

V O L U M E T W O


THE BEST OF BAD HEMINGWAY




MORE CHOICE ENTRIES FROM
THE HARRY'S BAR & AMERICAN GRILL
IMITATION HEMINGWAY COMPETITION

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY DIGBY DIEHL

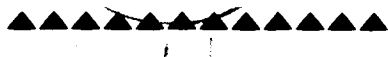
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The Best of Bad Hemingway, Volume Two



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THE HARRY'S BAR & AMERICAN GRILL
IMITATION ~~Hemingway~~ COMPETITION





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A B C D E

INTRODUCTION:
CONFESSIONS OF AN
INTERNATIONAL IMITATION HEMINGWAY
CONTEST JUDGE

We're baaa-aaack! Bad Hemingway fans, rejoice! You hold in your hands yet a second volume of irreverent, audacious, and sometimes downright silly parodies of America's 1954 Nobel laureate. As if this were not a sufficient outrage, after a hiatus of three years (to allow the swollen livers of the judges to regenerate), the International Imitation Hemingway Competition itself has been revived to coincide with the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of Harry's Bar & American Grill in Century City. The Torrents of Spring 1992 will be filled with Papa parody.

I helped foment the resuscitation of the Imitation Hemingway Contest, and even in doing so had known fear. After eleven years of sitting in Harry's staring at *bellini*-soaked entries for the International Imitation Hemingway Competition, I worried that I might have read too much bad Hemingway—thousands of words of comic homage. If I keep this up, I said to myself, eventually I will have read more bad Hemingway than I have read real Hemingway. Would it corrupt me? Was I jaded? Bored? Blasé? I knew that I had acquired immunity to bullfight jokes and was becoming weary of double entendres about snow leopards and Key

West. Nevertheless, I felt a certain exhilaration about being reunited with my fellow judges—the same sort of excitement which a *torero* must feel when returning to the ring for the first time after having been gored while executing a *veronica*.

Why do we do this? It is true that there has developed a marvelous camaraderie among the judges. Like a rite of spring, all of us look forward to the annual renewal of old friendships in the guise of exchanging literary opinions and communing over wine and good food. For strictly extra-literary reasons, we revel in the chance to separate the “good bad Hemingway” from the “bad bad Hemingway,” to use Ray Bradbury’s description.

But more to the point, why do you do this? Why this insane fervor to parody a writer who died thirty years ago? During the first decade of the competition, Harry’s received over 22,000 entries and, in fact, they continued to get entries in the three years when the contest lapsed. When the first volume of *The Best of Bad Hemingway* was published in 1989, bookstores were amazed at the brisk sales. Now public clamor for more has resulted in this second volume.

Always more than just a great writer, Ernest Hemingway lived a quintessentially romantic life. Even before he died, he had already become an American icon, a symbol of rugged individualism, masculinity, and bravery—and he died the same way that he lived. A hard-drinking sportsman, he fought the Fascists in both world wars. In short, he embodied a lot of what America likes best about itself.

INTRODUCTION

With his bare-knuckled, undandified prose, he was as much a hero to the working man as he was to the *literati*. With simple declarative sentences, his tales appealed to the same broad audience as radio thrillers and, later, prime-time network television shows. The stories he wrote about safaris in Africa, bullfighting in Spain, deep-sea fishing in the Caribbean, and passionate affairs of the heart were the very stories he lived, and everyone knew it. He consumed his life in his writing and hung it out there in black and white.

Do people still read Hemingway, or is he too hairy-chested for this age of feminism, recycling, and lite beer? From the Imitation Hemingway entries, it was always evident that some contestants knew more about the myth than about the prose. Often the spoofers tried to find humor by overlaying the superficial hallmarks of his robust style on such flyweight topics as yuppies, aerobics, or Valley Girls—the result was not unlike Madonna voguing her way through “The Star Spangled Banner” without knowing the words. But it was equally evident that this contest had sent many aspiring parodists scampering off their bar stools and back to dusty copies of *The Sun Also Rises*, *A Farewell To Arms*, *Death In the Afternoon*, and *The Old Man and the Sea*. In this second volume, almost every one of Hemingway’s famous novels and short stories are referenced with appropriate irreverence. A few I even recall having read with approval on Judgment Night.

Each year of the contest, the number of entries became more voluminous, and it soon became impossible for the judges to read every gem among the thousands submitted.

Consequently the sponsors enlisted a number of local university English professors to read through the entries, and pass on only twenty to the judges to pore over on Judgment Night. College insecurities lingering, we judges became distrustful of the academic screeners, and there was always the suspicion among the sages at the Judgment Table that some of the best stuff had been winnowed out before we got to it. Some of what survived was funny, but it was not Hemingway; some of it was Hemingway, but it was not funny, and we obscenitized on much of it.

Here, however, is a collection of good and truly funny Hemingway, which I hope will be the second of many such volumes to be published as the contest continues. As it resumes, the rules of the competition and the prize will remain the same (see details on page 127) with the only innovation—and certainly a welcome one—being that the contest will be cosponsored by the Los Angeles PEN Center and that Judgment Night will be a benefit for PEN, a writers' organization dedicated to freedom of expression around the world.

Hemingway himself did not approve of this type of lampoonery, good-natured or otherwise, damning it to a literary hell one step below graffiti in the men's room. He may have been above it, but the rest of us are not. The good and true reason why we participate in the Imitation Hemingway Contest, both judges and entrants alike, is respect and admiration—for both Hemingway's work and the uncompromising way he lived his life.

INTRODUCTION

The proof will come, as it always does, on Judgment Night. Amidst the frivolity of the evening, there is always the traditional toast "... To Papa." It will be a moment of great solemnity, and we will remember, and it will be good to remember together.

—*Digby Diehl*

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*Illustrations by David Levine,
Gerry Gersten, Rick Geary, Tullio Pericoli,
and Richard Thompson appear on pages 2, 26,
60, 104, and 114, respectively.*

**Across the
Street and
Back into
Harry's for
Another Round**



**MORE CHOICE ENTRIES FROM
THE COMPETITION**



THE LITERATI

► ► ► ► ► *T*^{いざ}he marvelous thing is that it's painless," he said. "That's how you know when you have a winner."

"Is it really?"

"Absolutely. I'm awfully sorry about the odor though. That must bother you about the reading."

"Don't! Please don't."

"Look at them," he said. "Now is it sight or scent that brings them every year?"

The cot the man lay on was in Harry's Bar as he looked out onto the glare of Century City. There were half a dozen of the literati squatted obscenely, drinking absinthe, Strega, and cold white wine. The service was true and good in Harry's that day. They read and drank in this pleasant place in the middle of the Entertainment Center near the Shubert Theatre.

"They've been here since the day the contest started," he said. "Today's the first time any have sobered and lighted on the stools."

"I wish you wouldn't," she said.

"I'm only talking," he said. "It's much easier if I talk. But I don't want to bother you."