

The Invitational Week 105: Dead Letters

Write a funny poem about someone who died in 2024. Plus our annual Kook's Tour of new ink from earlier contests.

[Pat Myers](#)

and

[Gene Weingarten](#)

Jan 02, 2025



^^ **Ai Weiwei, *Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn*, 1995.** See Chris Doyle's poem about this artwork in today's Invitational results, below.

Hello. Welcome to The Invitational Gene Pool, the first of 2025, which we earnestly hope will not be the Worst Year of Our Lives.

We begin with this poem:

Amalija Knavs (1945-2024)

This most elegant lady has passed away

(The mom of Donald Trump's missus).

For Donald, the funeral was pure hell to pay:

He got the cold shoulder, no kisses.

It is based on this [Holy Cow video](#):

For Invitational Week 105: Write a witty poem about someone who died in

2024. Here's [the New York Times's list of "notable deaths,"](#) but feel free to do your own research; there are lists of "odd deaths," the Darwin Awards, etc., that have provided novel material over the years. To see what we like in an obit poem, check out the ones that [got ink a year ago](#).

Deadline is Saturday, Jan. 11, 2025, at 9 p.m. ET. Results will run here in The Gene Pool on Thursday, Jan. 16. As usual, you may submit up to 25 entries for this week's contest, preferably all on the same form.

Formatting this week: Just type the poems as they ought to appear in publication. Please include the person's birth year if you have it.

[Click here for this week's entry form](#), or go to tinyurl.com/inv-form-105.

This week's winner receives, somewhat in keeping with the theme of this week's contest, a "glow knife" that looks (to the charitable) as if it's going straight through your cranium.



To the rapier wit who wins Week 105, this week's prize.

Runners-up get autographed fake money featuring the Czar or Empress, in one of [eight nifty designs](#). Honorable mentions get bupkis, except for a personal email from the E, plus the [Fir Stink for First Ink](#) for First Offenders.

Rerunning Amok: New ink from last year's contests, Part 1

In [Invitational Week 103](#) we invited you to enter any of twenty-four Invite contests from the first half of the past year. Many of the entries were brand-new (and about new events), but as always, many readers resubmitted entries we had spiked the first time around. And as always, very few of these impressed us this time, either. However, this year we do seem to

have an embarrassing landmark moment in Invitational history, to which we now confess. This week's winner, a brilliant and oddly moving poem, had been submitted in exactly the same form, last year. We blew it.

Third runner-up: *From Week 65: Write a funny poem about an artwork:*

“Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn,” by Ai Weiwei, 1995 (pictured at the top of the page)

Ai Weiwei succeeded the way he had planned:

A Han Dynasty urn worth a few thousand grand
Was dropped on the floor, while a colleague took pics,
And left shattered to pieces beyond any fix.

The three photos that captured the action created
A worldwide kerfuffle that since has abated.

It's a famed work of art, though some folks, I have heard,
Think such acts of destruction are Weiwei absurd.

(Chris Doyle, Denton, Tex.)

Second runner-up:

From Week 68: “Breed” two names of real racehorses and name their “foal”:

Count Dracula x Rocketeer = He's Undead, Jim *(Jonathan Paul, Garrett Park, Md.)*

First runner-up:

From Week 54: Edgy alphabet-primer couplets:

G is for Gaetz, who did crimes for his hard-on.

H is for Hoping Trump gives him no pard-on. *(Kevin Dopart, Naxos, Greece)*

And the winner of the [cat-butthole calendar](#):

From Week 53: Poems about people who died in 2023:

Arnold Freed, novelty manufacturer (1926-2023)

Inventively hilarious, humor was his game.

Perhaps you loved his novelties, but didn't know his name.

He gave to us [“The Crooked Deck,”](#) with cards shaped in a Z,

And [“Parking Meters for the John,”](#) so all had time to pee.

Those [“No-Tear Sugar Packets”](#) could drive anybody mad.

And [“Liquor-Flavored Lollipops”](#)— the “gin” ones weren't bad.

Laughing with the angels now, proud of all he did,

He says: “You like that stupid stuff? You should see my kid!”

(Judy Freed, Deerfield Beach, Fla. — Arnold Freed's daughter)

The Again-y of Defeat: Honorable mentions

Week 53: Obit poems

Samuel Wurzelbacher, a.k.a. Joe the Plumber (1973-2023)

He featured in the '08 race, although

[He wasn't really working as a plumber.](#)

So here's to Sam (he also wasn't “Joe”),

Who made our discourse just a little dumber.

(Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.)

Shivdayal Sharma (died April 19, 2023, age 82)

In India he went to pee beside a railroad track;

Did he not hear the train? Did he forget to watch his back?
The railcar never hit him. He escaped — I don't know how!
But then, as luck would have it, the express train hit a cow.
The luckless beast was launched into the air (100 feet!),
Then landed on Shivdayal — they were prob'ly *both* dead meat.
And so, let's stop and shed a tear for poor ill-fated Sharma;
But wait! He might be coming back! (You never know, with karma.)
(*Beverley Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.*)

John Warnock, co-founder of Adobe (1940–2023)

Inventor of the PDF, this fellow, name of John
Is sadly in the Pushing Daisies Format from now on.
(*Jesse Frankovich, Laingsburg, Mich.*)

Chaim Topol, who played Tevye in the movie “Fiddler on the Roof” (1935-2023)

They worked you hard—your thumbs you seldom twiddled—
In all the years when on the Roof you Fiddled.
You'll have occasion, in the life to come,
To sit around and biddy biddy bum. (*Duncan Stevens*)

Alice K. Ladas (1921-2023), author of the manual *The G Spot*

As the coffin lowered, said the officiant with care:
“To the left just a bit. Oh, yes, yes! Right there!”
(*Leif Picoult, Rockville, Md.*)

Yevgeny Prigozhin (1961-2023), Russian mercenary leader

A loyal combatant
Found Ukraine war lacking
Flew to get out
Had lost Putin's backing
A missile was launched
Prodigious explosion
And so went the end
Of Yevgeny Prigozhin.
(*Daniel Helming, Conshohocken, Pa.*)

Frank Coppa (1941-2023), gangster

No Mafia mobster would say that his wish is
To wind up garroted or sleeping with fishes,
Since wise guys and made men are sensibly loath,
Being sworn to omertá, to breaking that oath.
One exception's Frank Coppa, who sang to the feds
Under witness protection and took down the heads
Of the family Bonnano, then died with his feet
In a pair of black Oxfords, not set in concrete.
(*Chris Doyle*)

Week 54: Edgy alphabet-primer couplets

A is for AI (it's useless to fight this!).
B is for Bots, who were happy to write this. (*Beverley Sharp*)

Week 55: Words/phrases with the letter block DUST in any order

KISS-ASS DUTY: What's on the daily calendar of every GOP leader. (*Gregory Koch, Falls Church, Va.*)

Week 56: 'Dad jokes' vs. subversive-Grandpa jokes

What do the women in Norfolk say when the fleet comes in?

Dad joke: Long time no sea.

Grandpa joke: Long time no seamen. (*Chris Doyle*)

I have legs but cannot walk. What am I?

Dad joke: A table.

Grandpa joke: A roast turkey on a Thanksgiving table. (*Chris Doyle*)

Why did the mortgage lender get fired?

Dad joke: He lost interest.

Grandpa joke: He kept cutting off people's ARMs. (*Kevin Dopart*)

Why did the man put his money in the freezer?

Dad joke: He wanted cold, hard cash.

Grandpa joke: Because his wife wouldn't look for it underneath the frozen human head. (*Pam Shermeyer, Lathrup Village, Mich.*)

Week 58: Clickbait headlines for unsensational articles:

CASH-STARVED STREET WALKERS SWARM TEXAS TOWN

Actual story: Safety advocates patrol streets and call for government funding (*Leif Picoult*)

NON-DIVERSE STATE TO GET EVEN WHITER

Storm to bring record snow to southern Maine (*Jesse Frankovich*)

BARING YOUR BREASTS CAN KILL YOU!

New study finds Mardi Gras beads release potentially toxic metals (*Jesse Frankovich*)

MEXICANS WITH KNIVES TAKE OVER CITY

Article about popular radish-carving contest in Southern Mexico (*Mark Raffman, Reston, Va.*)

Week 59: 'Why not' ideas

Why not add Harriet Tubman's face to \$20 Venmo payments, too, so people will actually see it? (*Jesse Rifkin, Arlington, Va.*)

Week 60: Diary entries of famous people

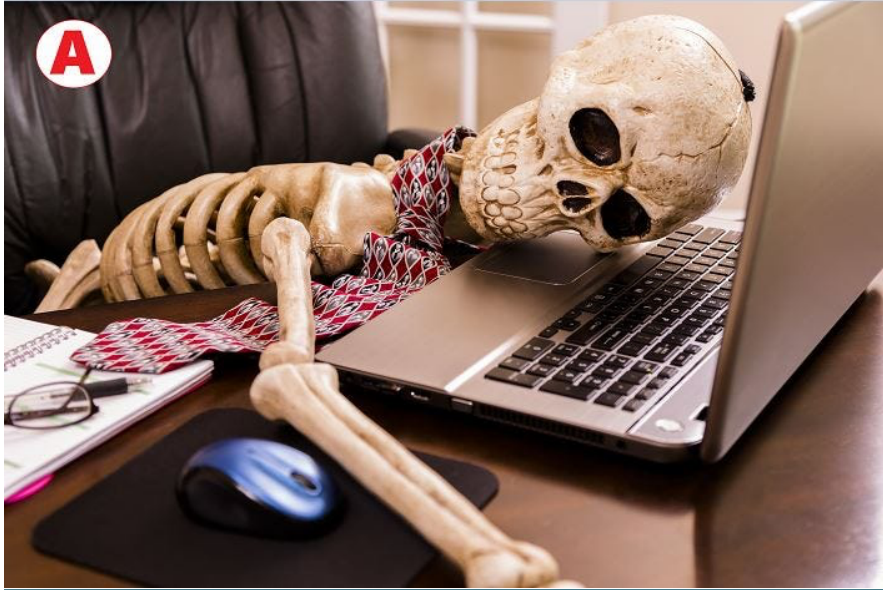
March XIV: Having a hard time convincing C. he should give up the idea of becoming a king.

Will take another stab at it tomorrow. — Brutus (*Art Grinath, Takoma Park, Md.*)

6-10-1787: As we dressed for the day's debates, Gen. Washington accidentally displayed for all to see that Member which Providence has so grandly bestowed upon him. Franklin, that wag, declared that a monument should be erected to commemorate the event. — J.

Adams (*Steve Smith, Potomac, Md.*)

Week 61: Photo captions



Barry struggles to find the right work-death balance. (*Jesse Frankovich*)

Week 62: How to stress yourself out

I'm proud of my breasts, and I just bought a sexy party dress that really shows them off. But should I wear it to the party tonight? I don't especially want to attract someone who's drawn only to my boobs. But I don't want to meet someone who's indifferent to them, either. Okay, I'll wear it, but I'll spend the whole night constantly tugging it up whenever it slips down too much, so he doesn't think I'm *trying* to show them off ... (*Tom Witte, Montgomery Village, Md.*)

Week 63: Passages written only with the words in Biden's 2023 State of the Union address:

Well, you actually kicked me out. Dropped in Vice President Harris at the last second. How did that work out for you? So long and thanks for nothing. I will remember this. May be not. (*Kevin Dopart*)

My predecessor, who is also following me, is not too healthy. Just look at him. He goes at least 250, probably a lot more. He gets so mad, many times he has exploded. He's a consumer of junk food, and he's old. Will he last four more years? (*William Kennard, Arlington, Va.*)

Week 64: Name chains

Donald Trump, "Liar Liar," Jim Carrey, James Bond, Austin Powers, Fat Bastard, Donald Trump (*Neil Kurland, Elkridge, Md.*)

Al Roker, Stormy Daniels, Rubin "Hurricane" Carter, Bob Dylan, "A Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall"; Al Roker. (*Roy Ashley, Washington, D.C.*)

Sean Combs; Madalyn Murray O'Hair; Grecian Formula; Formula 1; Jackie Stewart; Jackie O; "The Story of O"; "The Scarlet Letter"; Scarlett O'Hara; "Gone With the Wind"; "Puff, the Magic Dragon"; Puff Daddy; Sean Combs. (*Stephen Dudzik, Olney, Md.*)

Pete Hegseth, Pete Rose, Cincinnati Reds, "Reds," Diane Keaton, Buster Keaton, Buster Crabbe, Flash Gordon, Gordon MacRae, "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'," "Mourning

Becomes Electra,” Eugene O’Neill, Eugene Levy, “Schitt’s Creek,” Pete Hegseth. (Steve Smith)

Ronald Reagan; Oliver North; Shredder; “Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles”; Mitch McConnell; United States Senate; “Filibustered!”; “Bust a Move”; Raygun. (Malcolm Fleschner, Palo Alto, Calif.)

Week 66: Anagram one product to create another

BOUNTY PAPER TOWELS > SLOPPY ONE BUTTWEAR: The quilted crappy-wiper diaper. (Jesse Frankovich)

STOUFFER’S LASAGNA > A+ SAFFRON SEAL GUTS: America’s No. 1-selling frozen seal guts. Try the Party Size! (Barbara Turner, Takoma Park, Md.)

WHEATIES contain just enough fiber to produce A WEE SHIT. (William Kennard)

Week 67: Move the last letter of a word to the beginning

Kamo: The de rigueur garb of the January 6 crowd. (Kevin Dopart)

Shaagen Daz: Ice cream with aphrodisiac properties. (Duncan Stevens)

Week 68: Foal names from ‘breeding’ two 3-year-old racehorses

Lonesome Boy x Candymaker = Incel and Gretel (Jonathan Paul)

Count Dracula x Prints Money = Cryptocurrency (Jonathan Paul)

Mr. Suds x Daily Grind = Cleaney Todd (Judy Freed)

Awesome Wind x Mister Lincoln = ‘Cane and Abe L. (Jesse Frankovich)

Mannerly x Reaper = De Rigueur Mortis (Duncan Stevens)

One Sharp Cookie x Epic Ride = Oreo Speedwagon (Eric Nelkin, Silver Spring, Md.)

Feel the Magic x Tiz My Hero = Penn and Kveller (Judy Freed)

Fifth Avenue x Tourist = JustHereForTheSaks (Judy Freed)

Pirate x Lord Prancealot = Jean L’Effete (Jeff Hazle, San Antonio)

Week 70: ‘Grandfoals’ from breeding two foals from Week 68

Nosh x Famous Anus = Snack Crackle Plop (Jonathan Paul)

Leak House x De Beers = Pees and Carats (Judy Freed)

Week 71: ‘Wait Wait ... Don’t Tell Me’-type questions about real events

The Lego toy company asked a Southern California police department to stop doing what?
A. Telling thieves that the police would leave them alone if they stole “minor items like Lego.”

B. Photoshopping the heads of Lego mini-figures onto suspects’ heads in social media posts.

C. Pranking prisoners by making them build school desks and license plates out of Lego.

Answer: B ([Photo here](#)) (Leif Picoult)

Chainsaws are not just for horror movie villains and lumberjacks. The first one was invented to:

A. Be an alternative to the guillotine during Napoleon’s rule.

B. Assist with childbirth.

C. Sculpt ice replicas of Catherine the Great.

Answer: B (Kevin Dopart)

Week 75: Write something with just a small section of the keyboard

From the 9 letters on the left side of the keyboard: We saw Dad’s waxed wee-wee area. Eww! (Chris Doyle)

Week 74: Song parodies

Trump Takes On the Civil Service

To ["Under the Sea"](#)

Protections for civil servants
I'm ready to abrogate.
Guardrails get no observance;
Believe me, I'll clean the slate.
From now on, the real essential's
Just loyalty to this man,
So screw all those dumb "credentials"!
'Cause patronage, that's my plan.
I'll sunder D.C.! Sunder D.C.!
Deep State erasure—itching to chase yer
Butts up a tree!
Purge all the "experts" leaning left:
Soon they'll be truly Schedule-F'ed.
Jobs we'll be baggin', makin 'em MAGAn,
Sunder D.C.!
Sunder D.C.! Sunder D.C.!
Donald-admiring types we'll be hiring ASAP!
You say they'll sue, my scheme to thwart?
Guess you forgot who rules the Court.
Old guard to dumpsters: hire some Trumpsters,
Sunder D.C.! (*Duncan Stevens*)

Boeing's Pitch (and Roll)

To ["Be Our Guest"](#)

Be our guest! Be our guest!
Put our aircraft to the test;
Let's get going! Made by Boeing,
All our parts are just the best!
Want a seat by the door?
Oops! It's not there anymore;
(Though we've had our share of glitches,
For the most part, no one bitches...)
Lost a tire, lost a wheel?
Not to worry — no big deal!
And that nosedive — quite a feat! (Weren't you impressed?)
Although your head was reeling
When it hit the ceiling,
Don't be stressed! Get some rest! Be our guest!
(*Beverley Sharp*)

Letter to Santa from Mar-a-Lago, 2025

To ["I Want an Alien for Christmas"](#) by *Fountains of Wayne*
Mass deportation! We sent 'em back across!

But now here in our nation, we're feeling at a loss.
And so this Christmas season, the first among my needs,
Is someone I can ease in, to pull up all my weeds.
I want an alien for Christmas! I want an alien this year,
I want a Pedro or Juan to count upon,
Who'll mulch my beds and cut my lawn,
I want an alien for Christmas this year!
My big estate needs staffing, there's no help left about,
So Santa, please stop laughing, and help a brother out.
I'm not some kind of villain, so dontcha be a jerk —
Just send me someone willin' to do that kind of work!
I want an alien for Christmas, I want an alien this year,
I want a Lupe or Luz that I can use
To fold my sheets and shine my shoes —
I want an alien for Christmas this year!

(Mark Raffman)

The Ballad of RFK Jr.

To *"Hot to Go"* by Chappell Roan

Why? Sick? Why sick — just you wait!
Used to be a Dem but he said, "I'm ditchin'
MAGA is the place for the crap I'm pitchin'!"
Found a roadkill bear and he had no pity,
Worm got in his brain and it died — not pretty!
Baby, when he takes his seat,
Then Musk will send a happy tweet,
And the deep-state folks with PhDs
Will be stewin' in mis'ry, stewin' in mis'ry!!
K-E-N-N-E-D-Y,
Wackadoo but he's our guy,
If it's "science" he'll deny,
Normal rules do not apply,
K-E-N-N-E-D-Y,
Bring the crazy — don't be shy,
Suspect stuff is what he'll buy,
K-E-N-N-E-D-Y.
K-E-N-N-E-D-Y,
Vaccines are a great big lie,
K-E-N-N-E-D-Y
Let's give polio a try!

(Mark Raffman)

The headline "Rerunning Amok" is by Jesse Frankovich; Tom Witte wrote the honorable-mentions subhead.

Still running — deadline 9 p.m. ET Saturday, Jan. 4: our Week 104 contest, a chance to enter any of the contests from the past half-year. Click on the link below.

