

Style Invitational Week 1202: Don't be afraid of the dark — a song parody contest

Give us a song about hope — we need it. Plus the “plain English” winners.



(Bob Staake for The Washington Post)

By Pat Myers • Entertainment November 17

(Click [here to skip down](#) to the winning translations of spin, puffery, etc., into “plain English”)

Two days before the election, the Empress went to see the musical “[Carousel](#)” at Arena Stage. It’s a top-notch production by any measure, but since Nov. 8, emotions must be exploding inside the D.C. theater, onstage and off, as voices and orchestra swell in Rodgers and Hammerstein’s majestic finale, “You’ll Never Walk Alone”: “Walk on through the wind, walk on through the rain, though your dreams be tossed and blown.” **This week: Write lyrics to a song that, in some way, express hope**; set them to a well-known tune. You don’t have to be sappy; you may even be cynical (you know us). But the theme: hope. Just stick up your chin and grin — at least we’ll have something to sing in four weeks while we’re scrubbing off the graffiti.

Submit entries at this website: bit.ly/enter-invite-1202. Feel free to include a link to an audio or video clip to the tune you’re using. Or you can even make your own recording.

Winner gets the [Inkin’ Memorial](#), the Lincoln statue bobblehead that is the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives something a lot of people would like to get their hands on right now: this fabulously squishy, gel-filled [Stress Man](#)

squeezy thing. It's labeled "boss." Donated — some time back — by Dave Prevar.



This week's second prize: the wonderfully satisfying Stress Man. Interested? (Pat Myers/The Washington Post)

Other runners-up win their choice of the yearned-for [“This Is Your Brain on Mugs” Loser mug](#) or our Grossery Bag, [“I Got a B in Punmanship.”](#) Honorable mentions get one of our lusted-after Loser magnets, [“Magnet Dum Laude”](#) or [“Falling Jest Short.”](#) First Offenders receive a smelly tree-shaped air “freshener” ([FirStink](#) for their first ink). Deadline is Monday night, Dec. 5 (you have an extra week!); results published Dec. 18 (online Dec. 21). You may submit up to 25 entries per contest (really, I bet someone out there will send me 25 songs this week). See general contest rules and guidelines at [wapo.st/InvRules](#). The “Transcriptions” headline is by Tom Witte; the honorable-mentions subhead is by Chris Doyle. 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](#); follow [@StyleInvite](#) on Twitter.

The Style Conversational: The Empress’s weekly online column discusses each new contest and set of results. Especially for song parody guidance this week, check it out at [bit.ly/conv-1202](#).

TRANSCRIPTIONS: WINNING 'PLAIN ENGLISH' TRANSLATIONS FROM WEEK 1198

In [Week 1198](#) we asked readers to find a sentence in that's week's Post or another newspaper and to translate it into "plain English," free of spin, obfuscation or just plain lying. Some entrants' translations snarkily assumed an election outcome other than the one that occurred; to those Losers, I hope that being robbed of ink is the biggest thing you have to be upset about all week.

4th place:

"Kaine said there's nothing in his life or emails he'd be 'overly embarrassed about' and said he's determined not to be distracted."

Translation: Kaine admits having no life. (Neal Starkman, Seattle)

3rd place:

From a classified ad: "Oil Painting: Man and Camel — \$110 Original, in beautiful gold frame."

Translation: "I don't know how to use Craigslist." (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

2nd place

and the [Hillary Laughing Pen](#):

"How does one face the absurdity of existence in a cold, indifferent universe, where time's arrow points inexorably toward death and the only certainties are loss and sorrow?"

Translation: What do you mean you're out of the pumpkin spice ones?!!" (Danielle Nowlin, Fairfax Station, Va.)

And the winner of the Inkin' Memorial:

On China's plan to rate its citizens: "Imagine a world where an authoritarian government monitors everything you do, amasses huge amounts of data on almost every interaction you make, and awards you a single score that measures how "trustworthy" you are."

Translation: "Imagine how you got your own credit rating." (Kevin Dopart)

Tossed in translation: honorable mentions

From a job posting: "Capable of crafting and executing an organized sales plan."

Translation: "Willing to cheat your own grandmother." (Jon Gearhart, Des Moines)

A Nobel Prize committee member about Bob Dylan's refusal to acknowledge receiving the literature award: "One can say that it is impolite and arrogant."

Translation: "What a douche." (Hildy Zampella, Falls Church, Va.)

Nationals General Manager Mike Rizzo: "We can go in a lot of different directions to improve our ballclub."

Translation: "We have absolutely no clue how to improve our ballclub." (Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif.)

"Scientists say that the Ross Sea has hardly been touched by humans and as such is a perfect laboratory."

Translation: "Hey, look! Nobody's ever touched this stuff! Let's touch it!" (Marni Penning Coleman, Falls Church, Va.)

Horoscope: "You have a hobby you love, so make it okay to dedicate some hours to this pastime."

Translation: "Enjoy that Internet porn!" (Mark Raffman, on travel in Vietnam)

"After one of the most egregious cases of domestic violence among National Football League players two years ago . . . the league vowed a not-again, get-tough approach."

Translation: ". . . the league vowed to not, again, get tough." (Warren Tanabe, Annapolis, Md.)

FBI Director James Comey: "Given that we don't know the significance of this newly discovered collection of emails, I don't want to create a misleading impression."

Translation: "Even though that's what I'm obviously doing." (Joe Neff, Warrington, Pa.; William Kennard, Arlington, Va.)

"Here's an important rule to remember: If you ever find yourself in Antarctica near the Mount Erebus lava lake, don't take your eyes off it."

Translation: "Here's an important rule to remember: Nature documentarians enjoy humblebragging." (Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn, Va.)

"U.S. officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss an operation that has not been acknowledged, said the drones being flown out of Tunisia . . ."

Translation: The Pentagon announced that it is flying drones out of Tunisia. (Dave Prevar, Annapolis, Md.)

Metro General Manager Paul Wiedefeld on planning SafeTrack: "In a perfect world, you would study it for a year and come up with this."

Translation: "We brought the Metro map to happy hour and threw darts at it over a couple of Coronas." (Hildy Zampella)

"0% Interest for 4 Years on All Products"

Translation: "We've seen 0% interest in our products for the past 4 years" (Mike Gips, Bethesda, Md.)

"I love Florida, this is my second home."

Translation: "I wouldn't be caught dead here in the summer." (Florida native Tom Witte, Montgomery Village, Md.)

"Are you an expert-level Help Desk professional who is passionate about leading highly effective teams to support more than 5,000 users?"

Translation: "Are you looking to avoid any life outside of work?" (Jon Gearhart)

"Lyft Inc. co-founder and President John Zimmer denied reports the ride-sharing firm is for sale and said it has more than doubled its ridership in the U.S. since late last year, with 17 million rides in October."

Translation: "Lyft Inc. is for sale." (Francis Canavan, Reston, Va.)

“Do you need more storage space?”

Translation: “Do you have too much crap?” (Rob Huffman, Fredericksburg, Va.)

“... is pleased to offer third party financing plans to meet every lifestyle and budget.”

Translation: “... especially the Crippling Debt lifestyle and budget.” (John McCooey, Rehoboth Beach, Del.)

Horoscope: “Your excitement over an upcoming event is truly half the fun.”

Translation: The event will be truly half-fun. (Beverley Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.)

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An article quoting President Obama's last State of the Union address: “It's one of the few regrets of my presidency that rancor and suspicion between the parties has gotten worse instead of better.”

Translation: “Hey!! Who threw that? (Hildy Zampella)

“According to the European Space Agency, radio signals from the ExoMars Schiaparelli lander that were picked up by an Earth telescope and a Mars orbiter suggest that Schiaparelli performed most of its six-minute descent maneuver according to plan.”

Translation: “Mars now has a new crater.” (Jeff Contompasis)

“Such a nasty woman!”

Translation: “Touché.” (Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase, Md.)

And Last: “So instead of crying over all their near misses, maybe Washington sports fans should enjoy their teams that are very good.”

Translation: “The Style Invitational Losers, bringing you the finest in poop jokes since 1993. “ (Jeff Contompasis)

And Even Laster: “In a recent Style Invitational, one reader went so far as to offer a new definition of autumn: ‘The time of year when one gets a queasy feeling that one's first-place team will yet again go down to ignominious defeat.’ ”

Translation: Who cares what they meant! The Invite got quoted in the sports section! (Danielle Nowlin; quote was about Nan Reiner's Week 1194 runner-up)

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