possible. Out of school, she introduces two members of the next generation to the mysteries of Star Trek, Star Wars, and – of course – the art of the bad pun.

At 26 words, Prof. Fondrie’s submission is the shortest grand prize winner in Contest history, proving that bad writing need not be prolix, or even very wordy.

### Runner-Up:

- As I stood among the ransacked ruin that had been my home, surveying the aftermath of the senseless horrors and atrocities that had been perpetrated on my family and everything I hold dear, I swore to myself that no matter where I had to go, no matter what I had to do or endure, I would find the man who did this ... and when I did, when I did, oh, there would be words. — Rodney Reed, Ooltewah, TN

## Winner: Adventure



- From the limbs of ancient live oaks moccasins hung like fat black sausages – which are sometimes called boudin noir, black pudding or blood pudding, though why anyone would refer to a sausage as pudding is hard to understand and it is even more difficult to divine why a person would knowingly eat something made from dried blood in the first place – but be that as it may, our tale is of voodoo and foul murder, not disgusting food. — Jack Barry, Shelby, NC

## Runner-Up:

- Sensing somehow a scudding lay in the offing, Skipper Bob tallied his tasks: reef the mains'l, mizzen, and jib, strike and brail the fores'l, mizzen stays'l and baggywrinkles, bowse the halyards, mainsheets, jacklines and vang, turtle and belay fast the small cock, flemish the taffrail warps, batten the booby hatch, lay by his sou'wester, and find the bailing bucket. — Mike Mayfield, Austin, TX

## Winner: Crime



- Warily approaching the murder scene of Jeannie and Quentin Rose and needing to determine if this was the handiwork of the Scented Strangler – who had a twisted affinity for spraying his victims with his signature raspberry cologne – or that of a copycat, burnt-out insomniac detective Sonny Kirkland was sure of one thing: he'd have to stop and smell the Roses. — Mark Wisnewski, Flanders, NJ

## Runner-Up:

- Five minutes before his scheduled execution, Kip found his thoughts turning to his childhood – all those years ago before he had become a contract killer whose secret weakness was a severe peanut allergy, even back before he lost half of a toe in a gardening accident while doing community service – but especially to Corinne, the pretty girl down the street whom he might have ended up marrying one day if she had only shown him a little more damn respect. — Andrew Baker, Highland Park, NJ

## Dishonorable Mention:

- The victim was a short man, with a face full of contradictions: amalgam, composite, dental porcelain, with both precious and non-precious metals all competing for space in a mouth that was open, bloody, terrifying, gaping, exposing a clean set of asymptomatic impacted wisdom teeth, but clearly the object of some very comprehensive dental care, thought Dirk Graply, world-famous womanizer, tough guy, detective, and former dentist. — Terri Daniel, Seattle, WA

## Winner: Historical Fiction



- Napoleon's ship tossed and turned as the emperor, listening while his generals squabbled as they always did, splashed the tepid waters in his bathtub. — John Doble, New York City

### Runner-Up:

- The executioner sneered as the young queen ascended the stairs to the guillotine; in the old days, he thought, at least there was some buildup, a little time on the rack or some disemboweling, but nowadays everyone wants instant gratification. — Andrea Rossi, Wilmington, NC

### Winner: Purple Prose



- As his small boat scudded before a brisk breeze under a sapphire sky dappled with cerulean clouds with indigo bases, through cobalt seas that deepened to navy nearer the boat and faded to azure at the horizon, Ian was at a loss as to why he felt blue. — Mike Pedersen, North Berwick, ME

### Runner-Up:

- The Los Angeles morning was heavy with smog, the word being a portmanteau of smoke and fog, though in LA the pollutants are typically vehicular emissions as opposed to actual smoke and fog, unlike 19th-century London where the smoke from countless small coal fires often combined with fog off the Thames to produce true smog, though back then they were not clever enough to call it that. — Jack Barry, Shelby, NC

### Dishonorable Mentions:

- LaTrina – knowing he must live – let her hot, wet tongue slide slowly over Gladiator's injured ear, the taste reminding her of the late June flavor of a snow chain that had been removed from a tire and left to rust on the garage floor without being rinsed off. — Betsy Replogle, Nichols Hills, OK
- Like a bird gliding over the surface of a Wyoming river rippled by a gentle Spring breeze, his hand passed over her stretch marks. — Patty Liverance, Grand Rapids, MI
- Deep into that particular wet Saturday night ugly blues screamed out from the old man's horn like a hooker being hauled down a flight of stairs, regular thick loud thumps punctuated by nasty and erratic sharp barks. — John Benson, Carthage, MO
- She held my hand as if she were having a swollen barrel of fun which was off considering that my teeth were sitting on my bathroom cabinet (eight miles away, no less) and my elbow was peeling like a soggy coconut, the fine hairs of which were standing on edge in fear, as if the coconut had been reading "Dracula." — James Hearn, Canterbury, Kent, U.K.

## Winner: Romance



- As the dark and mysterious stranger approached, Angela bit her lip anxiously, hoping with every nerve, cell, and fiber of her being that this would be the one man who would understand – who would take her away from all this – and who would not just squeeze her boob and make a loud honking noise, as all the others had. — Ali Kawashima, Greensboro, NC

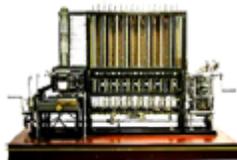
## Runner-Up:

- Deanna waited for him in a deliberate pose on the sailor-striped chaise lounge of the newly-remodeled Ramada, her bustier revealing the tops of her white breasts like eggs – eggs of the slightly undercooked, hard-boiled variety, showing a nascent jiggle with her apprehensive breath, eggs that were then peeled ever-so-carefully so as not to pierce the jellied, opaque albumen and unleash the longing, viscous yolk within – yes, she lay there, oblong and waiting to be deviled.— Meredith K. Gray, Ithaca, NY

## Dishonorable Mentions:

- They called her The Cat, because she made love the way she fought, rolling rapidly across the floor in a big, blurry ball of shrieking hair, fury, and dander, which usually solicited a “Shut up!” and flung shoe from one of the neighbors, and left her exhilarated lover with serious patchy bald spots and the occasional nicked ear. — Lisa Kluber, San Francisco, CA
- She gazed smolderingly at the mysterious rider, his body cloaked in enough shining black leather to outfit an Italian furniture store, wrapped so tightly each muscle stood out like a flamboyant Mexican hairdresser at an Alabamian monster truck rally; and he met her gaze with an intensity that couldn’t have been matched by even a starving junkyard dog in the meat aisle of a suburban supermarket. — Chris Kemp, Annapolis, MD

## Winner: Sci Fi



- Morgan “Bamboo” Barnes, Star Pilot of the Galaxia (flagship of the Solar Brigade), accepted an hors d’oeuvre from the triangular-shaped platter offered to him from the Princess Qwillia – lavender-skinned she was and busty, with two of her four eyes what Barnes called “bedroom eyes” – and marveled at how on her planet, Chlamydia-5, these snacks were called “Hi-Dee-Hoes” but on Earth they were simply called Ritz Crackers with Velveeta. — Greg Homer, Placerville, CA

## Runner-Up:

- Sterben counted calcium bars in the storage chamber, wondering why women back on Earth paid him little attention, but up here they seem to adore him, in fact, six fraichemaidens had already shown him their blinka. — Elizabeth Muenster, Columbia, PA

## Winner: Fantasy



- Within the smoking ruins of Keister Castle, Princess Gwendolyn stared in horror at the limp form of the loyal Centaur who died defending her very honor; “You may force me to wed,” she cried at the leering and victorious Goblin King, “but you’ll never be half the man he was.” — Terri Daniel, Seattle, WA

## Runner-Up:

- Veronica, two months pregnant and attempting to get her boyfriend to notice, and Ricky, who wanted to end things with his expansive girlfriend, sat at a table-for-two around lunchtime at the Olive Garden in Columbus, Ohio, eyeing the bottle of house rosé which, unbeknownst to them, doubled as the portal key to Khryсандelt: The land where everything glitters slightly more than normal. — Andrew Allingham, Fairfax, VA

## Winner: Vile Puns



- Detective Kodiak plucked a single hair from the bearskin rug and at once understood the grisly nature of the crime: it had been a ferocious act, a real honey, the sort of thing that could polarize a community, so he padded quietly out the back to avoid a cub reporter waiting in the den. — Joe Wyatt, Amarillo, TX

## Runner-Up

- Monroe Mills’ innovative new fabric-dyeing technique was a huge improvement over stone-washing: denim apparel was soaked in color and cured in an 800-degree oven, and the company’s valued young dye department supervisor was as skilled as they came; yes, no one could say Marilyn was a normal jean baker. — Marvin Veto, Greensboro, NC

## Dishonorable Mentions:

- Convinced that the fabled Lost Treasure of Eggsbury was concealed within the statue of the beloved Sister Mary Francis in the village square, Professor Smithee would steal away in the darkest hour of each night to try to silently chip away at her impervious granite vestments – a vain and fruitless nightly exercise, he well knew, but it was a hard habit to break. — Rodney Reed, Ooltewah, TN
- 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 scrabbled hard and it drove him bonkers that she considered life just a game. — Linda Boatright, Omaha, NE

## Winner: Western



- The laser-blue eyes of the lone horseman tracked the slowly lengthening lariat of a Laredo dawn as it snaked its way through Dead Man’s Pass into the valley below and snared the still sleeping town’s tiny church steeple in a noose of light with the oh-so-familiar glow of a Dodge City virgin’s last maiden blush. — Graham Thomas, St. Albans, Hertfordshire, U.K

## Runner-Up:

- Sunburned and lost, Jake tightened the noose around Randy’s diaper-white neck and growled, “Any last words, varmint?” to which Randy replied, “Don’t be afraid to go out on a limb, Jake – that’s where all the fruit is!” which marked the first and last time Jake and the boys hired a life coach to lead one of their cattle drives. — Lisa Kluber, San Francisco, CA

## Miscellaneous Dishonorable Mentions

- Rosy lips aquiver, Lauren drizzled with tears the wave-tousled sands of Wampauset Municipal Area Public Access Beach, hearing in every shriek of shriek and plaint of plover the ancient wail – kreeAHH, kreeAHH! – of good women widowed by the sea, as well as tonal nuances indicating the shorebirds’ relative levels of copulative receptiveness, for our umber-eyed heroine is both lover and ornithologist. — Anna Springfield, Raleigh, NC
- Business was kinda slow at the “If You Build It” sperm bank. — Simon Petrie, Hawker ACT, AUSTRALIA
- Day broke upon the Baroness von Hestach with the pitiable insistence of all that she despised – a gray and unattractive intrusion into her sumptuous bedchamber, much like the Baron. — Holly Kohler, Concord, MA
- No one walked down Bleak Street at night – not where hobgoblins hobnobbed, skeletons skulked, vampires vamped, and the dumpster behind the Chinese buffet smelled like zombies. — Bill Hartmann, Dallas, TX
- Dawn crept up like the panther on the gazelle, except it was light, not dark like a panther, and a panther, though quiet, could never be as silent as the light of dawn, so really the analogy doesn’t hold up well, as cool as it sounds, but it still is a great way to begin a story; just not necessarily this particular one. — Warren Blair, Ashburn, VA
- As the young officer studied the oak door, he was reminded of his girlfriend – for she was also slightly unhinged, occasionally sticky, and responded well to being stripped and given a light oiling. — Ian Fishlock, Harrow, London U.K.
- The beast lumbered toward the maiden, its fetid breath announcing its presence to her (since she couldn’t see him due to the blindfold her captors had tied around her head), its jaws gaping open like a sub sandwich with too much meat, so that no matter how hard you try, you can’t possibly keep the lettuce or the tomatoes from squeezing out onto the table or, worse, your lap. — Donna P. Titus, Freeland, PA

- All the signs, both actual and imagined, made it immensely clear there was trouble ahead for Marlene and, yet, her childlike sense of hope that maybe he was “the one” kept her foot on the accelerator pedal of life even when she came to the “bridge out” warning handwritten in Magic Marker on Myron’s Polident cup. — Karen Arutunoff, Tulsa, OK
- The grisly scene before him was like nothing Detective Smith had ever seen before, but there were millions and millions of things he had never seen before, and he couldn’t help but wonder which of them it was. — Sean Griffin, Tacoma, WA
- Maggie said they were birthmarks and they very well could be, but the three very small black moles in a horizontal line just above her right eyebrow looked like an ellipsis to some, but to others who did not know what an ellipsis was, they looked like three very small black moles in a horizontal line just above Maggie’s right eyebrow. — Betty Jean Murray, Richland, TX
- As she downed the last Dixie cup of Listerine and let every drop of its 21.6 percent alcohol content hit her like an icy mint anti-cavity brickbat, Karen squinted at the breasts dangling like two electrocuted ospreys from the powerline of her heart and, with a despondency born of a thousand nights spent gaining a decent skill level at internet mahjong, wondered how she and they had all three sunk so low. — Anna Springfield, Raleigh, NC
- Her flaming red hair whipped in the wind like a campfire, stroking the embers of passion hidden within the hearth of my heart and I began to burn with a desire that seared me to my very core – oh the things that I would do if only I weren’t incarcerated for arson! — Aubrey Johnson, Edmonton, AB, Canada
- Carmela’s knees buckled and she (a responsible consumer) collapsed down onto the sidewalk, as her environmentally green grocery bag bounced – spewing forth organic mixed lettuces, crispy eco-friendly cucumbers, juicy natural cherry tomatoes, home-grown herbs – while in perfect synchronization, a recyclable plastic bottle burst open, spraying droplets of Lite-Italian dressing upon the freshly tossed salad. — Margie Parker, Weeki Wachee, FL
- After five years as a freelance writer, Greg finally managed to double his income, letting him add a processed cheese product slice to the baloney sandwiches he had for breakfast, lunch and dinner. — Lawrence Person, Austin, TX
- The mostly, but not quite, extinguished fire’s dying embers writhed upon the floor like tiny little wasps which someone has just stuck in the abdomen with a needle, and they are frantically contracting around the metal protrusion in their gut in a desperate effort to remove it which, let’s face it, is hopeless so they are just slowly dying and good riddance to them too, because unlike bees – which actually have some purpose in the world – wasps are just mean, ornery wastes of space, and who can blame someone for spearing them? — Darian McGee, Petal, MS
- “Bleeek!” nine-year-old prince Crawthula, lord of Undaria and heir to the vampire throne, cried as the lollypop, expertly wielded by his irksome sister, left a bright red goeey smear across his pale cheek, shattering the image of tranquility he was ineffectually trying to maintain in front of his undead ministers and beginning the tirade that resulted in them both being sent to coffin before the first human had been brought out to feast on. — Eric A. Vanderburg, Cleveland, OH
- They kissed with the fury and suction of a dart that was shot onto the back of the bus driver’s fat bald head by the red-headed kid that was too big for his age (the rumor was he was “held back”) and everyone knew was going to end up in prison, or perhaps a prop comic if he straightened out in time. — D. Drake Daggett, Omro, WI
- Awakened by a howling wind snapping branches against her new but poorly installed storm windows, Stella heard another sound she found puzzling so, grabbing her trusty Colt Python, she snuck stealthily

downstairs to find an oddly-dressed gnome-like man methodically dropping breath mints onto her freshly-waxed kitchen floor. — Ann Hammack, Pittsboro, NC

- “You’re not in Kansas anymore, people!” the gruff Marine Captain bellowed as I wheeled myself along the tarmac of Planet Cliché, the only place in the Galaxy where you could mine Unobtainium, undergo the powerful Eywa ritual with a blue eight-foot-tall alien Princess, and discover a hunter-gatherer people who despite decades of human contact still hadn’t developed the wheel, the composite bow, or toilet paper. — Adrian McKinty
- Urgh the howler monkey was sort of the leader of his troop, though not old enough to be a silverback and not having fathered more than a couple of sons, but he did know where the good berries were and how to avoid the leopards, anacondas, and especially the hairless apes, the ones who crashed through the forest only to stand behind a tree and breathe noisily, and watch them and sometimes leave bunches of those disgusting bananas. — David S. Nelson, Falls Church, VA

## 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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