

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 undesired critique by classmates during recess consisting of a most unpleasant Atomic Flying Wedgie. (Jeff Contompasis, 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 Birmholz 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 Heimer.

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" (FirStink 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 itty-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 CROSSYNERGY SYNDICATE LLC

CROSS

1 Soul food meat
9 Connect Four game pieces, e.g.
14 Character on HBO's "Boardwalk Empire"
15 Seed-bearing plant organ
16 Dessert layering fruit and cream between crunchy meringue rings
17 Cell dweller
18 Org. that endorsed Obamacare
19 Spinners on hi-fis
20 Trauma sufferer's goal
21 Dudley Do-Right's beloved
23 Orange-and-white rentals
25 Swig
26 Doesn't bother with cue cards, say
28 Sign at a B'way sellout
29 Possible side effect of steroid use

30 Like lots of telephone operator impersonations
31 "You've got to be kidding me!"
33 "Soft 'n Juicy" candy aisle debut of 1975
35 Cast members' initial run-through, often
38 Greek played by Anthony Quinn
42 Slush Puppie maker
43 Hot water dispenser
44 "Down goes Frazier!" sportscaster
45 Part of an office sched.
46 Far from hip
48 Numskull
49 Be relevant (to)
51 Chapter in history
53 That, in Tijuana
54 Parting words overseas
55 Disconnected musical notes

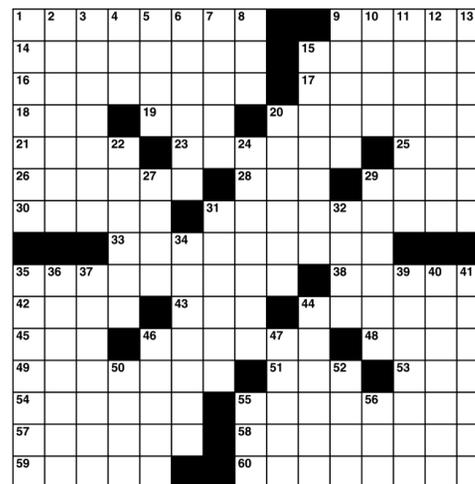
57 Fawcett co-star in an old Nozema ad
58 Shaken up
59 River through Grenoble
60 Moon shot stages

DOWN

1 José Canseco or Gloria Estefan, by birth
2 California county in which Berkeley is located
3 First of the "Seven Sisters" magazines to fold
4 Gloater's exclamation
5 German GM subsidiary
6 Body of written work
7 Fried snack at kosher delis

8 Electee with a six-yr. term
9 "Jurassic Park" giants, colloquially
10 Distinctive theories
11 Steadfast
12 Yellow quartz
13 Woody Allen film featuring cryopreservation
15 Expose to public ridicule
20 Reined in
22 On the hook, legally
24 City on Kentucky's northeastern border
27 In a funk
29 No greater than
31 Shakespearean fairy king
32 Anise-flavored liqueur
34 Barbaric

35 They represent the hunters in "Peter and the Wolf"
36 Performed the duties of
37 Smudge heavily
39 Fix, as a caned seat
40 Glassware flaw
41 "Curiously strong" mints
44 Fictional writer of billets-doux to Roxane
46 Panify
47 "You'll ___ argument from me!"
50 Streak on a cheek
52 Pitching staff leaders
55 Easily pranked teacher, perhaps
56 Obsolete PC monitor type



Answer to last week



HOROSCOPE

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 dote 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.

Does wife's texting indicate an affair?

Ask Amy

AMY DICKINSON

Dear Amy: I am 51 years old, and my wife and I have been married for 25

years. My wife has a male colleague at work whom she has been good friends with for more than 20 years.

It has been bothering me for quite some time now, that they text each other after work and over the weekend.

Nothing has ever led me to believe anything is going on other than friendship. However, since it is bothering me, I did some research, and there is evidence that many "affairs" start out as friendships and that texting can often lead to something more.

I have shared my feelings on three different occasions, and my wife tells me there is nothing to worry about. If it bothers me, shouldn't that bother her?

He is a great guy, and I don't think anything is going on, but I am concerned. Am I paranoid? *Worried Hubby*

Worried Hubby: You admit to being at least a little paranoid about this long-standing friendship. The question is, why are you concerned about this relationship now? Is it because the off-hours texting is a new thing, or are you perceiving changes in your relationship with your wife that causes you to worry?

I agree with you that if this bothers you, it should bother your wife. It is definitely true that anyone engaging in an emotional affair would falsely reassure their spouse by saying they had nothing to worry about — as your wife has done. A perceptive and sensitive spouse would also recognize where the insecurity came from and would take some very easy steps to remove the worry.

It would be easy for your wife to let you in, and also be reassuring, by telling you, "Oh — that text was from Jerry. He sent along a link to this hilarious video. Check it out. Should I tell him you say hi?"

What I'm getting at is that your wife could easily loop you into this friendship just enough

so that it dispelled your worry. If she is sharing personal intimacies about your marriage with this friend, then that is a definite red flag.

Dear Amy: "Not Engaged" faced a tricky situation when her girlfriend asked her mother for her hand in marriage, and the mother basically hedged on offering her permission.

My husband and I faced a similar engagement backfire when he asked my father for my hand.

My father said: "I don't own her hand and therefore can't give it to you. You'll have to ask her."

We got married anyway, but this was a serious thunder-stealer.

Happily Married

Happily Married: Thanks, Dad.

Amy's column appears seven days a week at washingtonpost.com/advice. Write to askamy@amydickinson.com or Amy Dickinson, Tribune Content Agency, 16650 Westgrove Dr., Suite 175, Addison, Tex. 75001. You can also follow her @askingamy.

© 2016 by the Chicago Tribune