

DIVERSIONS

THE STYLE INVITATIONAL

Cape-abilities: Uses for magic powers

BY PAT MYERS

In Week 1203, we asked what you would do with one or more of the magical powers we listed. Many Losers offered that if they could become many times as small, they might almost feel comfortable on a short flight in coach.

4th place

Shape-shifting: I would turn myself into a Chihuahua during storms so my habit of piddling myself would seem more acceptable. (Bird Waring, Larchmont, N.Y.)

3rd place

If I had **X-ray vision**, I would become an orthopedic surgeon and go to poor rural clinics to provide free health care. Just kidding! I would look through people's clothes at their butts. (John Hutchins, Silver Spring, Md.)

2nd place and the

'Pessimism: It's probably not that great' T-shirt:

X-ray vision: Don't need it — I just walk right into the dressing room. — D.J.T., Still New York (Jesse Frankovich, Lansing, Mich.)

And the winner of the

Inkin' Memorial:

Supersonic speed: I'd stand on the Olympic podium next to Usain Bolt and proudly receive my silver medal. (Rob Huffman, Fredericksburg, Va.)

Downed power lines: honorable mentions

Becoming huge and shape-shifting: I'd become a super-large Newt Gingrich and put the star on the Capitol Christmas tree. Just like the Abominable Snowman in the Rudolph TV special, but with hair spray and no friends. (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

Imperviousness to heat: I'd run into burning buildings to save people. Then run back in and ransack their drawers for cash. Come on, it was going up in smoke anyway! (Ben Aronin, Washington)

Shape-shifting and becoming many times as small: I would assume the shape of a camel and then fit through the eye of a needle, paving the way to heaven for countless dead tycoons. (Mark Raffman, Reston, Va.)

Shape-shifting: I would assume the shape of a 15-foot rooster, paint myself blue and run through the National Gallery's East Building shouting, "I'm free! I'm free!" (Roy Ashley, Washington)

I'd **shrink** and sneak into Trump's bedroom while he's alone at the White House and then do a series of **shape-shifts** into the Ghosts of Wives Past, Present and Yet to Come. The future vision would be Rosie O'Donnell. You're welcome, Melania. (Kevin Dopart)

Shape-shifting: I would become a star so I could twinkle. This is how I actually answered that question in elementary school, which led to an undeserved critique by classmates during recess consisting of a most unpleasant Atomic Flying Wedgie. (Jeff Contompsonis, Ashburn, Va.)

If I had **supersonic speed** and **X-ray vision**, was **impervious to cold** and could **shape-shift**: I'd race to the North Pole, morph into an elf, and get an early look at what Santa is bringing me this year. Oh yeah, like you wouldn't? (Perry Beider, Silver Spring)

Supersonic speed: I'd be late for everything, just to mess with people. (David Ballard, Reston, Va.)

Supersonic speed: I'd go to law school and become an ambulance catcher. (Roger Strauss, Silver Spring, Md.)

Imperviousness to heat and cold: I could fulfill my childhood ambition to become a firefighter/penguin researcher. (Lawrence McGuire, Waldorf, Md.)

Imperviousness to cold: In August, I could go to my D.C. office without even bringing my parka. (Howard Walderman, Columbia)

Imperviousness to cold: I'd stand outside disguised as a snowman, waiting patiently to scare the bejeebers out of the next person who let his dog poop on my lawn. (Melissa Balmain, Rochester, N.Y.)

X-ray vision: I'd finally confirm that sicko Schrödinger's cat is dead. (Jon Gearhart, Des Moines)



PAT MYERS/THE WASHINGTON POST

How do you make Homer Simpson look like O.J. Simpson? This week's second prize.

Week 1207: Clue us in — a reverse crossword

RETIRE: What to do to a car that won't run — or one that just has a flat

HEARSE: Derrieres that fit best in men's jeans

There's a double helping of Evan Birnholz in The Post's Arts & Style section this weekend. First, because The Washington Post Magazine has Christmas off, Evan's ultra-clever Sunday crossword found room at our newsprint inn instead, on Page E4. And just as he did last year, Evan has slipped the Empress a grid to use for our annual backward-crossword challenge; once again, it's from a puzzle he constructed for his own website, Devil Cross, back in 2014.

This week: Supply clever, funny clues to up to 25 of the 72 words and multi-word terms in Evan's grid, as in the examples above (the second one being "he-arses"). Yes, the grid has no numbers — because we don't need them: just list each word along with your clue (if it's a multi-word or hyphenated term, please list it as a single word anyway, so the Empress can search for all the entries with, say, IDOTOO). The clues should be brief, but they don't have to be as short as for a real crossword, as the examples show. (Note: This is an American-style crossword, not the British type in which the clue contains an anagram of the desired word.)

Evan's own clues for this puzzle are, not surprisingly, pretty challenging; for example, for ANTI it's "No one?" — as in someone who says no. (We dispense with the convention of ending a wordplay clue with a question mark, since we'd end up with them on 90 percent of our clues.) If you'd like to try to do the puzzle first, before studying the clues above — or just want to see Evan's clues — go to bit.ly/devilcross2 and scroll down to the blank grid.

Submit entries at this website: bit.ly/enter-invite-1207 (all lowercase). Winner gets the Inkin' Memorial, the Lincoln statue bobblehead that is the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place gets a brand-new **Chia Homer**, a terra cotta bust of Mr. Simpson on which you grow a sort of Afro of green "hair" in the form of sprouting little chia seeds — making Homer look like a cross between Green Bill Cosby and Green Ronald McDonald. Donated by Not a Loser Herself Martha Heiner.

Other runners-up win 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" (FinStar for their first ink). Deadline is Monday night, Jan. 2; results published Jan. 22 (online Jan. 19). See general contest rules and guidelines at wapo.st/InvRules. The headline for this week's results is by Tom Witte; the honorable-mentions subhead is by Jesse Frankovich. 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 if you plan to enter, check it out at wapo.st/styleconv.



PAT MYERS/THE WASHINGTON POST

How do you make Homer Simpson look more like O.J. Simpson? This week's second prize.

X-ray vision: I'd wear a lead-lined blindfold — because I definitely do not want to see people's skulls and intestines. (Melissa Balmain)

X-ray vision: I don't really want to use it for anything. I just want to wear those cool glasses with the spiral lenses. (Warren Tanabe, Annapolis, Md.)

To become many times as large: I'd become a hand model. — Donald Trump (Ben Aronin)

Many times as small: I would fill my toilet with heated water so it could double as a Jacuzzi. (David Kleinbard, Mamaroneck, N.Y.)

Many times as large: I could finally see just how cold — and deep — urinal water is. (Chris Doyle, Denton, Tex.)

Having supersonic speed: When the car ahead of me on the Beltway moved, I'd be able to move that five additional feet really, really fast. (Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.)

Many times as small: At last I can finally get that last bit of toothpaste out of the tube! I'll need tiny miner's helmet for light and a minuscule bulldozer. Bulldozer's gonna need an itsy-bitsy ramp to the mouth of the tube . . . Man, this is complicated! But so worth it. (Elliott Shevin, Oak Park, Mich.)

Still running — deadline Monday, Dec. 26: Enter any of the year's previous contests. See bit.ly/invite1205.

SUNDAY CHALLENGE

BY BRAD WILBER © 2016 CROSSSYNTHESIS LLC

ACROSS	1 Soul food meat	30 Like lots of telephone operator impersonations	57 Fawcett co-star in an old Noxzema ad	8 Electee with a six-yr. term	35 They represent the hunters in "Peter and the Wolf"
9 Connect Four game pieces, e.g.	31 "You've got to be kidding me!"	58 Shaken up	9 "Jurassic Park" giants, colloquially	36 Performed the duties of	37 Smudged heavily
14 Character on HBO's "Boardwalk Empire"	33 "Soft n Juicy" candy aisle debut of 1975	59 River through Grenoble	10 Distinctive theories	38 Fix, as a caned seat	39 Woody Allen film featuring cryopreservation
15 Seed-bearing plant organ	35 Cast members' initial runthrough, often	60 Moon shot stages	11 Steadfast	40 Glassware flaw	41 "Curiously strong" mints
16 Dessert layering fruit and cream between crunchy meringue rings	38 Greek played by Anthony Quinn	13 First of the "Seven Sisters" magazines to fold	12 Yellow quartz	42 Slush Puppie maker	43 Expose to public ridicule
17 Cell dweller	40 Hot water dispenser	14 Jose Canseco or Gloria Estefan, by birth	15 Reined in	44 Pantry	45 Fictional writer of billets-doux to Roxane
18 Org. that endorsed Obamacare	41 Down goes Fraizer!	16 California county in which Berkeley is located	20 On the hook, legally	46 "You'll _____ argument from me!"	47 Streak on a check
19 Spinners on hi-fis	42 Part of an office sched.	17 Jose Canseco or Gloria Estefan, by birth	21 Reigned in	48 No greater than	50 Pitching staff leaders
20 Trauma sufferer's goal	43 Far from hip	18 First of the "Seven Sisters" magazines to fold	22 On Kentucky's northeastern border	51 Shakespearean fairy king	52 Easily pranked
21 Dudley Do-Right's beloved	44 Numskull	19 First of the "Seven Sisters" magazines to fold	23 In a funk	53 Anise-flavored liqueur	54 Fictional writer of billets-doux to Roxane
23 Orange-and-white rentals	45 Be relevant (to)	20 First of the "Seven Sisters" magazines to fold	24 City on Kentucky's northeastern border	55 Fried snack at kosher delis	56 Obsolete PC monitor type
25 Swig	51 Chapter in history	21 First of the "Seven Sisters" magazines to fold	25 In a funk	22 On the hook, legally	26 Electee with a six-yr. term
26 Doesn't bother with cue cards, say	53 That, in Tijuana	22 First of the "Seven Sisters" magazines to fold	27 In a funk	23 Reigned in	28 Distinctive theories
28 Sign at a B-way sellout	54 Parting words overseas	23 First of the "Seven Sisters" magazines to fold	29 No greater than	30 First of the "Seven Sisters" magazines to fold	31 Steadfast
29 Possible side effect of steroid use	55 Disconnected musical notes	24 First of the "Seven Sisters" magazines to fold	32 Yellow quartz	33 First of the "Seven Sisters" magazines to fold	34 Fix, as a caned seat

Answer to last week
1 E B A N | A S T O N I S H E S
2 M O L E | S H A P E L I E S T
3 O T I C | N O M E A L A S K A
4 J O G T R O T | D R U M S E T
5 I X N A Y | S E E R S
6 R E D S T A T E S
7 D A B S | E T H N O | E A S E
8 E V E | F E I G N | P O X
9 B E T A | E A G L E | T E N S
10 D A R K H O R S E
11 G A B O R | O R I B I
12 U S U R I E S | U L Y S S E S
13 A T T E S T E D | T O | E S A I
14 R E T R E A T I N G | L U S T
15 D R E S S S H O E S | Y E T I

BY JACQUELINE BIGAR

HAPPY BIRTHDAY | Dec. 25: This year you express more of what you want with the belief that others will listen. An older relative or boss could have a profound influence on your year. If you are single, meeting someone happens with ease come fall 2017. If you are attached, the two of you often can be found out watching a sports game. Still, make sure to create plenty of downtime together. Sagittarius understands you almost too well.

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

One-on-one relating proves to be the most rewarding, even if you are surrounded by lots of people. Express your gratitude in a way that a friend can hear. You might be delighted by how this person responds.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

You can't seem to get enough time with a loved one. The feelings between you are mutual. Express your caring in a meaningful way.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

How you let someone know that you like and appreciate their gift could have a great impact. Wherever you are, you might feel the need to pitch in.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)

Being very emotional and adoring is natural for you; however, others could have a problem with your intensity. Keep it simple when saying "thank you" — not everyone is comfortable with a grand presentation.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

How you let a family member know how much you appreciate their

efforts could make a big difference in what happens in the next few days. Clearly, you are cared about. Hopefully, the feelings are mutual. Relax and enjoy your family.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

You'll want to clarify a change of plans, but you might overexplain. Open up a discussion with a neighbor or sibling. What you have been fearful of sharing will become a surprisingly easy conversation.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

You might try several different approaches to make a key person feel better. Relax with loved ones wherever you are. Make this day as special as you can. Others will model their behavior off yours.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

You decided a while ago to give more of yourself during this holiday. You see the difference this Christmas makes, not only because of what occurs, but also because of others' attitudes.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

You tend to be in touch with your feelings, but lately you have been closing down. As a result, others

have difficulty interacting with you or even thanking you. Make an effort to stay more open.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

Be more open with a key person in your life. How you handle someone who is determined to date on you to the point that you are uncomfortable could be an indication of the type of relationship you will have.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

You could be happy that the holidays are nearly over, even though you feel content with what has occurred. You'll want to make some time for a friend whom you don't often get to see; even an hour would work.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

You could be at your wits' end when dealing with children, mopey friends and someone who wants much more out of life than you are willing to give. Finances could be involved with a gift and a friend. Don't allow this situation to become a problem.