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Entertainment

Style Invitational Week 1411: The back end of a Bulwer

Write a comically bad last sentence of a novel. Plus winning ads with unlikely pitchmen.



(Bob Staake for The Washington Post)

By Pat Myers

November 19, 2020 at 9:51 a.m. EST

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(Click [here to skip down](#) to the winning ideas for ads from space and other unlikely venues)

As he left, the captain flashed a smile — a wide, satisfied grin with lips parted a quarter-inch, the right corner of the mouth raised slightly above the left, and a dry lower lip slightly stuck to the teeth — that defied description. *(Jay Shuck, Week 788)*

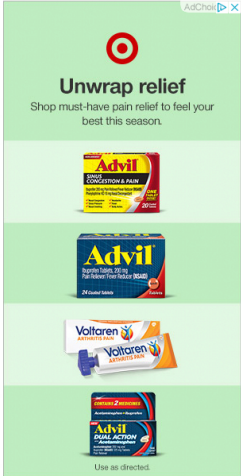
First the infarction, then the ambulance ride, now going under the knife, he drifted away under anesthesia, humming Celine Dion's tune "My Heart Will Go On." But it didn't. *(Larry Miller)*

In the tradition of the Even Older Than the Style Invitational [Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest](#), which has been seeking hilariously bad first sentences to a novel each year since 1982 (the 2020 winner: "Her Dear John missive flapped unambiguously in the windy breeze, hanging like a pizza menu on the doorknob of my mind," by Lisa Kluber), we offer the obvious variation, as we did back in 2008: **Write a humorously awful final sentence or two to an imaginary novel**, as in the examples above from our previous go at this. Given the season, holiday stories wouldn't be out of line. The Empress isn't going to count words, but don't go on forever: The first example is about 40 words and it's plenty long for us.



Submit up to 25 entries at wapo.st/enter-invite-1411 (no capitals in the Web address). **Deadline is Monday, Nov. 30**; results appear Dec. 20 in print, Dec. 17 online.

Winner gets the Lose Cannon, our Style Invitational trophy, or more likely its replacement trophy (TBA). Second place



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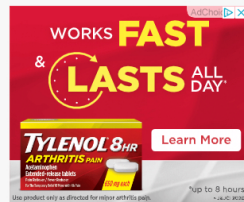


Maxwell Matthews, 3, models this week's second prize. (No, you can't have her doll.) (Pat Myers/The Washington Post)

receives this really just too cute **velvety dragon hat** with all those velvety spikes down the back. While it's modeled here by the Empress's adorable 3-year-old neighbor Maxwell Matthews, the hat also fits an adult's head, or at least the E's. Donated by Dave Prevar.

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 "Ad Ribs" is by Roy Ashley; Kevin Dopart wrote the honorable-mentions subhead. Join the 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, Nov. 19, at wapo.st/conv1411.

[And from The Style Invitational four weeks ago . . .](#)

Ad ribs: Product pitches from unlikely venues

In [Week 1407](#), inspired by NASA's efforts to bring in some bucks by offering to shill Estee Lauder moisturizer from the space station, we asked for some more ideas for ads from space — or from a prison, a football team, a kindergarten or the White House.

4th place:

From space: *Female astronaut:* "Mine never sag up here, and yours won't sag down there — if you beat gravity with a Playtex bra." (*Tom Witte, Montgomery Village, Md.*)

3rd place:

From a kindergarten: "Elmer's Paste: It's what's for lunch." (*Frank Mann, Washington*)

2nd place

and the [plush urine beaker mascot](#):

"Start your day with Breakfast Cereal, the official cereal of the Washington Football Team." (*Jonathan Jensen, Baltimore*)

And the winner of the Lose Cannon:

From space: "A great void. We make it happen. Ex-lax." (*Kevin Dopart, Washington*)

From ad to worse: Honorable mentions

FROM SPACE



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An astronaut is floating outside the space station, looking at his giant watch. A small reentry vehicle floats up, and he jumps in. "Right on time!" he says. And away he whisks as the voice-over says.

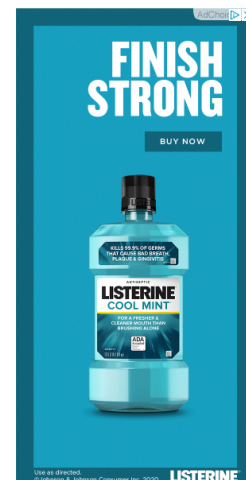


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“Download the Uber app today.” (Jon Ketzner, Cumberland, Md.)

“Reactivate your docking station with Viagra.” (Bob Kruger, Rockville, Md.)

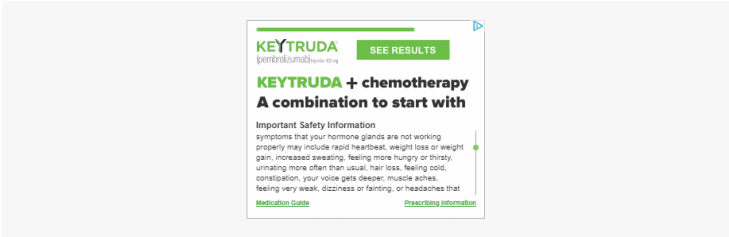
“With Imodium, you’ll never have to tell Houston you have a problem.” (Frank Mann)

For a brothel: “Open the bod-pay door.” (Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.)

“Kohler is pleased to supply its new noise-canceling urinal for the International Space Station. Because in space, no one wants to hear your stream.” (Stephen Litterst, Newark, Del.)

FROM A FOOTBALL TEAM

The Washington Football Team for Pepperidge Farm: “Trust us, nobody knows more about turnovers.” (Jesse Frankovich, Lansing, Mich.)



New York Giants: “Garmin GPS: The only way we can find the end zone.” (Bird Waring, Larchmont, N.Y.)

“After every third down, we on the Washington Football Team like to kick back with a bottle of our official sports drink — yep, it’s time again for another Punt.” (Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase, Md.)

Washington Football Team: “Do you fumble with your condom? Afraid the play is over before you’re prepared? Use ReadySkins, with the easy-open package!” (Drew Bennett, West Plains, Mo.)

“More hits, less brain trauma: Download Spotify.” (Kevin Dopart)

FROM A KINDERGARTEN

“Bota Box chardonnay: The juice box for mommies” (Bird Waring).

A photo of a kindergarten class. All the tots are all well scrubbed and smiling, except for one scruffy little guy who’s giving the finger to the camera. Tagline: “When you’re looking for that talented maverick, call ZipRecruiter.” (Jon Ketzner)



FROM A PRISON

Warden in prison corridor: “With Verizon Wireless, your cell will get even more bars than theirs.” (Kevin Dopart)

Massive riot. Officer is in the control room with his feet up, wearing headphones and smiling. “With the Bose patented noise-canceling system, you’ll never know that all hell broke loose.” (Frank Mann)

“When you carve a pistol out of soap, a rich, solid coat of black isn’t just a fashion statement. That’s why I use Kiwi shoe polish.” (Jeff Shirley, Richmond, Va.)

“When you’re in for armed robbery, you need things that will last. Good thing my Accutron watch is guaranteed for 20 years. Accutron: Nobody does time better.” (Jonathan Jensen; Mark Raffinan, Reston, Va.)

Medtronic endoscopes: “If it’s in there, we’ll find it.” (Kevin Dopart)

Association of public schools: “Next time, fund us instead.” (Sam Mertens, Silver Spring, Md.)



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“Having trouble taking it off? Come to beautiful San Quentin, California, to lose those unwanted pounds in a highly supervised, temptation-free environment. Failure is NOT an option!” (Brett Dimaio, Cumberland, Md.)

FROM THE WHITE HOUSE

Is your child impulsive? Unable to focus? Out of control? Ask your doctor if Ritalin can help. (Jeff Hazle, San Antonio)

Wearing sunglasses, the new president smiles his signature smile, and it's so bright, everyone around him has to put on sunglasses also. Voice-over: Colgate — because we're all going to be smiling a lot more these days. (Danielle Nowlin, Fairfax Station, Va.)

Still running — deadline Monday night, Nov. 23: our contest for bogus trivia about autumn. See wapo.st/invite1410.

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 [Twitter](#)

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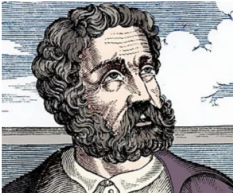
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