

# The Style Invitational

Week 614: In-Stock Characters



BY BOB STAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

**Mr. Fixit arrives to repair an antique Ms. Pac-Man game, but through a sudden techno-warp, he winds up a character in the game itself. Ms. Pac-Man is a slave of a warlord who forces her to race around ratlike mazes for the amusement of others. Despite some anatomical differences — he, for example, is not a wafer without genitalia — Mr. Fixit and Ms. Pac-Man fall in love. Mr. Fixit rescues her from the machine, and they live together as man and mouth.**

**Mr. Clean**  
**Mr. Coffee**  
**Mr. Peanut**  
**Dr. Pepper**  
**Mrs. Butterworth**  
**Mr. Fixit**  
**Mrs. Dash**  
**Mrs. Smith**

**Mrs. Fields**  
**Mr. Pibb**  
**Mr. Potato Head**  
**Ms. Pac-Man**  
**Aunt Jemima**  
**Cap'n Crunch**  
**Mr. Dee-Lish**  
**Uncle Ben**

**Molly McButter**  
**Betty Crocker**  
**Mrs. Paul**  
**Chef Boyardee**  
**Johnnie Walker**  
**Bartles & Jaymes**  
**Bazooka Joe**  
**Count Chocula**

**Baby Ruth**  
**Papa John**  
**Captain Morgan**  
**Burger King**  
**Dairy Queen**  
**Cracker Jack**  
**Mister Salty**  
**Ms. Magazine**

**This week's contest**, suggested by Jim Ward of Alexandria: Pitch us an idea for a summer movie featuring two or more of the above characters, as in the example above. The description may be no more than . . . hmm, 82 words. Other than that, you have free rein (except, of course, that entries must be within the Empress's strict

standards of taste and propriety). The winner receives the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. First runner-up gets an empty bottle of the French wine Chateau des Tourettes, whisked away by the Empress from Phil Frankenfeld of Washington. There is no indication that this wine produces any unusual side effects.

Other runners-up win a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable mentions get one of the lusted-after Style Invitational Magnets. One prize per entrant per week. Send your entries by e-mail to [losers@washpost.com](mailto:losers@washpost.com) or, if you really have to, by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, June 20. Put the week number in the subject line of your e-mail, or it risks being ignored as spam. Include your name, postal address and phone number with your entry. Contests are 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 July 10. 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 Stephen Dudzik of Olney.

**Report from Week 610**, in which we asked you to "mash" two movies, TV shows, etc., into a single work of art and describe it: The Empress got an enormous response to this contest, at least 4,000 entries, the most in at least a year, evidently because it was pretty easy to combine the names of two movies to make a funny-sounding hybrid. What proved a whole lot harder was to say anything very interesting about it. So below, there's no "Agnes of Godzilla," or "Othello Dolly" or "Magnum P.I. Claudius" or "Beauty Shop of Horrors," to name but a few of the many that received multiple tries, but no imperial green light.

♦ **Third runner-up: The Wizinator:** A steroid-fueled cyborg pursues Dorothy and her companions as they attempt to reach the Emerald City in time to take their court-mandated drug tests. But along the Yellow Brick Road there were some poppies . . . (Meg Sullivan, Potomac)

♦ **Second runner-up: Please Don't Eat Miss Daisy:** Hannibal Lecter lands a job driving for a prim southern spinster. (Peter Metrinko and Laura Miller, Chantilly)

♦ **First runner-up, winner of Peyton Coyner's custom-made Style Invitational Magnet box: Pollyanna Karenina:** "Oh, my — isn't that the most beautiful train?" (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

♦ **And the winner of the Inker: Terminators of Endearment:** At last, the perfect "compromise" date movie. (Paul Whittemore, Gaithersburg)

♦ **Honorable Mentions:**

**Valley Girl With a Pearl Earring:** There's this girl, Julie? She gets to be a model for, like, a famous photograph or something. (Chris Kervina, Manassas)

**It's a Wonderful Life Is Beautiful:** A man sees how depressing a Nazi concentration camp would have been without him. (Eric Murphy, Chicago; Beth Morgan, Palo Alto, Calif.)

**My Left Footloose:** A dancer with leprosy sees the imminent end of his career. (Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.)

**The French Lieutenant's a Man and a Woman:** Confused sexual identity threatens morale in Napoleon's army. (Fred S. Souk, Reston)

**The Americanization of Amelie:** The cute, quirky French girl finds herself getting a big butt. (Bill Caldwell, Shawnee-on-Delaware, Pa.)

**Soylent Green Acres:** Two rich urban retirees find out the real meaning of being "put out to pasture." (Carolyn Steele, Annandale)

**The Man With the Golden Gunga Din:** James Bond finally meets a better man than he. (Tom Kreitzberg, Silver Spring)

**The Lion in Winterminator 2:** Eleanor of Aquitaine can't be bargained with. She can't be reasoned with. She doesn't feel pity, or remorse, or fear. And she absolutely will not stop. Until you are dead. (Tom Kreitzberg)

**2001 Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest:** A computer attempts to get out of work by acting crazy, but things get out of hand and he ends up with a circuit-otomy. (Art Grinath, Takoma Park)

**Love Toy Story:** Woody, an old favorite, feels threatened by the arrival of the new battery-powered Buzz Lightyear. (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge; Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)

**Das Booty Call:** When the German sub fleet puts in to port, they're ready for some action! (Brendan Beary)

**A Bullet Is Waiting for Godot:** Let's just say Vladimir and Estragon have had it up to here. (Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)

**Wag the Dogma:** A group of apostles spin some messianic nonsense to distract the public from the Pilate-Magdalene affair. (Danny Bravman, St. Louis)

**The Full Monty Python and the Holy Grail:** The search for the missing cup. (Steven J. Allen, Manassas)

**Man on Fire Down Below:** An educational film about STDs and their symptoms. (Judith Cottrill, New York; Beth Morgan)

**Gandhi-Haw:** An hour of Delhi laughs and homespun humor. (Bob Dalton, Arlington)

**Inherit the Wind in the Willows:** Did Mole descend from Rat? Or was it the other way around? Let a jury decide! (Joseph Romm, Washington)

**Gilligan's Island of Dr. Moreau:** A mad scientist's plans to perform experimental lobotomies on seven castaways are spoiled when he realizes that someone has already beaten him to it. (Meg Sullivan)

**Throw Momma From the Planes, Trains & Automobiles:** Young Grigori discovers the family secret when he tries to bump off his mother, Mrs. Rasputin. (Mark Eckenwiler, Washington)

**DracuLa Recherche du Temps Perdu:** Memories of his past life come flooding back when a vampire bites into Madeleine. (Jonathan Paul, Garrett Park)

**Two and a Half Men at Work:** The tragic tale of OSHA factory regulations ignored. (Robin Parry, Arlington)

**Waiting for Godot to Exhale:** Don't hold your breath. (Mark Eckenwiler)

**Independence Day After Tomorrow:** Aliens stupidly attack Earth right after global warming has rendered the planet uninhabitable. (Joseph Romm)

**Guess Who's Coming to My Dinner With Andre?:** A white guy and a black guy sit and listen to a boring guy. (John Chamberlain, Silver Spring)

**Bob & Carol & Ted (Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore):** After the divorce, Ted settles into a *ménage à trois*. (Dave Prevar, Annapolis; Andrew Hoenig, Rockville)

**You Only Live Twice, Pussycat:** The other cats gang up on Felix and say nasty things to him. (Michelle Stupak, Ellicott City)

**Tequila Sunrise at Campobello:** Suddenly Eleanor starts looking pretty good. (Bonnie Jacob, Alexandria)

**The Thin Red Blue Long Grey Line:** A bus company offers an extended tour of the American political landscape. (Bonnie Jacob)

**Big Top Pee-wee Willie Winkie:** You wouldn't call this movie a tearjerker, but you may want to bring a box of Kleenex anyway. (Jon Reiser, Hilton, N.Y.)

**My Fair Lady Sings the Blues:** "Cocaine, I'm sayin', stays mainly in the vein." (Hamdi Akar, Springfield; Chris Doyle)

**Pretty in Pink Flamingoes:** Andie can't make up her mind: Should she date the class hottie or the gross, feces-eating drag queen? (Beth Morgan)

**Die Another Day After Tomorrow:** The world ends not with a stir, but with a shake. (Wunji L. Lau, Fishers, Ind.)

## MISS MANNERS

Judith Martin

### Yo, Woman! This Your Parasol?

**H**ow can you get the attention of someone whose name is unknown to you?

Let us say, for example, that a stranger has accidentally dropped something that you, as a helpful and honest citizen, wish to restore to its proper owner. Yet the stranger, unaware of the loss, is sauntering down the street.

Do you shout "Miss!?"  
Not if you have had the experience of so addressing a lady who replied indignantly that she was married. One Gentle Reader went so far as to ask whether the clerk who called her this meant to imply that her young children were illegitimate.

Or, if the stranger is male, "Sir!?"  
Not if you have been reprimanded for using that term by someone who angrily accused you of making him feel old. Some will explain coldly that this should be used only to their even more elderly fathers.

So — one by one, we have condemned the respectful terms by which we address others. Although Miss Manners notices that this is always done with the argument that the terms constitute a subtle form of rudeness, they are attacked with such blatant rudeness as to make the polite fearful of using them.

"Sir" and "ma'am" are spurned as insults by adults who hope to pass as youths. The preposterous part is that they attempt to do this to genuine youths. Do they expect gently reared children who have been taught to respect their elders to slap their foreheads and say, "Oops, my mistake! How could I have thought you were older than I am?"

Meanwhile, the terms for addressing youths, "young lady" and "young man," are useless for opposite reasons. The young person with the exposed and ringed midriff understandably does not recognize herself in the term "lady," while the not-quite-parallel male term is taken as patronizing.

The reintroduction of "Ms.," the centuries-old abbreviation for "mistress," was supposed to eliminate the nuisance of determining whether the lady was married, which burdened "Miss" and "Mrs.," the other honorifics derived from "Mistress."

Instead, "Ms." created even more consternation, while the permissiveness of letting ladies choose their own titles only spurred them to try to enforce their choices on others. Grandmothers were lectured that

they could no longer use their husbands' names, while brides were scolded for not doing so.

And don't you wonder why the terms of female respect, "Mistress" and "Madam," picked up dirty meanings while the male equivalents, "Mister" and "Sir," retain their dignity? Even slangy terms to address men, such as "man" and "dude," have more dignity than such unfortunately-not-dead ones for females as "sweetie" and "dearie."

"Honey" is sometimes used this way, but strictly speaking, it is a unisex term that is the exclusive privilege of marriage. In fact, calling one's partner "honey" seems to be the only privilege still exclusive to marriage.)

Miss Manners would not have minded reasonable etiquette reform, but all this is merely destructive. The result has been that honorifics are simply eliminated, not only in direct address but in written addresses. And what have the reformers come up with in the way of graceful ways to address strangers?

"Hey," "Yo," and (plural only) "You guys."  
Nice work, ladies and gentlemen.

**Dear Miss Manners:**

**A friend of mine died last week. Going through my address book today looking for someone else, I came across my deceased friend's name. When is it appropriate to remove it, or is it a matter of dealing with grief?**

How could it be rude to remove a telephone number that is no longer useful to you, when the person concerned will never know?

That is the practical answer. Yet Miss Manners is well aware of how it feels. Piety toward the dead may not be reasonably defensible, but it is an important part of the human condition. So the answer is to leave it there until the pang it gives you to remove it is manageable, which could be sooner, later or never.

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

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## ASK AMY

**Dear Readers:**

A recent letter writer asked how a gay couple should respond to detailed queries about their daughter's parentage, both from friends and strangers.

The responses to this question made me eager to further explore opinions toward gay parents. I asked Zogby International, the polling firm, to insert a question concerning Americans' attitudes toward same-sex parents into their most recent national poll.

The results show that a majority of Americans do not believe that same-sex couples can be as effective parents as opposite-sex couples. However, a sizable percentage (42) believe that both types of parents can be equally effective (6 percent weren't sure).

I welcome readers' comments and stories on this timely cultural topic.

Below is a sampling of the letters I received responding to the question of how gay parents should handle queries about their children.

**Dear Amy:**

**In 1992 I became a gay foster parent and then an adoptive parent to two boys who were 12 and 15. I'm now the gay "Gampa" of the cutest 4-year-old grandson ever, but 1992 was a time when gay parenting was fairly rare.**

**Like the "Dads" in your column, I was asked lots of questions, often questions that people would never in a million years ask a heterosexual birth parent.**

**By answering the questions as honestly and politely as I could (without invading the boys' privacy), I educated a whole lot of people.**

**Being a pioneer often means you have to endure some discomfort along the way, but in the end you arrive in a wonderful new world.**

*Hamp Simmons, California*

**Dear Amy:**

**No matter how clever the verbal responses are to questions, it will never make the situation normal for children of gays.**

**It's one thing to tolerate gays, but it's a whole different matter when defenseless children are put into such an unnatural setting.**

**I am not anti-gay, but I am concerned about the children who have no say in these situations.**

*Spare the Children*

**Dear Amy:**

**I am the biological mother of our 5-year-old daughter. My partner is her adoptive mother. On our daughter's birth certificate, we are listed as parent and parent.**

**When we are asked about our daughter's parentage, we say, "The story is a little involved. If you want to know, give me your e-mail address and I'll be happy to answer all of your questions."**

*Deborah*

**Dear Amy:**

**I am a gay man and am used to fielding questions from straights.**

**I think that at this point the whole idea of gay parentage is so new and so against-the-grain that such questions are inevitable and understandable. How could people not be curious? And what possible harm could there be in simply telling people how their daughter came about in as abbreviated, non-graphic and casually friendly a manner as you can — and thereby teaching your daughter to do the same thing?**

**Universal acceptance and understanding of new ideas can take a long time, and pretending otherwise gets us nowhere. Like it or not, gay parents are that new idea.**

*Ray in Washington*

**Dear Amy:**

**We, especially the straight ones of us, are really ignorant about all of this.**

**Believe me, I have no clue, and in the world where the whole sexual dimension of life seems to be "out there" in the public domain, why should these questions seem rude? Have these gay men, who even today are still outside the "norm," considered that there is a chance to educate people if they want us to understand them?**

*Another Parent*

**Dear Amy:**

**When picking my son up from school, a little girl asked my partner how he could have two dads. I think his response was one of the best.**

**"There are many different types of families. Some kids have a mom and a dad, some kids live with just their mom or just their dad, some kids live with their grandparents or maybe aunts and uncles and some kids have two moms or two dads. Isn't it neat that there are so many different types of families?"**

*Dad in Long Island*

**Dear Amy:**

**While waiting in a long grocery checkout line just ahead of two exhausted-looking men with a toddler, I overheard one of them say to someone behind them, "She has two parents who love her more than life itself."**

*A Regular Reader*

Thank you all for sharing your thoughts, suggestions, insights and opinions with me and with one another.

*Write to Amy Dickinson at [askamy@tribune.com](mailto:askamy@tribune.com) or Ask Amy, Chicago Tribune, TT500, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60611.*

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## BRIDGE | Frank Stewart

**E-W vulnerable**

**NORTH (D)**  
♠ 7 4  
♥ Q 10 9 4  
♦ K Q J 3  
♣ K 10 4

**WEST**  
♠ A 10 6 5 2  
♥ None  
♦ 10 9 8  
♣ Q J 6 5 2

**EAST**  
♠ Q 9 3  
♥ J 3  
♦ 7 5 4  
♣ A 9 8 7 3

**SOUTH**  
♠ K J 8  
♥ A K 8 7 6 5 2  
♦ A 6 2  
♣ None

**The bidding**  
North East South West  
Pass Pass 1 ♥ Pass  
3 ♥ Pass 6 ♥ All Pass

Opening lead: ♦ 10

**I** was playing in a pairs event with Cy the Cynic when we sat down against Minnie Bottoms, my club's senior member.

"How nice," Minnie murmured. "We get to play against the experts."

Cy threw me a look that would have curdled milk. Minnie and her old bifocals, which make her mix up kings and jacks, regularly saddle Cy with bottom scores.

Cy was determined to go down fighting. When I issued a jump raise of his opening bid of one heart, he leaped to slam. West led the ten of diamonds, and Cy saw immediately that the contract depended on a winning guess in spades. If West held both the ace and queen, Cy had no chance. Should he play East for the ace or for the queen?

Cy was sure West didn't have both black aces: Then she'd have

led one of them. So Cy decided on a "discovery play" to find out who had the ace of clubs. He won the first trick in dummy and led the king of clubs. Minnie, East, smoothly played low!

Cy ruffed, drew trumps and led a spade from dummy. Minnie played low again, and Cy confidently put up the king, playing West for the ace of clubs, hence no ace of spades. West produced the ace and returned a spade to Minnie's queen for down one.

Minnie thought dummy's king of clubs was the jack, of course. She followed with a low club because she thought Cy was about to lose a finesse to the queen.

"What chance have I got?" Cy asked me. "I make discovery plays, but Minnie has anti-discovery plays — and those confounded glasses."

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Next Week: **Ask Backwards: Erudite Edition** or **Cerebral Hemorrhage**