



The Contest

James Hurley

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"The only constant passion in my life was my love of fly fishing and all that went with it. I coveted the escape I could find sitting at my vise for hours, tying deceitful little flies. I loved to be in the world where trout lived—the rivers and mountains and forests and meadows, away from people and the demands and requirements that created stress in my life."

Meet Benedict Salem, whose friends call him BS, a frustrated writer and teacher looking to find himself. Middle-aged and blocked creatively, his dreams are filled with those magical moments when the weather, the lay of the cast, the fly, and the water converge with the fish in one fluid arc of perfection. The desire to perpetuate these moments takes BS to a small town in Maine, home to the crossing house inn, behind which lies a tract of virtual wilderness, a clean-running river, and a bounty of large, smart, and mostly fearless trout. BS soon befriends the owner of the inn, Bill Cahill, and together they and a group of fellow anglers found the Samuel Tippet Fly Fishers club. They soon devise a fishing contest between them, but what starts out as a friendly game to determine the best trout fly to represent their new club, quickly descends into a bitter rivalry that threatens to overtake reason. Feelings and friendships are forgotten as a fight over rules and the hunger to win takes hold of the men.

In a deftly interwoven tale that explores the camaraderie and sportsmanship among anglers, *The Contest* challenges the wisdom of chasing perfection, and instead, encourages the reader to revel in life's most important moments, however brief or passing.

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Amos Curley:

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Latonya Sams:

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