


LAUNCH  PAD



**PROSE**  
**WRITING COMPETITION**  
**TOP 100**

---

## **80 CENTS OF WONDER** by Roland Heep

**Book** — Adventure | Family | Fantasy

A 12-year-old boy teams up with his lab partner on an epic adventure to track down his father, who went missing while reporting for a sensational tabloid six years earlier.

---

## **80 KRONER** by Stephen Bonino

**Short Story** — Drama | Fantasy | Period

An executioner who has been spiriting innocent convicts out of the kingdom for years is faced with a dilemma when the king orders him to perform a public execution.

---

## **A MURDER IN SHINJUKU** by Yugo Hoshi

**Short Story** — Drama | Thriller

A reclusive young woman becomes obsessed with her neighbor.

---

## **A VALENTINE FROM YOUR MOTHER** by Chloe Stillwell

**Book** — Drama

A woman cares for her mother after a stroke and reminisces about their shared past and the unique experience of Southern womanhood.

---

## **AIN'T NEVER NO SNOW IN ATLANTIS** by Bobby Burnett Lee

**Book** — Crime | Drama

A man returns to his small Texas hometown to investigate the suspicious death of his adoptive father and attempt to save the woman he loves, who has gone missing under mysterious circumstances that may connect to his father's death.

---

## **AMANDA SAYS** by Carleigh Foutch

**Short Story** — Sci-Fi

A woman invests in a virtual assistant meant to help her navigate the disingenuous corporate world but soon realizes the technology expects her to follow its every demand... or else.

---

## **AMELIA by Morgan Rothwell**

**Book** — Horror | Mystery | Period | Supernatural

In late 19th century New Zealand, a girl's enigmatic cousin comes to live with the family after the death of her parents. When the cousin goes missing, presumed dead, the mystery will haunt the town for decades to come.

---

## **ANNIE FROM IOWA by Liesl Wilke**

**Short Story** — Drama | LGBTQ

A college student from a conservative family is forced to examine his assumptions about identity and love when the girl he thinks is perfect for him begins to explore her sexuality.

---

## **AS LUCK WOULD HAVE IT by Jason Mueller**

**Book** — Fantasy

While working on a missing person's case, a private detective who relies a little too heavily on his bond with the mercurial Avatar of Luck is forced to join forces with his godly patron to save the world.

---

## **BEAUTY TIPS & TRICKS FOR THE APOCALYPSE by Mary Elder**

**Book** — Action | Romantic Comedy

Armed with wits, glamor, and surprising survival tips, an aspiring beauty influencer finds her niche as she fights to navigate the apocalypse in style.

---

## **BEFORE CLOSURE by Shadley Grei**

**Book** — Comedy | Drama

A man and his two adult children deal with the emotional aftermath when his wife of 40 years walks out on the family without warning, just before a planned wedding anniversary celebration that the husband is determined to still put on, convinced that his wife will return for the party.

---

## **BENSON FAMILY SECRETS by Sean Armstrong**

**Book** — Coming-of-Age | Drama

When a poor teenager learns about the opulent world his mother grew up in, he sets out to capture the life that has been denied to him.

---



---

## **BETTER! FASTER!: A CHRONICLE OF TECHNOLOGY-DRIVEN CHANGE**

**by Alex Kipp**

**Short Story** — Comedy

The “fixes” a poorly managed company adopts to keep costs down lead to awkward firings and at least two funerals, as seen through the e-blasts of a cheerful, spelling-challenged Director of HR.

---

## **BETWEEN THE DEVIL AND THE WIDE WIDE SEA**

**by Kathryn Christopher**

**Book** — Action | Adventure | Fantasy | Period | Supernatural

A young woman embarks on a dangerous voyage to track down her missing husband amidst the chaos of the Civil War, leading her to discover monsters, tortured souls, and a new way home.

---

## **BLOOD FOR THE ANUNNAKI by Randall Moore**

**Short Story** — Action | Horror | Supernatural

A vampire vigilante fights to stop a cult performing sacrifices to ancient gods in present-day Detroit.

---

## **BULLDOG MURPHY by Chris Corbett**

**Book** — Crime | Drama | Period

When her estranged grandmother goes missing, a woman becomes a reluctant detective in order to solve an old mystery linked to her grandmother's adventures with a private eye decades earlier.

---

## **BURN MY SHADOW (A SELECTIVE MEMORY OF AN X-RATED LIFE)**

**by Tyler Knight**

**Book** — Drama | Memoir

A young Black man fights to maintain dignity while working in the porn industry where his race is exploited for profit and he's paid pennies on the dollar compared to his white costars.

---

## **CALAMITY, OR HOW A SUDDEN LACK OF TOILET PAPER LED TO MY UNTIMELY INCLUSION IN THE APOCALYPSE** by Julia Bianco

**Book** — Action | Comedy | Drama

A severe agoraphobe leaves her house for the first time in over a year when she runs out of toilet paper, only for the apocalypse to hit while she's at the store.

---

## **CALIFORNIA IS AN EARTHQUAKE** by Leanne Phillips

**Book** — Drama | Period | Supernatural

A murder in 1870s Los Angeles forces three women to work together to save a life, sending aftershocks through the generations that follow.

---

## **CARPOOL CONFIDENTIAL** by Karen Scholl

**Book** — Comedy | Sports

A satirical how-to guide for parents on how to raise a soccer star.

---

## **CHILDREN OF THE SUN** by Jandos Azerbay

**Book** — Coming-of-Age | Drama | LGBTQ | Young Adult

After an accident almost kills him, a teen transfers to a prestigious boarding school in Switzerland where he wrestles with identity, sexuality, and temptation.

---

## **CHOKER** by Claire Chitham

**Book** — Drama

Following a public meltdown, a renowned chef travels home to New Zealand and rediscovers herself in the place she left behind long ago.

---

## **CLOSE ENOUGH TO CANADA** by Anna Forsyth

**Short Story** — Drama | Romance

A shy grocery store manager in small-town Texas falls for the pregnant wife of a professional hockey player when her husband is absent for the season.

---

---

## DEER SHOOTS MAN (...THEN STEALS HIS CIGARETTES)

by Tyler Knight

Book — Sci-Fi

A washed-up MMA fighter races to track down a genetic code that can be used to cure a sweeping pandemic in near-future Los Angeles.

---

## DISPLACEMENT by Noémi VanSlyke

Short Story — Drama | Period

In Soviet-controlled Hungary, a 14-year-old boy's world is shaken when five members of the Budapest aristocracy are ordered to live with him and his mother in their small farmhouse by the post-war communist government.

---

## DRAWN INTO DANGER: LIVING ON THE EDGE IN THE SAHARA

by Keith Costelloe

Book — Drama | LGBTQ | Period | Thriller

A young man moves to Algeria to teach English in 1979 and finds himself drawn into a counter-espionage mission.

---

## DRIED FIGS OR DATES by Siawosh K. Eskandari

Book — Drama | Period

An Iranian refugee must convince an uncompromising liaison officer to grant him and his family asylum by recounting his horrific past as a political prisoner, or run the risk of being deported back to Iran where he'll be executed.

---

## DROWN 'EM LIKE PUPPIES by Maria Wickens

Book — Drama | Period | Young Adult

A teenage girl in 1970s small-town Georgia endures the abuse of her stepbrother after he kills his father and lets someone else take the blame.

---

## **EDIE WALKER AND THE NIGHT TERRORS** by VP Anderson

**Book** — Horror | LGBTQ | Supernatural | Young Adult

A 13-year-old girl's dangerous night terrors somehow become tangible and start hunting her during her waking hours. When the "things that go bump" come knocking, what happens when you let them in?

---

## **EVIL F—ING CLOWNS** by Chris Bolton

**Short Story** — Dark Comedy | Horror | Supernatural

After he's fired from his job as a fast food mascot, a professional clown discovers he may be the only person who can save innocent children from interdimensional evil clowns.

---

## **FINCH** by David Shawn Klein

**Short Story** — Coming-of-Age | Drama

A young boy realizes that his lawyer father is swindling a client and tries to make things right.

---

## **FIRST FATE** by Annette Kendall

**Book** — Thriller

When two EMPs knock out all electronics on a cruise ship and leave it drifting helplessly at sea, the crew and their 1,100 passengers must face the reality that no one is coming to save them.

---

## **FLABBERGAST** by Kenya Thames

**Short Story** — Drama

A desolate woman attends a birthday party where she has to choose to either forgive her over-the-top sister for nearly destroying her marriage or finally end their relationship for good.

---

## **FOURTH GENERATION FARMER** by Dominick Gasperini

**Short Story** — Dark Comedy | Drama

After his mother dies in her sleep, the young heir to a failing family farm must figure out what to do with her corpse before it starts to decay in the summer heat.

---

---

## **FUCKING GUYS** by Aaron Schroeder

**Book** — Comedy | Drama | LGBTQ | Memoir

A nonfiction collection of comedic short stories detailing the misadventures of coming out as gay later in life.

---

## **FUTURE SHADOWS** by Willem Peters

**Short Story** — Fantasy

A company of banished soldiers discovers an ancient and powerful magic in an abandoned desert city that could help them exact revenge against the kingdom that exiled them.

---

## **GANGLERS** by Mark Renshaw

**Short Story** — Horror | Period | Supernatural | Western

A formerly enslaved bounty hunter summons a vengeance demon to hunt those who have wronged him, unaware of the wild fury he's unleashing on the fugitives in his care.

---

## **GOD OF THUNDER** by Vincent Stoia

**Book** — Drama | Mystery | Period | Thriller

In Tang Dynasty China, a member of the emperor's police force investigates a series of murders connected to crimes he helped cover up in the past.

---

## **GOTHIC REVIVAL** by Michael Mullin

**Book** — Mystery | Thriller

Old friends gather in an isolated mansion to write ghost stories in the vein of Mary Shelley's iconic creation of *Frankenstein*, only to realize their host is hiding a sinister secret.

---

## **HAUNTED HOUSE SITTERS** by Charlene Ellen

**Book** — Comedy | Family | Horror | Supernatural

A young ghost whose job is to occupy haunted buildings when the resident ghost goes on vacation must find his long-lost sister before she becomes an evil spirit.

---



## **IJE MMIRI (WATER JOURNEY) by Uzo Chijioke**

**Book** — Drama | Period | Young Adult

When a hurricane shipwrecks British sailors on a remote island inhabited by escaped enslaved Africans in 1803, a teenage boy helps the lone survivor repair the ship so he can travel across the ocean to see his lost home in Nigeria.

---

## **IMMORTALISED TO DEATH by Lyn Squire**

**Book** — Drama | Mystery | Period

When Charles Dickens is murdered in the midst of finishing his final novel, solving the mystery in the unfinished book will be essential to solving the mystery of his death.

---

## **INCURSIO by Stephen Sinclair**

**Book** — Period | War

A politician and his family are forced to flee their home in Britannia when Roman settlements are besieged by Irish, Scottish, and Saxon armies, leaving them to fight through the wilds of the Roman province to survive.

---

## **INTO THE VOID by Michael Esser**

**Book** — Coming-of-Age | Drama | Period | Young Adult

In 1960s Alabama, two teenagers discover their immigrant parents were on opposite sides in Nazi Germany, uncovering a truth that threatens the German expat community and launches a fight that could jeopardize the moon landing.

---

## **KNOW by Sung-Ju Suya Lee**

**Book** — Horror | Supernatural

A pregnant woman experiences visions thanks to her unborn child's psychic powers and attempts to use her knowledge to stop a gruesome serial killer.

---

---

## LOVE AND A SACHET OF JOOJOO AND OTHER INFIDELITIES

by Shari Poindexter

Short Story Collection — Drama

A collection of short stories centered around themes of love and infidelity in Black American communities.

---

## LUNA by David Thomas McKenna

Book — Sci-Fi | Thriller | Young Adult

As the first child born on the moon approaches his 18th birthday, an unprecedented disaster strikes, threatening the lives of everyone in his lunar colony.

---

## MAINE TIGER by Michael Diamond

Book — Coming-of-Age | Drama | Family | Period

After a circus freighter wrecks off the coast of Maine, a 12-year-old boy finds a tiger that survived the crash and tries to protect it from being captured and killed.

---

## MERE MORTALS by Andrew Bumstead

Book — Fantasy | Romantic Comedy

After accidentally shooting the wrong woman with an arrow, a veteran cupid makes himself mortal so he can find her match and save his job, but faces an even greater challenge when he falls in love with her himself.

---

## MIDNIGHT AT THE PET EXPRESS by Liesl Wilke

Short Story — Drama

A newly sober alcoholic who has lost his wife and the respect of his daughter finds new purpose and motivation when he adopts a ferret on a whim.

---

## MONARCH by Shayla Durbois

Book — Fantasy | Young Adult

After her mother is killed by monsters, a teenager discovers she is the true heir to the throne of her kingdom and must win over her people and save the city from the creatures who are hunting her.

---

**MONSTER by Lauren Certo****Short Story** — Drama

A woman gets the job of her dreams only to face constant belittlement and workplace harassment from her male colleagues.

---

**MY SO-CALLED RUINED LIFE by Melanie Bishop****Book** — Drama | Mystery | Young Adult

A teenager struggles to live a normal life after her father is charged with her mother's murder, but her belief that he is an innocent man is challenged when she makes a horrible discovery that causes her to question everything.

---

**NEWTON'S CRADLE by Teresa Herzog****Book** — Fantasy | Sci-Fi | Supernatural

When the laws of physics suddenly begin to change, a young woman must protect her reality from an astral being on a relentless quest for power.

---

**NO TIME FOR THE PRESENT by James Cusick****Short Story** — Mystery | Sci-Fi | Thriller

A time traveler attempting to solve a murder mystery finds his life threatened when someone begins breaking all the rules of time travel, dragging him along across the centuries.

---

**NORTH OF SUNRISE by Gavin Fee****Book** — Coming-of-Age | Drama | Period

The son of Irish immigrants stands to inherit a wildly successful oyster business in the late 19th century, but the competition turns deadly when a rival company threatens their livelihood.

---

**NOT IF, WHEN by Elizabeth Weeks****Short Story** — Drama

A grieving bank teller is forced to confront her failing marriage when a new, much younger employee shows romantic interest in her.

---

---

## **ONE NOW OR TEN LATER** by Danielle Monique

**Short Story** — Horror | Supernatural

A nonprofit director struggles with guilt over a decision she made years earlier during college when she meets a young intern from her alma mater who is haunted by the repercussions of her choice.

---

## **ONE OF US** by K.T. Jayne

**Book** — Drama | Mystery | Thriller

A woman goes undercover to interview the man accused of her sister's murder, but she begins to question his guilt and helps him get released from prison, only to become his next target.

---

## **OPENING THE BODIES** by Jennifer Schuberth

**Book** — Drama | Mystery | Period

In 1894 Philadelphia, a female medical student's investigation into a murder that she believes is being covered up puts her closest friend in danger.

---

## **ORIFLAMME** by Noah Pohl

**Short Story** — Drama

A young ICU nurse recovering from a heart attack takes a much-needed vacation in the remote California desert where she discovers something otherworldly.

---

## **PENETRATION** by Alex Yalen

**Book** — Drama | Thriller

A wealthy Jewish American CIA officer is sent undercover to Israel to infiltrate the network of a Russian oligarch.

---

## **PLAYTIME AT THE BAGH** by Reenita Hora

**Book** — Drama | Period | Romance

An Anglo-Indian schoolteacher and a Muslim activist fall in love in 1919 Amritsar, not knowing they are on a collision course with the violence of British occupation and a massacre that will change the tides of India's independence movement.

---

**REMEMBRANCES by Mark Broucek****Short Story** — Drama | Mystery | Period

In 1970s Los Angeles, a man with bitter feelings towards his ailing father discovers a secret while visiting him in a dilapidated nursing home and sets off with the facility's janitor to uncover the truth of a crime committed decades earlier.

---

**RUBY ROY AND THE MURDER IN THE FALLS by Rima Ray****Book** — Comedy | Crime | Mystery

A bumbling young professor at a prestigious university is thrown into the center of a campus mystery when she discovers her department chair murdered in his office.

---

**SALTBORN by Debbie Trecek Volkens****Book** — Fantasy | Young Adult

A 16-year-old salt miner attempts a harrowing mission through the dark swamps around her isolated community in hopes of finding a cure for her brother, who is mortally wounded after she accidentally unleashes a violent witch upon their town.

---

**SEPARATE BEDROOMS by Matt Clemons****Short Story** — Horror | LGBTQ | Supernatural

A middle-aged couple finds their passion rekindled after bringing a haunted painting into their home, but their all-consuming lust soon turns sinister.

---

**SEX PARTNER #9 by Sanyee Yuan****Book** — Romantic Comedy

After being told by a psychic that the tenth man she sleeps with will be the one she marries, a woman resolves to get number nine out of the way, only to start falling for him instead.

---

**SHOOT THE HORSES FIRST by Leah Angstman****Short Story Collection** — Drama | Period

An anthology of historical fiction ranging from the 16th century through the early 20th, beginning with the story of a female botanist in 1850s Iowa struggling to get recognition from her male colleagues.

---



---

## **SIGNS OF THE CROSS** by Patrick Furlong

**Book** — Thriller

A priest is recruited to secretly investigate a Vatican deception that could call the very foundations of Christianity into question.

---

## **SKELETON PRAYER** by Joshua Rodgers

**Book** — Mystery | Thriller

A woman struggling with losing both her marriage and her faith discovers that the truth of her childhood best friend's unsolved murder lies in the tight-knit religious community she just left behind.

---

## **STANDING IN WATER** by Kathleen Caprario-Ulrich

**Book** — Comedy | Drama

After her husband's suicide, a woman reclaims life for herself and her teenage son through comedy.

---

## **THE ARMAGEDDON VECTOR** by Michael Corey

**Book** — Action | Sci-Fi | Thriller

When her remote Siberian village is devastated by a biological weapon that launches a global pandemic, a young Olympic athlete crosses the world to fight back.

---

## **THE ART OF ELODIE** by Michelle Luke

**Book** — Comedy | Drama

A young photographer moves from small-town Montana to a friend's lumpy sofa bed in New Haven, leaping at the chance to make it in the New York art scene of the early 90s.

---

## **THE BROTHERS WINKELSTEIN AND THE HOMBURG HAT** **by Guy Polin**

**Book** — Comedy

A family whose property was bisected by a border dispute in the 1800s must put aside their generations-long feud to stop an ambitious congressman from seizing the land for a new superhighway.

---

## **THE CAREGIVER** by Jim Gourley

**Short Story** — Sci-Fi

A young girl and a robot, the only survivors on a distant planet ravaged by disease, must learn to care for each other as they wait for rescue.

---

## **THE CHANCER** by Fiona Graham

**Book** — Comedy

In the late 1980s, a young Irish man desperate to be an actor teams up with an aging Hollywood star to prove himself in Los Angeles.

---

## **THE CIRCLE AT LIBERATION SQUARE** by Jessica Jiji

**Book** — Drama | Period

An Iraqi Christian patriot is forced to fight for the safety of his community during the rise of Saddam Hussein in 1972.

---

## **THE DEW OF MEN** by Dina Mousa

**Book** — Drama | Period

Three Cairo families of Muslim, Jewish, and Coptic faith are thrown into an era of war and upheaval with the fall of the Egyptian monarchy.

---

## **THE ENLIGHTENED** by Andries Ehlers

**Book** — Sci-Fi

In the aftermath of a centuries-long conflict in space, the fragile peace between two warring races is threatened by a rogue attack.

---

## **THE FICUS** by Michelle Blair Wilker

**Short Story** — Drama

A middle-aged man's obsession with taming a ficus in his yard leads to the unraveling of his personal life.

---

---

## **THE GHOSTS OF OKUMA** by Mitch Wieland

**Book** — Drama | Teen

An American teenager relocates to Tokyo with his agoraphobic father to track down his missing sister with the unexpected help of a Fukushima disaster refugee who is struggling to fit in.

---

## **THE GODDESS CLUB** by Amy Reardon

**Book** — Drama

A lonely, divorced woman struggles to befriend a group of seemingly perfect mothers at her son's school.

---

## **THE GREAT GIMMELMANS** by Lee Matthew Goldberg

**Book** — Crime | Dark Comedy | Period

After losing everything in the 1987 stock market crash, a formerly wealthy family starts a cross-country crime spree that turns them into the most notorious bank robbers of the era.

---

## **THE HOLLOWING OF LADY ABIGAIL HECTOR**

**by Neil Flinchbaugh**

**Book** — Fantasy

A brilliant detective struggling to make ends meet is forced to solve a locked-room mystery in a city filled with magically animated stone men.

---

## **THE LAST CLIFFHANGER** by Sara Bibel

**Book** — Comedy | Drama

A young woman is hired to keep up the ruse that a comatose soap opera writer is still running the show and she ends up embroiled in the messy world of daytime TV while investigating a possible murder.

---

## **THE LAST GOODBYE** by Russ Josephs

**Book** — Drama | Sci-Fi | Young Adult

Two teens reminisce about their decade-long friendship and attempt to say goodbye on the night the world ends.

---

**THE LION OF JUDAH** by Desson Thomson**Short Story** — Drama | Period

A mother brings her young son to Ethiopia to meet the man she intends to marry, a reporter who is scheduled to interview Haile Selassie.

---

**THE PIRATE OF SOULS** by Caroline Strong**Book** — Adventure | Fantasy | Period | Young Adult

A desperate 13-year-old boy joins a crew of sailor magicians to rid the world of a legendary pirate sorcerer out to ravage Europe.

---

**THE RIDDLE OF THE HYACINTH** by Michael Corey**Book** — Thriller | Mystery

When her online boyfriend is abducted while on a call with her, a woman and her best friend take it upon themselves to solve his disappearance, even though she's never met him in person.

---

**THE TINY BANG: SEVEN SHORT STORIES SURE TO SHAKE YOU AWAKE**  
by Ben Donley**Short Story Collection** — Dark Comedy | Horror | Sci-Fi

A collection of seven dark sci-fi and horror short stories about overcoming oppression and challenging entrenched worldviews.

---

**THE UNEXPLAINABLES: THE OTHER SIDE OF LOCKER FIVE**  
by Joey Aucoin**Book** — Family | Fantasy | Sci-Fi

An 11-year-old gets his wish when he discovers an alternate dimension on the other side of his locker where he's popular, but things get complicated when he learns his family doesn't exist there and he must find a way back to his own reality.

---

---

## **THE WAY THROUGH THE WOODS** by Brian Lyons

**Short Story** — Drama | Period | War

An Irish soldier stumbles across two German enemy combatants in the woods of Italy during WWII.

---

## **THE WHACK-JOB CASE OF THE BULL AND A CHINA CABINET** by Sunny Marsten

**Short Story** — Dark Comedy | Mystery | Thriller

An enterprising employee of a top Wall Street investment bank suspects a top earner at her company is behind the disappearances of multiple female coworkers, and she puts her life in danger to uncover the truth.

---

## **TO HER BODY** by McKenzie Moser

**Short Story Collection** — Drama

Three short essays on grieving the wrong way, beginning with the story of a young woman coping with the loss of her friend after an overdose.

---

## **UNDER WATERTOWN** by Bob Gebert

**Book** — Crime | Thriller

While researching a cold case, a low-level FBI transcriber realizes he's listening to tapes of a woman from his past and involves himself in her criminal enterprises in an attempt to steal money he knows is hidden in her house.

---

## **USELESS CRUELTIES** by Jess Capelle

**Book** — Thriller | Young Adult

A teenager discovers that her father is planning acts of domestic terrorism as revenge for her mother's death and she is the only one who can get close enough to stop him.

---



## **WELCOME TO WINGSPAN** by Matt McManus

**Short Story** — Sci-Fi

In the post-apocalyptic United States, a rogue scientist escapes an underground lab with a device that could save the lives of the remaining Americans struggling to survive.

---

## **WHITEHORSE** by Sean Fitz-Gerald

**Short Story** — Drama

A family reunites for a funeral in the Yukon, only to come to blows over what family really means.

---

## **WORDS** by Marie Robinson

**Short Story** — Horror

An aspiring actor starts taking voice lessons to improve her diction, but her demanding coach's methods are more frightening than anything else she faces in Hollywood.

---