LAUNCH-PAD



PROSE WRITING COMPETITION

TOP 100

FINALIST BOOK

A GIRL CALLED REDEMPTION by Sophie Neville

Book — Drama | Period

On the cusp of the 1964 revolution in Zanzibar, a teenage girl who fled her village takes a job working at the house of a wealthy European family, but the conflict threatens to separate her from the doctor she has grown to love.

A GLIMPSE AT THE ECLIPSE by Susan Hahn

Book — Drama

When a world-renowned photographer loses his eyesight while hiking in the Himalayas, his journey to rediscover his will to live has ripple effects on the people around him, who each go on their own path from darkness to light.

A MOST PECULIAR STAKEOUT by Josh Taylor

Short Story — Horror | Sci-Fi | Thriller

A private investigator is brought to Italy under mysterious circumstances to look into his client's ex-wife, who the wealthy man suspects of murdering his last two hired detectives.

AFTER THE SPIRITS COME by Beth Ford

Book - Drama | Period

After the events of *A Christmas Carol*, Ebenezer Scrooge finds that being a good person is more challenging than he imagined, and not everyone is willing to forget the heartless miser he once was.

ANNA by Amanda ReCupido

Book — Drama | Romance

A bored, wealthy housewife finds new passion when she begins a risky affair with a documentary filmmaker which could cost her everything. *Anna Karenina* in suburbia.

ART OF THE KILL by Joe Cooke

Book — Action | Thriller

After attempting to kill her abusive stepfather, a 14-year-old girl is taken in by a covert agency of assassins where she's thrown into a brutal game of survival that she has to win in order to escape and save her sister.

BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR

by Cara Highsmith and Gordon Jensen

Book — Sci-Fi

Decades after disappearing during a deep space exploration mission, the Alpha Centauri I crew returns home to find a world devastated by a pandemic for which they may hold the only cure.

BIG FAT F@!K UP by Lawrence Allan Pontius

Book — Comedy | Drama | Mystery

A recovering addict who was once a child star gets a second shot at fame when he takes a job as a private investigator at his mother's failing Los Angeles law firm.

BLACK SNOWMAN by Conrad Walters

Book — Sci-Fi | Young Adult

When people across Australia are suddenly unable to die, a teenager and his friends investigate the death of their neighbor, reportedly the last person in the country to pass away.

BUZZWORTHY by Mike Comforto and Nicole Comforto

Book — Adventure | Comedy

A recently fired professor and her journalist sister investigate the apparent kidnapping of a wealthy reality show contestant which could have surprisingly massive geopolitical implications.

CLOUDS CLEARING by Dave Clair

Short Story — Drama | Fantasy

A man attempts a desperate, and possibly hallucinatory, plan to preserve his father's memories before they are lost to Alzheimer's, with the help of a spirit in the clouds.

CROSSTOWN by Loren Cooper

Book — Action | Adventure | Fantasy

A sorcerer-for-hire investigates his mentor's death in a strange world where anything is possible.

DARKNESS SHINES by Kirsty Boss

Book — Fantasy

When her supernatural powers suddenly weaken, a ruthless woman sets out to discover why, but she instead uncovers an ancient evil that threatens her entire world.

DON'T SHOOT THE PIANO PLAYER by Kevin Engelking

Book — Adventure | Drama | Period

A piano player in 1948 Seattle is unwittingly thrust into the search for the lost Amber Room treasure, putting him in the crosshairs of Nazis, Soviets, and the United States government at the onset of the Red Scare.

DUCK ROAST ON THE 38TH PARALLEL by Alicia Yang

Short Story — Drama

A young Korean American woman visits with her extended family a few miles from the North Korean border and uncovers a secret from her childhood while exploring the cultural chasm within her identity.

EMMA & THE GOBBLING BANDITS by Teigan Isobel

Book — Adventure | Family

A young inventor with dreams of being an entomologist accidentally releases a plague of mites, threatening her home and forcing her to take on pirates, carnivorous plants, and an evil overlord.

ERASED by Catherine "Kat" Boyd

Short Story — Drama

A Black journalist inadvertently erases the memory of slavery from every white American, leading to a nation more divided than ever.

FAR ROCKAWAY by Kim Kolarich

Short Story — Drama

A young boy growing up in the Bronx dreams of a vacation in Far Rockaway that could save his parents' crumbling relationship.

4 LAUNCH ✓ PAD

FLOOD MONEY by Adam McCulloch

Book — Crime | Drama

In the aftermath of a hurricane, an amateur coin collector and his friends embark on a high-risk scam to counterfeit a fortune and convince the government to exchange it for real money after the next big storm.

FOOTPRINTS IN WATER by Twist Phelan

Short Story — Drama | Mystery | Thriller

An African-born New York detective looks into the case of a missing girl from a Congolese family, dredging up memories of his homeland.

GARY by Jeremiah Murphy

Book — Dark Comedy | Drama

A woman learns that her ex is married to a man who all of her friends insist was a college classmate of theirs, but who she has no recollection of ever existing.

GHOST DICK by Matt Harry

Book — Comedy | Horror

A paranormal detective who can see people's souls is forced to go on a dangerous mission to find one of the deadliest souls ever born.

GONE TO GROUND by Morgan Hatch

Book — Drama | Thriller

A teenager struggling to keep his younger brother from joining a gang discovers a corporate conspiracy to take advantage of his low-income neighborhood.

HEARTBEAT by Samuel Finn

Book — Drama | Thriller

An emergency room doctor fights to save lives while struggling to move past his own trauma.

HELL SLOWLY CREEPS by Raquel Levitt

Short Story — Drama | Period | Romance

In war-torn 17th century Ireland, a young married woman gives shelter to a wounded man on the run from Cromwell's bounty hunters.

HOME FRONT by C. D. "Pete" Peterson

Book — Drama | Memoir | Period

A New England farm boy and his family face the rationing, blackouts, and fear of WWII.

HOW BAD WILL CLEA GET? by Carol Lazare

Short Story — Crime | Drama

An aimless young woman plots to rob the bank she works for in order to find her inner peace.

HOW TO STEAL A HOMINID by James Cusick

Short Story — Drama | Sci-Fi

A grieving anthropologist is brought in as an interpreter for a boy cloned from proto-human DNA, but he soon realizes the scientist in charge of the project has questionable motives.

I WISH KEVIN WAS A BAG OF SAND by Bobby Miller

Short Story — Comedy | Fantasy

Following his divorce and losing custody of his son, an office worker attempts to live his life as usual despite the fact that he has dissolved into a sentient pile of powder.

IMMORTAL ALCHEMY by Pamela Danforth Yaco

Book — Fantasy | Period | Young Adult

A teenage nomad joins an alchemist in plague-ravaged 17th century London to hunt down a lost manuscript that contains the secret to an elixir of immortality in the hopes of finding a cure to the deadly disease, but a ruthless secret society has darker plans for the book.

INSIDE OUT by Lisa Renee Jones

Book — Drama | Romance | Thriller

A young teacher is drawn into a world of erotic intrigue when she discovers a stranger's journal in a storage unit and becomes obsessed with finding the woman who wrote it.

JUST A GIRL IN THE WHIRL by Annie Wood

Book — Drama | Young Adult

A teenager struggling to care for her bipolar mother and younger sisters finds her world spinning out of control when her long-absent alcoholic father returns and wants back into their lives.

LANDLOCKED SUSHI IN THE DEAD CAMEL MOUNTAINS

by Harris Kauffman

Short Story — Sci-Fi

While on a hike in the mountain wilderness, a lonely rock collector stumbles across a sushi pop-up whose mysterious chef offers a free menu with dangerous repercussions.

LARCENY IN MY SOUL - LIFE OF A PLAYBOY BUNNY

by Jan Marlyn Reesman

Book — Comedy | Drama | Memoir | Period

A former Playboy Bunny details her journey from ugly duckling to cottontail in the Playboy Clubs of the 60s and 70s.

LIFE AFTER DEATH by Rick Miners

Short Story — Drama | Period | Romance

Two young strangers meet in medieval England during the Black Plague and take on new identities in a bid for freedom, love, and purpose.

MARBLE BIRDS by Larry Hendricks

Short Story — Drama

A man relives an incident from his youth when his dying father confronts him about it.

MEET JACK by Catherine Keane

Short Story — Sci-Fi

Unsatisfied with a mediocre relationship, a woman designs the perfect artificial companion to take her boyfriend's place but struggles to get her family and friends to accept that he is a robot.

MISS FORTUNE by Juan Villegas

Short Story — Fantasy | Thriller

A man takes home a fortune teller's discarded sign and soon realizes that for all the good luck it brings him, it is cursed to cause disastrous misfortune for others in exchange.

MISS MINNIE'S BOARDING HOUSE by Bonnie Ilyse Tunick

Book — Drama | Period

A multigenerational family of Midwestern women run a boarding house in 1950s Chicago.

NEPALI FOR "DUCT TAPE" by Stephanie Bousley

Short Story — Comedy

A recent film school grad produces a wealthy white woman's vanity project in Nepal.

NIGHT SHIFT by Mike Waterston

Short Story — Fantasy | Horror

A reclusive gravekeeper who is responsible for keeping the spirits in the cemetery at rest has his daily routine complicated when he's forced to chaperone his boss's teenage daughter for the day.

NOTHINGGOLD.EXE by Brian del Rio

Short Story — Sci-Fi

A young girl learns that she is a robot replacement for a dead child, engineered to help a woman overcome her grief, but her "mother" no longer wants her.

NUMBER 14 by Allen Blackwell

Short Story — Drama | Fantasy

The residents of Number 14 become the prime suspects when their three children — Wendy, John, and Michael Darling — disappear right under their noses.

OF PUMPERS AND BATHERS by Tanya Klein

Short Story — Sci-Fi

A working class man struggling to keep his family alive in a future where water is currency runs into an old friend who attempts to open his eyes to the unjustness of their society.

OPEN SORCERY by Rob Sheely

Book — Fantasy

In a world where magic is developed and produced like software, a small, struggling company takes on the lucrative but risky task of debugging a demon.

PATRIOT DAY by Dana Dillon

Book — Drama | Period

When a British officer and an aristocrat hiding a carnal secret launch a raid to destroy minutemen arms in colonial Massachusetts, an enslaved Black man and a reluctant militiaman must battle the British regulars in the accidental Battle of Lexington and Concord – 'the shot heard round the world.'

PIG by Jessica Wood

Book — Drama | Thriller

In this modern take on *Bluebeard*, a woman travels to L.A. to assume the assistant job to a high-powered producer formerly held by her sister, who has gone missing, only to learn that her sister's predecessors all seemed to have disappeared as well.

PROJECT WILD by Michael Schwartz

Book — Coming-of-Age | Drama | Mystery

After surviving a deadly wilderness school founded by her father, a beloved but unstable counselor reunites with her estranged brother, forcing her to unravel the dark secrets of her past.

RED HOT by Joshua Scicluna

Book — Crime | Coming-of-Age | Drama | Young Adult

A teen boy is forced to take over his grandfather's illegal drug farm when the man is held for ransom by a rival dealer.

RESCUE BOT by Thomas Thonson

Short Story — Dark Comedy | Sci-Fi

A drug addict is assigned a live-in government-mandated intervention robot to get him off drugs, and finds that this "machine" has something to teach him about being human.

RISE - VALLEY OF THE DOLLS by M.D. Waters

Book — Action | Sci-Fi | Young Adult

A teen girl who competes in a violent, high-stakes underground robot fighting ring is recruited to catch the city's most notorious crime boss with the help of her friends and their illegal fighter bot.

SAN CAMILIO by Katie Antonsson

Book — Drama | Romance

The prince of a small island nation desperately wants to abdicate the throne, but is afraid of disappointing his family, until he meets a troubled young woman who could change everything.

SCURRY BACK by Aaron Brock Dehn

Short Story — Drama | Horror | LGBTQ

A closeted man returns to his small Texas hometown for his grandmother's funeral, only to face the ghosts of the past, both literal and figurative, that still haunt him.

SEOUL FOOD by Sarai Koo

Book — Comedy | Drama | Memoir

Through a collection of autobiographical vignettes, a woman unpacks issues of Korean family expectations, identity issues, and life pressures while living the double life of a CIA agent.

SHOES by Andrew Phillips

Book — Drama

A man copes with the sudden death of his son in Afghanistan by reading the letters the son wrote to his dead grandmother as a teenager, and gains new insight into the person his child was.

SHUT-EYE by Kevin O'Hare

Book — Drama | Thriller

A man is released from prison due to a terminal sleeping disorder diagnosis and moves in with his estranged sister who runs a domestic violence shelter. When his new home is attacked, he seeks revenge alongside the teenage daughter of one of the late residents.

SISTERS by Azenath Adede

Short Story — Sci-Fi

In a future society where the rich have health companions meant to prolong their own lives, a young woman dying of a terminal illness ends the contract of her lifelong companion so she can be free.

SIX SAGE SOCIETY by Allison Hong Merrill

Book — Coming-of-Age | Drama | Period

A mixed race young woman struggling with her family's recent move discovers that she is the heir to the ancient imperial court of Genghis Khan.

SOME OF MY BEST PATIENTS WERE ANIMALS by K.C. Nayfield

Book — Drama | Memoir

A veterinarian practices for over forty years in Florida, treating all types of animals and facing heartwarming and heartbreaking experiences alike.

STELA by R. C. Frink

Short Story — Horror

An amateur archeologist gets a chance to put his degree to use in the jungles of Guatemala, but he uncovers unexpected horrors alongside ancient ruins.

TALKING MAN by John Broadhead

Book — Sci-Fi

A prominent commentator who speaks out against space travel as a waste of resources agrees to go into space with a mega-corporation in order to gain a larger platform.

TERRAFORMING by Robert O'Malley

Short Story — Crime | Drama | Fantasy

A psychic who covers up crimes for the Philadelphia mob encounters an equally powerful psychic from the Department of Justice, jump-starting a dangerous cat-and-mouse game.

THE COP KILLER OF TADE COUNTY by Mosby Barley

Short Story — Drama | Thriller

A corrupt rural police department faces an unexpected threat when the deputies begin to be killed off by a legendary vigilante.

THE FIRST AFTER by Jasmeen Siddiqui

Book — Drama | Romance

An aspiring poet living abroad in Portugal is reunited with her ex-boyfriend when he comes to visit, forcing them to figure out who they are to each other now.

THE FREEK OF LEESVILLE by David Vienna

Book — Dark Comedy | Drama | Young Adult

A teenager so obsessed with horror that he has a slasher movie monster as an imaginary friend is forcibly enrolled in a private school where he must unmask a vicious bully.

THE GIANT OF ILLINOIS by Adam Sleper

Book — Drama | Period | True

The tragic true story of Robert Wadlow, the tallest person who ever lived, as he traveled across 1930s America exploiting his height to earn enough money to save his family home.

THE HIDDEN COUNTRY by Stuart Hardy

Book — Sci-Fi | Thriller

On a routine business flight, a man experiences a strange layover in a mysterious authoritarian country whose existence is hidden from the outside world.

THE HOUSE ON DESCO DRIVE by Kay Smith-Blum

Book — Drama | Period

A former justice of the 1925 all-female Texas State Supreme Court bonds with her new next door neighbor, a mixed-race pre-law student who is fending off racist threats and fighting to keep her Dallas home as the 1960s Civil Rights movement embroils the nation.

THE LAST HISTORIAN by Tanya Klein

Short Story — Drama | Sci-Fi

When humanity decides to erase everyone's memory to reduce conflict, a group of historians and academics hide in an underground bunker to retain the final record of human history as the world above dissolves into unexpected chaos.

THE LIES MY IMMIGRANT PARENTS TOLD ME by Carolina Caro

Book — Drama | Memoir

A second-generation immigrant woman leaves behind her lucrative big pharma job to pursue her dream of acting.

THE LIES OF LOVE by Kelly Pierce

Short Story — Drama | Period

A pregnant teenager is thrown out of her conservative home in 19th century Ireland and flees to America for the chance at a new life for her and her child.

THE MAD QUEEN AND LAVENDER FARM by Michael Kramer

Book — Drama | Romance

A bee specialist clashes with the lavender farmer he's meant to help, but an unexpected romance develops as he repairs the farm's hives.

THE MAN WHO GOT OUT OF JAPAN by Sophie Neville

Book — Drama | Period | True

An East African man enlists as a medic in the Allied army to earn money to marry the woman of his dreams, but after his capture by Japanese forces he must endure brutal treatment as he tries to survive in a WWII prisoner-of-war camp.

THE MOON IS BROKEN by Paula Conner

Short Story — Drama

A year after his daughter's sudden death, a man revisits the site of the tragedy in an attempt to move on.

THE OTHER ONE by Chrysler Szarlan

Book — Drama | Mystery | Thriller

A woman discovers she was adopted as a replacement for a child who went missing, but tracking down the truth about her sister unravels a decades-long mystery that threatens her freedom and puts her in the crosshairs of a serial kidnapper.

THE PARIS CONNECTION by Lorraine Brown

Book — Comedy | Drama | Romance

A woman gets separated from her boyfriend on the train to Amsterdam for his sister's wedding, leaving her stuck with an annoying Frenchman who is more charming than she wants to admit.

THE ROCKET SCIENTIST by Arthur Geis

Book — Sci-Fi | Thriller

A NASA scientist's rover finds bacteria on Mars that could hold the secret to reversing climate change, but forces inside the government and from rival nations threaten to destroy her discovery.

THE ROYAL CORONER by Matthew Morde

Book — Drama | Mystery | Period

In medieval England, a royal coroner with an infamous and rebellious past must solve a deadly mystery on the estate of a powerful lord.

THE SUMMER GIRL by Katherine Hill Brown

Book — Coming-of-Age | Drama | Period

A small-town tomboy and a spunky Jewish girl from Brooklyn find themselves caught in a firestorm of old suspicions and new peril after arson destroys a crumbling resort in upstate New York.

THE SWAMP REX by Cody Pearce

Short Story — Horror

Years after her brother went missing in a Florida swamp, a park ranger finds evidence of the legendary monster rumored to be responsible for several disappearances, including her brother's.

THE TALKERS ARE TALKING by Janna Grace

Book — Horror | Sci-Fi

An undiagnosed autistic woman fights to survive in the sewers of a post-apocalyptic world where exposure to air aboveground has turned people into cannibals who act just like anyone else... until they go too long without a meal.

THE WALK by Alianna Jaqua

Short Story — Drama | Sci-Fi

Reeling from her divorce, a woman gets lost in a storm while on a long walk and returns home to a parallel universe.

THE WATCHER by Noah Pohl

Short Story — Drama

A young woman reflects on the tragic accidental death of her ex-boyfriend, a small town rebel who fell victim to New Hampshire's state symbol: The Old Man of the Mountain.

THE WRONGDOERS by Becca Mann

Book — Sci-Fi | Young Adult

Twin teenage sisters in a post-apocalyptic society prepare for transition into adulthood in an idealized simulated world, but when they discover there's something beyond their isolated desert community, they're forced to choose between each other and eternity.

THESE WOODS by Allison Mick

Short Story — Horror

Logging is the most dangerous job in North America, especially in Humboldt County, where the redwood forest fights back.

THEY USED TO CALL ME CHAPLAIN by Graham Kirkham

Short Story — Horror | Period | Western

The only survivor of an ill-fated Arctic expedition is captured by a small town sheriff after being accused of cannibalism and shares the story of why he must eat human flesh to stay alive.

THOUGHTLESS ATOMS by Jesse Kendall

Book — Drama | Memoir

A man recounts his unique and sometimes traumatizing journey of drug addiction, disease, sex work, trauma, and finally recovery through the lens of science.

TUESDAY AFTERNOON/WEDNESDAY MORNING

by Deborah Riley

Short Story — Drama

An afternoon and morning in the life of a grieving mother.

TUSCAN SHADOWS by A.J. Hamer

Short Story — Drama

An American studying abroad in Florence is drawn into a conspiracy to cover up his roommate's murder in order to protect himself.

UNACCEPTABLE RISK: A MEMOIR OF MARRIAGE AND TAINTED

BLOOD by Kathy MacKay

Book — Drama | Memoir

Following the death of her husband due to a medical disaster that infected him with HIV, a photojournalist sets out to expose the truth of how four pharmaceutical companies sold tainted blood products to tens of thousands of hemophiliacs.

UNCONTROLLED DETONATIONS by Mary-Denise Tabar

Book — Drama | Memoir

A woman recounts her experience as an aid worker in Iraq and Afghanistan between 2003 and 2010.

UNDERTOW by Noah Pohl

Short Story — Drama

A beleaguered New Mexico police officer is pushed to his limits while working near one of the deadliest suicide bridges in America.

VANCOUVER SKIES by Marie Arsenault

Book — Comedy | Drama

A young autistic woman tries to solve her interpersonal problems and mounting student debt in one fell swoop by moonlighting as a call girl, but she never expects to get outed on reality TV.

VIEWER DISCRETION IS ADVISED by Benjamin Gleisser

Book — Drama | Fantasy | Horror

A elderly mentally ill woman struggles to understand what's real and what isn't as she and her husband with anger management issues navigate a challenging world.

WE ARRIVE UNINVITED by Jen Knox

Book — Drama | Fantasy

A teenage girl asks her grandmother — whose perceived mental illness may in reality be a clairvoyant gift passed down in the family — for help communicating with her mother from beyond the grave.

WE REST IN THE DARK by Joshua Rodgers

Book — Drama | Mystery | Thriller

A man returns to his hometown for the funeral of his childhood pastor and mentor, reuniting him with old friends as they face the consequences of an unsolved crime they committed together 20 years ago.

WHEN I GROW UP I WANT TO BE A NO ONE

by Celia Rettenmaier

Short Story — Drama

An anthropologist studies a tribe she grew up visiting with her parents, where identities are passed down like family heirlooms, forcing her to reconcile her own identity in the process.

WRESTLING DEMONS by Thomas Thonson

Short Story — Comedy | Drama | Horror

A man attends a company retreat to unleash his inner "wild man" in hopes of becoming more successful and returns to find a wild version of himself trying to take over his life.

ZACK CRESSID IS INVISIBLE! by David Lesser

Book — Family | Fantasy

An 8-year-old boy suddenly becomes invisible but soon realizes it's not as cool as he thought it would be.

ZARA by Melvin Sterne

Book — Crime | Drama

A Muslim sex worker and a wealthy Hindu policewoman join forces to solve the murder of a Mumbai police commissioner and recover a cell phone with incriminating photographs of a number of powerful men.