

LAW REVIEW

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BULWER-LYTTON FICTION CONTEST RESULTS

Every year we excerpt a handful of winners from the Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest, an international literary parody of competitor's bad opening sentences to imaginary novels.

The competition is to honor the memory of Edward George Earl Bulwer-Lytton who opened his novel *Paul Clifford* with Snoopy's immortal words, "It was a dark and stormy night." Apparently, that was bad writing. Being something of a bad writer myself, I feel qualified to select my favorites from the 2009 contest.

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Folks say that if you listen real close at the height of the full moon, when the wind is blowin' off Nantucket Sound from the nor' east and the dogs are howlin' for no earthly reason, you can hear the awful screams of the crew of the "Ellie May," a sturdy whaler Captained by John McTavish; for it was on just such a night when the rum was flowin' and, Davey Jones be damned, big John brought his men on deck for the first of several screaming contests. (First Place Winner)

* * *

Twas a dark and stormy Night Before Christmas, well not the night before to be honest, it was two days after, when the local newspaper editor finally (readers

wondered what took him so long) pulled the plug, not a real plug like a cork, just the expression—thus ending the writing career of a certain guaranteed winner of the Bulwer-Lytton bad writing contest (legal category).

* * *

The wind dry-shaved the cracked earth like a dull razor--the double edge kind from the plastic bag that you shouldn't use more than twice, but you do; but Trevor Earp had to face it as he started the second morning of his hopeless search for Drover, the Irish Wolfhound he had found as a pup near death from a fight with a prairie dog and nursed back to health, stolen by a traveling circus so that the monkey would have something to ride.

* * *

How best to pluck the exquisite Toothpick of Ramses from between a pair of acrimonious vipers before the demonic Guards of Nicobar returned should have held Indy's full attention, but in the back of his mind he still wondered why all the others who had agreed to take part in his wife's holiday scavenger hunt had been assigned to find stuff like a Phillips screwdriver or blue masking tape.

* * *

She walked into my office on legs as long as one of those long-legged birds that you see in Florida - the pink ones, not the white ones - except that she was standing on both of them, not just one of them, like those birds, the pink

ones, and she wasn't wearing pink, but I knew right away that she was trouble, which those birds usually aren't.

* * *

Darnell knew he was getting hung out to dry when the D.A. made him come clean by airing other people's dirty laundry; the plea deal was a new wrinkle and there were still issues to iron out, but he hoped it would all come out in the wash - otherwise he had folded like a cheap suit for nothing.

* * *

He slowly ran his fingers through her long black hair, which wasn't really black because she used Preference by L'Oreal to color it (because "she was worth it"); her carrot-colored roots were starting to show, and it reminded him of the time he'd covered his car's check engine light with black electrical tape, but a faint orange glow still shone around the edges.

* * *

The dame sauntered silently into Rocco's office, but she didn't need to speak; the blood-soaked gown hugging her ample curves said it all: "I am a shipping heiress whose second husband was just murdered by Albanian assassins trying to blackmail me for my rare opal collection," or maybe, "Do you know a good dry cleaner?"

* * *

It was a dark and stormy night, well, not pitch dark so much a plumby, you know, that time of night where it turns into that kind of eggplant color, which I hate-- eggplant not the time of night--and it wasn't stormy so much as drizzly, like a cold that's not so bad but really annoying, where you sound a little plugged up and all your mucus just sort of hovers at the edge of your nostrils or drips down the back of your throat, it was like that.

* * *

Grimly aware of the rapidly approaching disaster, Spiderman leaped from rooftop to flagpole, from flagpole to fire escape, hurling himself recklessly from building to building, darting glances through every window in his desperate search for one vital room, while silently cursing the fact that the last thing he had done before donning a one-piece skintight costume, was to eat a large bowl of hot chili.

* * *

Swain had always come out of bar fights unscathed, built as he was like a '70 Dodge pickup (with that "Adventurer" styling package), but after tangling with Big Luther tonight, he felt like he'd been in a wreck, not a five-car pileup, exactly, but a pretty bad fender bender, busted headlights, maybe a bumper knocked loose, and, for sure, his tailgate dragging.

* * *

As Oedipus watched his mother gracefully glide across the great hall, he felt a stirring in his loins which he immediately regretted but then quickly dismissed, for he knew if these wanton desires for his mother were wrong then someone would have named the condition by now, thus proving once again that where his emotions were concerned there was only one description for Oedipus . . . complex.

* * *

As always, that morning he awoke to the melodious sound of a stream of water cascading into a still pool, punctuated by several ominous silences-- and he could judge, by the length of the silences and the volume of the cascade, just how much of his three-year-old son's urine he would have to wade through to get to the sink.

* * *

A dark and stormy night it was; in torrents fell the rain --except at occasional intervals, when, by a violent gust of wind was it checked, as up the streets it swept, (for in London it is that lies our scene), along the housetops rattling, and the scanty flame of the lamps fiercely agitating, that against the darkness, struggled.

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A PROSPEROUS AND HEALTHY NEW YEAR

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