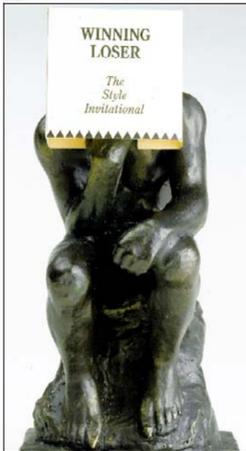


The Style Invitational

Week 536: And the Horse He Rodin On

We begin this week with an alarming announcement, and a plea for calm. After more than 10 years at the helm of this contest, your Czar is stepping down. He wishes to express his gratitude not only for your creativity, which has sustained him, but for your fealty, which has elevated him to the status of cult hero—a beloved and benevolent humor deity, feared for his power but respected for the evenhandedness with which he wields it. He announces with great pleasure that, by his grace, the contest will survive. He commands that you extend to his successor, a capable and industrious young woman, all the servile, fawning obsequiousness that you have shown him all these years. The task of succeeding a legend is an unenviable one, and if her steps are uncertain or her judgment timid, please understand that this is a natural consequence of the submissive attitude that The Czar has fostered in her over more than a decade, one that has happened to serve The Czar well, despite the occasional instances of childish rebellion and acting out that

Yeah, yeah. Swell. Beat it, Grandpa. The Czar has been called away on urgent business to the dacha in Ekaterinburg. Now that that unpleasant little housecleaning task is out of the way, The Empress of The Style Invitational wishes to announce a few changes in this contest, to elevate its level of tastefulness and decorum as befitting an internationally renowned quotidian journal. To that end, no longer will the grand prize for the winning ink each week be a risqué, coarse, hideous piece of promotional detritus or some tacky souvenir. Henceforth, that prize will be given to the first runner-up. Each winner will instead receive the trophy pictured at left, a mixed-media sculpture crafted of genuine bronzoid-looking Alabastrite™ and genuine paper paper bag.



The Inker.



The Empress.

PHOTOS BY KEVIN CLARK—THE WASHINGTON POST

This Week's Contest: Come up with some words we can stick on the back of The Inker. You have about two inches' worth of back, so don't send in a sonnet, you know? Winner gets the guy, with the winning stick-on stuck on. First runner-up receives a pair of slip-on fake feet complete with veins, scabs and suppurating lesions.

Other runners-up win the coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt (now in new Empress Red). Honorable mentions get the mildly sought-after Style Invitational bumper sticker. One entry per entrant per week. Send your entries via fax to 202-334-4312 or by e-mail to losers@washpost.com. U.S. mail entries are no longer accepted. Deadline is Monday, Dec. 22. Put the week number in the subject line of your e-mail, or you risk being ignored as spam. Include your name, postal address and phone number with your

entry. Contests will be judged on the basis of humor and originality. All entries become the property of The Washington Post. Entries may be edited for taste or content. Results will be published in four weeks. No purchase required for entry. Employees of The Washington Post, and their immediate relatives, are not eligible for prizes. Pseudonymous entries will be disqualified. The revised title for next week's contest is by Chris Doyle of Forsyth, Mo.

Report from Week 532, in which we asked for terse reviews of movies, books, etc., in four words or fewer:

A number of submissions cleverly and tersely described the plot, but weren't judgments on the works' quality ("Last Tango in Paris": For butter or worse"; "The Crying Game": Male's in the chick"). These get no credit whatsoever.

Guess which verb was used 263 times to describe "Gone With the Wind," "Twister" and "A Mighty Wind"? Very good. Now guess which verb was used 347 times to describe "Dracula" and "Deep Throat."

And in the Playing Against Type department, we have the week's entry that was so highbrow, you'd think it was sent in by the Cosmetic Surgery Institute: "Rimbaud's 'Une Saison en Enfer': Enfer non!" We pitterpat our hands for Mr. Chuck Smith of Woodbridge.

♦ **Fourth runner-up:** "I Am Curious (Yellow)": It was meaty (oher). (Michael Gips, Bethesda)

♦ **Third runner-up:** "S.W.A.T.": C.W.A.P. (Russell Beland, Springfield)

♦ **Second runner-up:** "The Sound of Music": DOA, dear. (Jeffrey Scharf, Burke)

♦ **First runner-up:** "Love Story": Sorry! (Carl W. Northrop, Fairfax)

♦ **And the winner of the edible napkins made from potatoes:** "Cast Away": Man overboard. (Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)

♦ **Honorable Mentions:** "Analyze This": Okay, it's awful. Satisfied? (Will Cramer and Julie Thomas, Herndon)

"War and Peace": Floccinaucinihilipili- cationally supercalifragilisticexpialidocious; osseocarnisanguineonervomedul- lary honorificabilitudinitatious. (Danny Bravman, Potomac)

"The Untouchables": The lowest cast. (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

"Fargo": Fargo. (Mike Genz, La Plata)

"To Have and Have Not": Has not. (Ray Aragon, Bethesda)

"Never Cry Wolf": Nunavut is worth seeing. (Karin Japikse, Fairfax)

"Oliver": Please, sir, no more! (Larry Levine and Arthur Windreich, Wheaton)

"The Odd Couple": I smell Oscar! (Drew Knoblauch, Falls Church)

"Cheers": Booze. (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

"The Sting": Where is its death? (G. Smith, Reston)

"On the Waterfront": Long snore, man. (Mike Murphy, Munhall, Pa.)

"Annie": Get your gun. (TJ Murphy, Blacksburg, Va.)

"Oh, God": Dog, ho! (Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)

"Moby-Dick": Call me fishmeal. (Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)

"Signs": Do not enter. (Sue Lin Chong, Washington)

"Camelot": Let it be forgot. (Danny Bravman, Potomac)

"Girl, Interrupted": Boy! Interminable! (Milo Sauer, Fairfax)

"Being There": Leaving early. (Jerry Norris, New Bern, N.C.)

"Annie Hall": Blah-de-dah. (Larry Levine and Arthur Windreich, Wheaton)

"Conan the Barbarian": I'm groping for words. (Joseph Romm, Washington)

"Twelve Angry Men": Make that thirteen. (Michael Gips, Bethesda)

"The Da Vinci Code": 16-18-5-4-9-3-20- 1-2-12-5-20-18-9-16-5. (Marc Leibert, New York)

"Groundhog Day": Same old same old. (Michelle Stupak, Ellicott City)

"Jaws": Box office poisson. (Peter Metrinko, Plymouth, Minn.)

"Animal Farm": Ewe. (Jacob Wolman, Washington)

"Chitty Chitty Bang Bang": No bang, dou- bly chitty. (Russell Beland, Springfield)

"The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly": Two out of three! (Russell Beland, Springfield; Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)

"Babe": On't-day o-gay. (Joseph Peta, New York)

"I, Claudius": It, tedious. (Russell Beland, Springfield; Milo Sauer, Fairfax)

"Don't Drink the Water": Drink the Kool-Aid. (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

"Ben-Hur": Loved Ben, hated Hur. (Tony Hope, Washington; Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)

"Ballistic: Ecks vs. Sever": Critic: Head vs. wall. (Evan Golub, College Park)

"Gigli": Reagli, reagli unapeagli. (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

"The Day After": A-bomb. (Cecil J. Clark, Arlington)

"Rashomon": Four stories, zero sense. (Marc Leibert, New York)

"Shampoo": Genuine poo. (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)

"Casablanca": Don't play it, Sam. (Michele Uhler, Fort Washington)

"Star Wars": Stay far, far away. (S.A. Wiebe, Calgary, Alberta)

"Moulin Rouge": Merde she wrote. (Berde Waring, New York)

"Lord of the Rings": Small men, big sets. (Kelli Midgley-Biggs, Columbia)

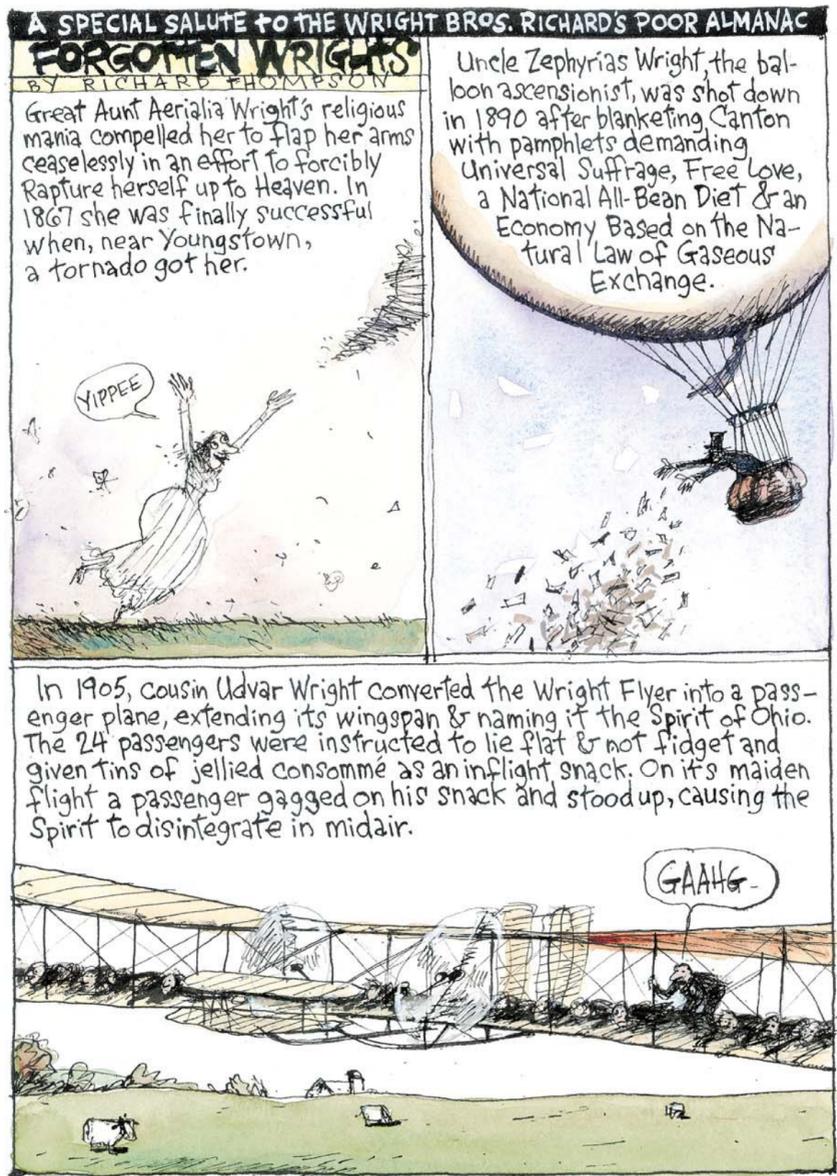
"The Shoes of the Fisherman": Smelt. (Brendan O'Byrne, Regina, Saskatchewan)

"The Great Gatsby": F— Scott Fitzgerald. (Bill Morris, Washington)

"Shampoo": Much hairdo about nothing. (Steve Fahey, Kensington)

"Flirting With Disaster": Flirting? (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

"Auntie Mame": Maim Auntie! (Meg Sullivan, Potomac)



MISS MANNERS

Judith Martin

Uninviting Invitations

Along with holiday greetings, the mail is surging with belligerent invitations.

As Miss Manners recalls, offers of hospitality used to be written in a charmingly suppliant tone. Would-be hosts didn't simply invite people, they begged, pleaded and cajoled:

"Please come . . . we would be so happy if you would join us . . . it would be such fun to have you here . . . I would be thrilled . . . We were hoping . . ." Even the most formal invitations emphasized what a pleasure the guests' company would be or what an honor their presence.

Some of this ingratiating wording is retained through habit, but Miss Manners fears that the spirit is lost. The modern invitation soon turns to snarling:

"Reply by December 16."
 "Dress creatively."
 "Female guests should not wear black, red, white or orange."
 "Adults only."
 "By invitation only."
 "No smoking."
 "Promptness requested."
 "Send in an original poem for our memory book."
 "Submit a square for our quilt."
 "Bring a dish that serves eight."
 "Bring a food donation for the cause."
 "Bring your checkbook."
 "Cash bar."
 "Currency only."
 "Monetary gifts preferred."

And a new one on Miss Manners to which a Gentle Reader reports being subjected: "Leftover food and drink welcome."

She recognizes that part of this bossiness—the part that isn't screaming greed—is the guests' own fault. If they behaved themselves, it wouldn't be necessary to bark orders at them. Hosts turn surly when they are fed up with guests who habitually put off replying (in many cases forever), dress incongruously, arrive late, leave in the middle for other parties, bring along uninvited children and friends, offer minimal thanks and are

never heard from again.

Perhaps all that has contributed to the greed factor. The conceit that it is the guest who confers a favor by agreeing to allow someone else to plan and prepare his or her entertainment, not to mention cleaning up afterward, gets less and less plausible.

"Why should I do this for those ingrates?" is an understandable question. Many hosts unfortunately stop right there, and thus the graciousness of home entertaining is becoming rare.

But the solution of making so-called guests pay their own way is a crass one. Cooperative parties and fundraisers are viable social forms if properly labeled, but do not replace the ancient and sacred ritual of exchanging pure hospitality.

There is a certain amount of direction that hosts must legitimately provide. They set the date, time, place and style of the event, and get extra credit if they throw in how to get there and where to park. And as a sad commentary on human behavior, requesting a reply has crept into the language of both formal and informal invitations. It used to be obvious that if someone asked you over, you had to reply yes ("I'd love to") or no ("Oh, I'm so sorry, that's the day I wash my beard").

Additional orders, especially any concerned with money or presents, are rude. Miss Manners lives in hope that guests will tire of hearing them and just go ahead and do their duties.

After all, it only took a decade or two for everyone to learn to wait for the beep before attempting to leave phone messages. Someday, perhaps, people will know to turn off their cell phones in the theater. Wouldn't it be worth it to be spared all that nagging?

Feeling incorrect? E-mail your etiquette questions to Miss Manners (who is distraught that she cannot reply personally) at MissManners@unitedmedia.com or mail to United Media, 200 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016.

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BRIDGE | Frank Stewart

Both sides vulnerable

NORTH
 ♠ A K 7 6 4 3
 ♥ 2
 ♦ K 6
 ♣ 9 6 5 2

WEST (D)
 ♠ Q 10 9
 ♥ A 10 5
 ♦ A Q 10 8 2
 ♣ 10 3

EAST
 ♠ J 8 2
 ♥ 7 3
 ♦ J 7 5 4
 ♣ A 8 7 4

SOUTH
 ♠ 5
 ♥ K Q J 9 8 6 4
 ♦ 9 3
 ♣ K Q J

The Bidding:

West North East South
 1 ♦ 1 ♠ 2 ♦ 4 ♥
 All Pass

Opening lead: ♣ 10

Bridge has no analogue to "lightning chess," but bridge tournaments are timed events. Excessive slow play is penalized, and the ability to analyze a complex position quickly is useful.

Look at today's deal and decide whether you'd bet on declarer or on the defense after West leads the 10 of clubs. Time limit: two minutes.

Suppose East correctly ducks the first club. If South leads a trump next, West wins, leads his last club, and gets a club ruff and the ace of diamonds. So after South wins the first club, he takes the A-K of spades to discard a club. But if South leads a trump next, West will win and lead a club to the ace, and a third club from East still promotes a second trump trick for West.

South can forestall the trump promotion by leading a third spade

from dummy and pitching his last club: a loser on a loser. West takes the queen and leads another club, and South plays low from dummy and ruffs East's seven.

South still can't force out the ace of trumps. West would lead the ace and a low diamond to dummy's king, and South would be stuck in dummy. Whether he led a spade or a club, West would score the 10 of trumps. So South must lead a diamond himself next.

If West takes the ace, South is home, but West plays low, and the king wins. South then leads a trump.

West takes his ace and puts East in with the jack of diamonds, and a club return seals South's fate.

If you worked all that out in two minutes, you'll have no problems with slow play at the table.

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Next Week: **Transparenting**