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Entertainment

Style Invitational Week 1415: The Year in Redo, Part 1

Enter any of 25 Invite contests from early this year. Plus winning bad-novel endings.



(Bob Staake for The Washington Post)

By Pat Myers

Dec. 17, 2020 at 9:59 a.m. EST

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(Click [here](#) to skip down to the winning bad-novel endings — or bad novel-endings)

From Week 1371, new words from ScrabbleGrams “racks”: AAAJMPS > PAJASM: **The “ohhh” moment that comes from getting out of your work clothes and putting on your warmest PJs on a cold evening.** (Jeff Hazle)

From Week 1360, fake facts about winter: **Due to climate change, mushers at the 2020 Iditarod must provide their own snow.** (Stephen Dudzik)

From Week 1385, puns on place names: **Belchum: Famed for its deeply satisfying beer.** (Dave Shombert)

Wouldn't you like to call a do-over on 2020? Go back to February, have the president put on a mask and implore everyone to wear one and stay away from other people for three straight weeks, screen every person coming in on a plane, and then get on with the year?



Never-Nixoners? From the 1968 campaign, this week's second prize.

Even the Empress can't do that, but she *can* give you a do-over on The Style Invitational of 2020. In Part 1 of our annual retrospective, we'll cover 25 Invite contests from last December to early June, a period that includes new-word contests, song parodies, Amazon reviews for everyday products, cartoon captions, and “foal breeding” between two Kentucky Derby winners, plus some one-offs like pickup lines for various professions, and stupid questions in These Challenging Times.



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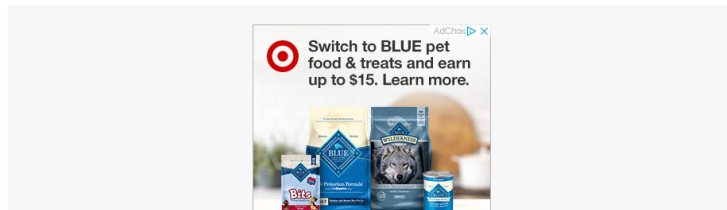


1 **Review**
Judy and Mickey would have loved the TikTok — ‘Ratatouille’ — 2021’s answer to ‘Let’s put on a show!’

2 **Q&A with Common:** Push-ups, Tiffany Haddish and where the rapper finds inspiration and peace

3 **Zorro at 100:** Why the original swashbuckler is still the quintessential American action hero

4 **Review**
Where did Agatha Christie go when she disappeared in 1926? Here’s one theory.



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This week: Enter (or reenter) any Style Invitational contest from Week 1360 through 1387, except for Weeks 1361-1363, which are last year's retrospectives plus the 2019 Year in Preview. You may enter multiple contests as long as you don't submit more than 25 entries in all.

See descriptions and links for all the old contests, plus more important details, in this week's **Style Conversational** column at wapo.st/conv1415 (published late Thursday afternoon, Dec. 17). Please begin each entry with "Week [XXXX]" plus a brief ID of the contest your entry is for (e.g., "Week 1377, quarantine activities"). **If you don't subscribe to The Post**, email me at pat.myers@washpost.com and, after I ask you why the heck not, I'll give you alternative directions.

Submit up to 25 entries at wapo.st/enter-invite-1415 (no capitals in the Web address).

Deadline is Monday, Dec. 28; results appear Jan. 17 in print, Jan. 14 online.

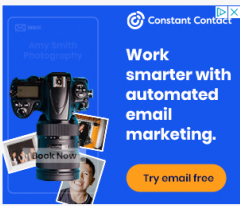


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Winner gets the **Clowning Achievement**, our new Style Invitational trophy. Second place wins a genuine "**Republicans for McCarthy**" button from the ultraliberal Democrat's 1968 presidential campaign, an effort to get Wisconsin GOPers to switch primaries. Donated by Loser Steve Smith in a fit of crazed altruism.

Other runners-up win their choice of our "**For Best Results, Pour Into Top End**" Loser Mug or our "**Whole Fools**" Grossery Bag. Honorable mentions get one of our lusted-after Loser magnets, "**No Bility**" or "**Punderachiever.**" First Offenders receive only a smelly tree-shaped air "freshener" (**FirStink** for their first ink). See general contest rules and guidelines at wapo.st/InvRules. The headline "**The Book Stops Here**" is by Tom Witte; Kevin Dopart and Jesse Frankovich each submitted the honorable-mentions subhead. Join the lively Style Invitational Devotees group on Facebook at on.fb.me/invdev; "like" the Style Invitational Ink of the Day on Facebook at bit.ly/inkofday; and follow [@StyleInvite](https://twitter.com/StyleInvite) on Twitter.

The Style Conversational: The Empress's weekly online column discusses each new contest and set of results. See this week's, published late Thursday, Dec. 17, at wapo.st/conv1415.



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The "You're Invited" podcast: Seven half-hour episodes, including dish from the Empress and the Czar, and tips from top Losers. See bit.ly/invite-podcast.

And from The Style Invitational four weeks ago . . .

The book stops here: Bad novel endings from Week 1411

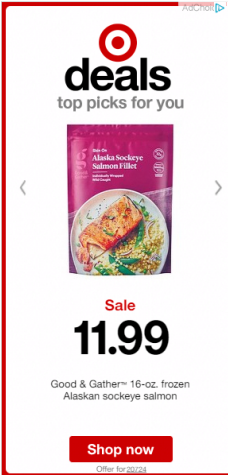
In [Week 1411](#) the Empress asked for a **bad final sentence or two to a novel**, a counterpart to the [Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest](#) for bad opening sentences. Dave Airozo's parody of the opening of "1984" was too good for a magnet: "It was high noon on a bright, cold January 20, 2021, and the clocks were once again striking twelve."

4th place:

I gave her a kiss on the cheek and turned to leave, not in a full 180-degree turn but about 150 degrees, since that's where my car was parked. (*Sarah Walsh, Rockville, Md.*)

3rd place:

And now it can be revealed: This is NOT my real autobiography. I made it all up — GOTCHA! (*Tom Witte, Montgomery Village, Md.*)




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2nd place

and *the adorable dragon hat*:

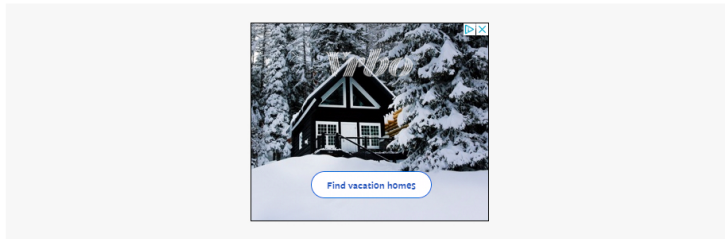
And I only am escaped alone to tell thee . . . but I will tell thee not until thou callest me Ishmael, dammit! I asked thee to do that many, many pages ago. (*Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase, Md.*)

And the winner of the Clowning Achievement:

The last thing I saw before the prison bars clanged shut was my mother's face, weeping for her lost child, though after the prison bars clanged shut I could still see her face, just with big stripes of bars through it, and I felt tears run down my own cheeks too, leaving trails like bars down my face. (*Hannah Seidel, Alexandria, Va.*)

Rear endings: Honorable mentions

And in the end, Rupert never answered the question to his own satisfaction — was it really the sweet smell of success, or had he just eaten asparagus? (*Larry Rifkin, Glastonbury, Conn.*)

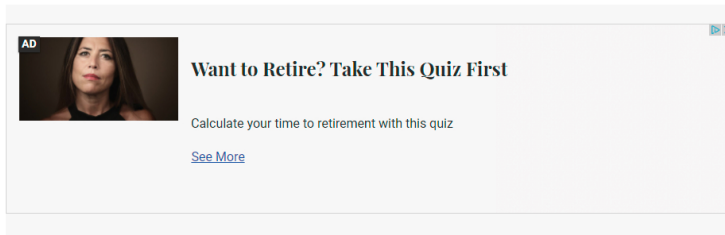


And in the next instant, the duke's head rolled away from the chopping block like a bowling ball that happened to have nose- and ear-shaped lumps on it. (*Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.*)

And then it hit him. It should have been obvious from the start: *They were never worn* because the kid had a second pair in the same size! (*Seth Tucker, Washington*)

And thus America perished, by the evil actions of a few, by the inaction of the many, and by the worldwide conspiracy of the giant squid. (*David Young, Falmouth, Mass.*)

"Ah, as a child on the farm, I lost my hand — and my brother — in a horrible thresher accident . . . but the doctors were able to attach his undamaged hand to my mangled arm, so now I have TWO left hands, so, yes, in fact I am the Foggy Bottom Stabber!" (*Bird Waring, Larchmont, N.Y.*)

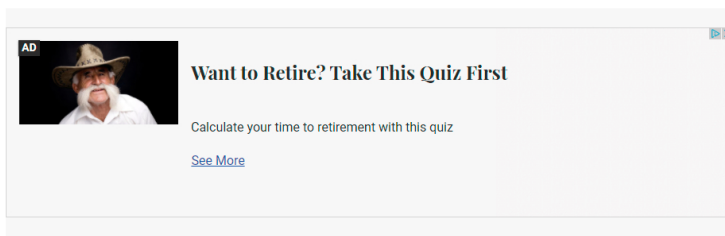


So as it turned out it was neither the best of times nor the worst of times. I'd say the times were about average, maybe a 6 if I'm feeling generous? (*Gary Crockett*)

And with this final sentence, I have completed the Great American Novel, of which I am as proud of writing as you are no doubt grateful for having had the opportunity of reading. You are most welcome. (*Tom Witte*)

As Inspector Katz spoke, tension in the room rose like the mercury in a rectal thermometer. "The butler did it," Katz revealed. "Case closed." And, like what will now happen with the book you are holding, dear reader, it was. (*Bob Kruger, Rockville, Md.*)

As the plane sputtered its final sputter, Amelia turned to an ashen Noonan and chuckled, "The real devil of it, Freddy, is that everyone's gonna wonder what happen to Amelia Earhart but nobody's gonna give a hoot about you." (*Jon Ketzner, Cumberland, Md.*)

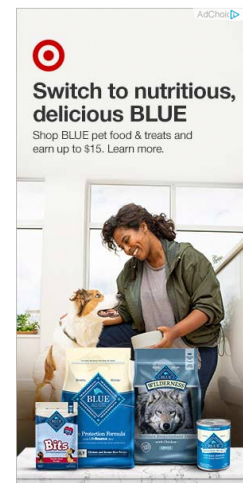


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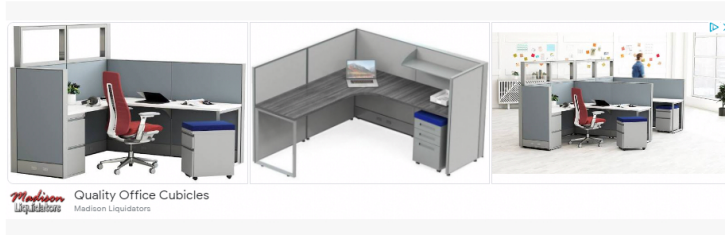
At the final stop, Santa sat back and looked at the single lump in the stocking. “Well, he did promise to bring back the coal industry.” (*Drew Bennett, West Plains, Mo.*)

But my end will not be my beginning, as I think I explained at some length in Chapters 3-10. (*John O’Byrne, Dublin, Ireland*)

Feeling empty as bowels after a pre-colonoscopy prep, Mariah cried out, “No, that’s NOT all I want!” And with a pout, she admitted that **Eartha had been right** all along. (*Dave Airozo, Silver Spring, Md.*)

“I love you,” she said lovingly. “Thank you,” he said thankfully. (*Art Grinath, Takoma Park, Md.*)

I’ll never forget that summer, partaking in her wonders but foolishly taking her for granted until one day she was gone as suddenly as she had arrived, like the McRib from McDonald’s menu. (*Bill Dorner, Indianapolis*)



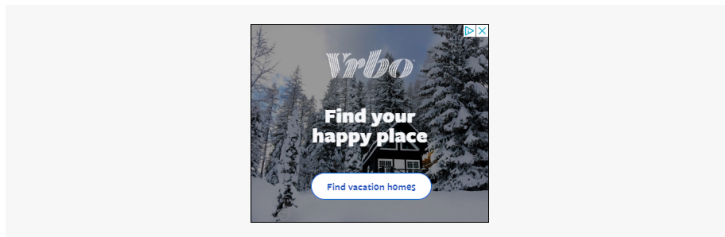
He could not lie: He loved Big Butts. (*Dave Airozo*)

Lucky Jim’s watch, so befittingly, was still ticking — and as he crawled from the smoking wreckage of the 747, he noted with a grin that he might yet be able to catch his 1:30 connection to Dallas. (*Jonathan Jensen, Baltimore*)

Steve envisioned the road ahead and saw a never-ending parade of challenges, potholes, confusing road signs, and squashed possums. (*Larry McClemons, Annandale, Va.*)

It was as if he’d sleepwalked into someone else’s dream about a person who was dreaming, until that person awoke and discovered that the second person was still asleep but was now dreaming that he’d woken up. (*Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif.*)

While the gullible masses have fallen for this version of events, only the truly astute reader will have determined the true killer’s identity. If you believe you are among the select few, send your guess, along with \$29.99, to Box 2782 . . . (*Eric Nelkin, Silver Spring, Md.*)



“Do you think this ending is too meta?” I asked my editor. As she nodded her head to signify yes, I said, “Thanks for your input, but it’s my book.” (*Mark Raffinan, Reston, Va.*)

At last alone with Susie, with no constraints, nor any misunderstandings about their mutual passion for each other, he slowly began to you-know-what, and soon she obliged with the kind of reciprocal action one might expect in return, followed by increasing yet always accurate estimations of what each other might enjoy, and after what most would likely deem a lengthy span of time, their interplay culminated in a decidedly not unsatisfactory fashion. (*Tom Witte*)

And Last: He tapped “Send,” fearing he’d only embarked on another pointless journey, until a wave of optimism hit him, and he realized, “Heck, the Empress has always thought my entries were hilariously bad.” (*Frank Osen*)

Still running — deadline Monday night, Dec. 20: Help build our Year in Preview timeline for 2021. See wapo.st/invite1414.

DON’T MISS AN INVITE! [Sign up here](#) to receive a once-a-week email from the Empress as soon as The Style Invitational and Style Conversational go online every Thursday, complete with links to the columns.

0 Comments



Pat Myers

Pat Myers is editor and judge of The Style Invitational, The Washington Post’s page for clever, edgy humor and wordplay. In the role since December 2003, she has posted and judged more than 700 contests. She also writes the weekly Style Conversational column and runs the Style Invitational Devotees page on Facebook. Follow [🐦](#)

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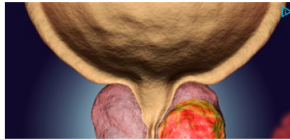
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