

DIVERSIONS

THE STYLE INVITATIONAL

Just-Not-So Stories: Critter creation



BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

BY PAT MYERS

In **Week 1230**, we expanded on a Twitter thing from a while back in which a Creator plans one biological oddity or another. Most frequent among them in this week's entrysthere: the platypus and Donald Trump.

4th place

ANGEL: So what's up with the narwhal?  
 GOD: It's a whale on a stick.  
 ANGEL: But why?  
 GOD: Everything's better on a stick. (Bird Waring, Larchmont, N.Y.)

3rd place

**Creating black widow spiders:**  
 GOD: The female will be a beautiful glossy black with a fetching red hourglass figure on her abdomen.  
 ANGEL: Splendid — how lovely the males and females will look together! Will they mate for life?  
 GOD: Well, sorta . . . (Rob Huffman, Fredericksburg, Va.)

2nd place and the plush strep throat microbe:

**Creating the rabbit:**  
 GOD: I'll make it look like a furry little meatloaf with a wiggly nose and big floppy ears.  
 DEVIL: And I'll spread rumors that its amputated limbs bring you good luck. (Joe Neff, Warrington, Pa.)

And the winner of the Inkin' Memorial:

**Creating the pigeon:**  
 GOD: We need to discourage false idols.  
 ANGEL: How about creating a bird that eats statues?  
 GOD: Let's use the other end. (Drew Bennett, West Plains, Mo.)

South of Eden: honorable mentions

**Creating the cat:**  
 GOD: Let's see . . . four legs, soft fur, long tail, and a pleasant, oddly comforting rumbly sound when it's happy.  
 ANGEL: Sounds great. Where does it live?  
 GOD: Inside. No — outside. Inside. Definitely inside. Wait . . . outside. Just leave the door open. (Molly Elizabeth Haws, Martinez, Calif., a First Offender)

**Pine tree:**  
 GOD: Hey, what if instead of leaves, we had needles and cones and stuff and they stayed green all year? That'd be cool.  
 ANGEL: Marketing says people will chop them down and drag them inside at Christmas.  
 GOD: What the . . . Why . . . never mind. Make the needles really sharp, and have them fall out, like, the day after the tree's chopped down. That should stop 'em. (Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.)

**Mammoth:**  
 CREATOR: Giant hose nose needs to be cuter. Make it fluffy.  
 LABOR: It'll run way too hot that way.  
 CREATOR: Then turn the temperature down.  
 LABOR: But . . . the biosphere!  
 CREATOR: Fluffy hose noses. (David Friedman, Santa Clara, Calif.)

**Centipede:**  
 GOD: Start with a worm. Give it 20 legs.  
 ANGEL: That's ridiculous.  
 GOD: Okay, then. Fifty legs!  
 ANGEL: You're drunk.  
 GOD: Dude, I'm God. I'll give it a hundred legs if I want, and I'll make it the creepiest thing you ever saw.

(Frank Mann, Washington)

**Panda:**  
 GOD: Make them really socially awkward.  
 ANGEL: If they're that awkward, how will they find a mate?  
 GOD: Make them so cute that humans will handle their mating for them. (Todd DeLap, Fairfax)

**Giraffe:**  
 ANGEL: Why is his head way up there?  
 GOD: I guess we better give him a long neck. (Edmund Conti, Raleigh)

**Platypus (I):**  
 ANGEL: Okay, looks like we're about done here. What do you want to do with these extra parts?  
 GOD: What have you got?  
 ANGEL: A duck's bill, some flippers, a rejected otter body prototype, misshapen beaver tail . . .  
 GOD: I got an idea. Throw all those together and add venomous claws!  
 (Jon Spell, Orem, Utah)

**Platypus (II):**  
 GOD: Hey, I have some leftover parts here.  
 ANGEL: Shoot, I already took out the trash.  
 GOD: Meh, just throw them together and put it on the weirdo island.  
 (Danny Wysong, Crozet, Va., a First Offender)

**Fleming:**  
 GOD: Make a swan on stilts. And put it in a pink tutu. (Beverly Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.)

**Mantis:**  
 GOD: Make a bug that looks like it's always praying, so that all who look upon it will see how all Creation praises the Creator.  
 ANGEL: You got it, Boss.  
 GOD: It will be an example for everyone.  
 ANGEL: Great idea.  
 GOD: When it mates, the female will tear the male's head off and eat it.  
 ANGEL: Rode that one right off the rails, didn't you?  
 (Molly Elizabeth Haws)

**Geoduck:**  
 GOD: Okay, all done with Adam.  
 ANGEL: Uh, he doesn't need two of those.  
 GOD: He doesn't? I mean, you never know.  
 ANGEL: They'll get in the way, and he'll be comparing them all the time.  
 GOD: So what am I going to do with the other one?  
 ANGEL: Just give it to me. I'll put it inside a big clam, let it hang out. . . . (Duncan Stevens)

**Chicken:**  
 CREATOR: Humans are too lazy — I'll make some Morning Motivational Birds for them: The male can wake them up, and then the female can produce breakfast

from her bottom. (Jennifer Dickey, Silver Spring)

**Otter:**  
 GOD: Let's go with a nice, small mammal.  
 ANGEL: Okay . . .  
 GOD: Make it an excellent swimmer.  
 ANGEL: Interesting . . .  
 GOD: And I want it to be really cute and lovable. Oh, and make it so it gets to enjoy a life with plenty of fun, playing and frolicking in the water.

ANGEL: Er, God?  
 GOD: Yes?  
 ANGEL: Would you please turn me into one of these? (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village, Md.)

**Stingray:**  
 GOD: So, it's going to be like a bee.  
 ANGEL: In the ocean?  
 GOD: Yeah, like a pancake fish bee.  
 ANGEL: That can't be a thing.  
 GOD (giggling): Make its belly silky. (Lauren Edmondson, Herndon, Va., a First Offender)

**Elephant:**  
 GOD: "Oops, I promised this one I'd give him cool stripes like the zebra. Oh well, he'll never remember . . ." (Hildy Zampella, Falls Church)

**Three-toed sloth:**  
 ANGEL: What, is there a toe shortage all of a sudden?  
 GOD: I gave it five, but it was too Me-damned lazy to pick up the last two. (Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase)

**Sponge:**  
 GOD: Okay, who spilled the wine over here?  
 ANGELS: [silence]  
 GOD: Fine, be that way. One of you make something to clean it up! (Mark Raffman, Reston, Va.)

**Blue whale:**  
 GOD: We'll make them the largest creatures on Earth, maybe 300,000 pounds.  
 ANGEL: Gosh, what an appetite they'll have! Will they eat whole forests or herds of beasts?  
 GOD: Nah, I'm thinking a diet of microscopic fish . . . (Rob Huffman)

**Buffalo:**  
 "Oh for My sake, get those wings off that thing!" (Hildy Zampella)

**Kim Kardashian:**  
 GOD (on the busy factory floor): Hey, I like the looks of this one — make sure you add lots of delicacy and refinement!  
 ANGEL: Sorry, what's that? Can't hear you!  
 GOD (as the background noise gets louder): GIVE HER A LOT OF CLASS!  
 ANGEL: [pause] A lot of . . . okayyy. (Duncan Stevens)

More honorable mentions later this month.

The headline "Just-Not-So Stories" is by Gary Crockett, the honorable-mentions subhead by Kevin Dopart.

Week 1234: It's incontestable

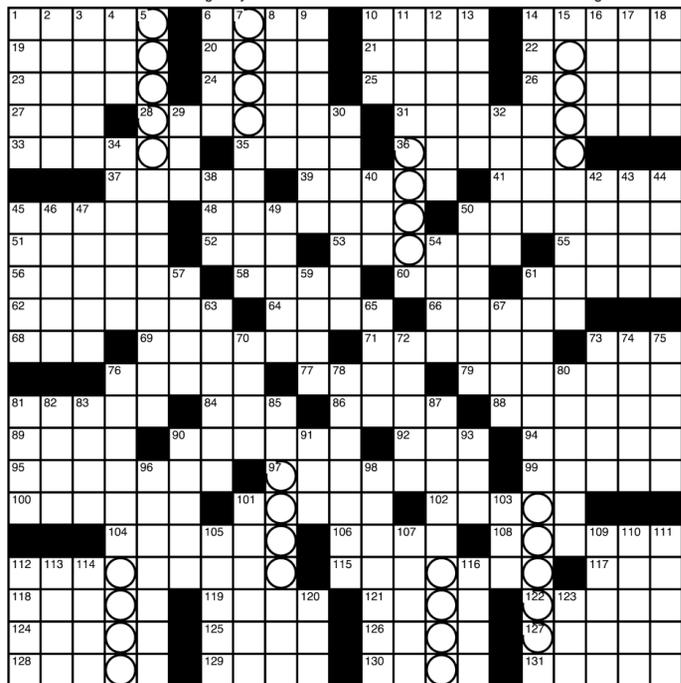
Four weeks from now, the Empress will have just placed her dainty imperial toe back on our glittering shores. Which means that for the first time since January 2002, almost 800 contests ago — back during the late reign of her predecessor, the Czar — the Invitational will skip two contests in a row. Seismologists are standing by to measure the effect of this event, er, uneven. Anyway, in mid-July we'll run more inkworthy entries from previous contests. Meanwhile, the Style Invitational Devotees group on Facebook — with no contest to obsess over — will presumably head full force into writing immediate postgame limericks about the Nationals' bullpen.

**THE STYLE CONVERSATIONAL** This week, the Empress's online column features an entry for Week 1230 that's a great read but a little too long for the Invite. Check it out at [wapo.st/styleconv](http://wapo.st/styleconv).

L.A. TIMES SUNDAY PUZZLE

EDITED BY RICH NORRIS AND JOYCE NICHOLS LEWIS

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|---|---|--|--|--|--|
| <p><b>"UP THE RIVER"</b><br/>                 By ALAN OLSCHWANG</p> <p><b>ACROSS</b></p> <p>1 Back biter?<br/>                 6 They're rarely good dance partners<br/>                 10 Worry word<br/>                 14 Nut under a tree<br/>                 19 Sherlock's adversary<br/>                 20 Zero-star meal<br/>                 21 Hard finish?<br/>                 22 Big fight<br/>                 23 Words on the street?<br/>                 24 Big Island port<br/>                 25 Spanish pronoun<br/>                 26 Window treatment<br/>                 27 Cargo unit<br/>                 28 Lennon classic covered by Pentatonix<br/>                 31 Like some riots<br/>                 33 Absurd<br/>                 35 Aborted operation<br/>                 36 Something to learn<br/>                 37 Willamette University home<br/>                 39 "Enigma Variations" composer<br/>                 41 Scary biter<br/>                 45 Coral Sea sight<br/>                 48 More hard-up<br/>                 50 Square dance milieu<br/>                 51 Turn<br/>                 52 NBC weekend staple<br/>                 53 Ancient German<br/>                 55 Furning<br/>                 56 Polishes, as prose<br/>                 58 Support source<br/>                 60 Job listing ltrs.<br/>                 61 Bacon and eggs, say<br/>                 62 Puts in order<br/>                 64 Police protector<br/>                 66 Woodworking supply<br/>                 68 Workable wood<br/>                 69 Firmly affixed<br/>                 71 State with confidence<br/>                 73 Span. title<br/>                 76 Hastings heath<br/>                 77 Deserve<br/>                 79 Tails<br/>                 81 Hostile force<br/>                 84 Cartesian conclusion<br/>                 86 Volvo competitor<br/>                 88 Freshen<br/>                 89 Starist Shankar<br/>                 90 Like hiss or boom<br/>                 92 Snappy dresser<br/>                 94 Scandinavian capital<br/>                 95 Fictional wolf's disguise<br/>                 97 Employ to excess<br/>                 99 Fisherman with pots</p> | <p>100 Algonquian chief<br/>                 101 Govt. issue<br/>                 102 Arabian peninsula capital<br/>                 104 Infatuate<br/>                 106 Intestine sections<br/>                 108 Plumed birds<br/>                 112 Dr. Brown's classic<br/>                 115 Ivy in Ithaca<br/>                 117 Seek office<br/>                 118 Baby bug<br/>                 119 Wedding reception eye-catcher<br/>                 121 Worked up<br/>                 122 Spender of rials<br/>                 124 French 101 infinitive<br/>                 125 "Power Hits" series record label<br/>                 126 Went off the deep end<br/>                 127 Picked a ticket, perhaps<br/>                 128 Board<br/>                 129 Lowly worker<br/>                 130 Christmas symbol<br/>                 131 Lyrical poetic form</p> | <p><b>DOWN</b></p> <p>1 Peruvian volcano<br/>                 2 Wrinkle-resistant fiber<br/>                 3 Cants<br/>                 4 "Barbara . . ."<br/>                 5 British actor who played Algy Longworth in 1930s Bulldog Drummond movies<br/>                 6 DOL watchdog<br/>                 7 Garage job<br/>                 8 Book sheet<br/>                 9 Freeloaded<br/>                 10 Stupefied state<br/>                 11 Western actor who taught Harrison Ford<br/>                 12 More<br/>                 13 Waterproofs, perhaps<br/>                 14 Cynical Bierce who defined "sweater" as "Garment worn by child when its mother is feeling chilly"</p> | <p>15 "Titanic" theme vocalist<br/>                 16 Broad assortment<br/>                 17 Bausch + Lomb brand<br/>                 18 Florem and Beatty<br/>                 29 Qantas hub letters<br/>                 30 Tertiary Period stones<br/>                 32 ___ Martin:<br/>                 Bond's car<br/>                 34 Like italics<br/>                 38 Middle of dinner?<br/>                 40 Turn right<br/>                 42 Capa attacker<br/>                 43 Scand. land<br/>                 44 Circle's lack<br/>                 45 Gemini rocket<br/>                 46 Some library volumes<br/>                 47 Caribbean sorcery<br/>                 49 Sorbonne student<br/>                 50 Nocturnal tree dweller<br/>                 54 Trueheart of the comics<br/>                 57 Problem with a line</p> | <p>59 Turn over<br/>                 61 Was perfectly tailored<br/>                 63 Glass component<br/>                 65 Ancient home of Irish kings<br/>                 67 Academic specialty<br/>                 70 Sister of Rachel<br/>                 72 A lot more than a little mistake<br/>                 73 It may have a swivel top<br/>                 74 Get together with old classmates, say<br/>                 75 China ___ showy bloom<br/>                 76 Memorable line from Berlin's "Cheek to Cheek"<br/>                 78 Religious recluse<br/>                 80 Unpaid bill<br/>                 81 Energy bits<br/>                 82 Ancient Japanese capital<br/>                 83 Brush fire op<br/>                 85 Third James Bond novel</p> | <p>87 Samba relative<br/>                 90 Filmdom's Thompson and Watson<br/>                 91 1961 Literature Nobelist<br/>                 93 Plant studied by Mendel<br/>                 96 Hamlet's homeland<br/>                 98 Puts in another roll of film<br/>                 101 Up till now<br/>                 103 First word in Dante's "Inferno"<br/>                 105 Taunts<br/>                 107 Grain bane<br/>                 109 Sister of Calliope<br/>                 110 Not sharp or flat<br/>                 111 Rather nasty<br/>                 112 Storm harbinger<br/>                 113 Marsh bird<br/>                 114 Name on the column "At Wit's End"<br/>                 116 Hungarian city known for red wine<br/>                 120 Seasonal worker?<br/>                 123 Swiffer WetJet, e.g.</p> |
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Answers to last week's puzzle below.

HOROSCOPE

BY JACQUELINE BIGAR

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY | July 2:** This year, you could be as changeable as the moon's phases and the tides. Some people could be drawn to your moodiness. You certainly are never boring. If you are single, you have a magnetic quality that draws many potential suitors toward you. If you are attached, the two of you often struggle to find some middle ground. Your life together will be filled with lots of variety. Scorpio can be a fun and interesting playmate, although he or she also can be sarcastic and demanding.

**ARIES** (March 21-April 19)  
 You could be more explosive than you realize. Your anger emerges as a result of a system or structure that is imposed upon you. You might want to change the status quo, at least for a while.

**TAURUS** (April 20-May 20)  
 Get as much done as possible. How might go back and forth about how much you want to give of your time and talent. You probably need to define your limits and boundaries — not only for others, but also for you.

**GEMINI** (May 21-June 20)  
 Your playfulness emerges in the morning. You draw others to you when you express your childlike personality. Be spontaneous with your time. By the afternoon, a project gains importance; focus on it.

**CANCER** (June 21-July 22)  
 Your playfulness emerges in the afternoon, after some quiet time at home. Your family rallies around you, and together you might start up a game of Scrabble or some other fun activity.

**LEO** (July 23-Aug. 22)  
 Make calls in the morning. You might wonder about several statements you hear. Differences of opinion could color your thinking. Spend time with a family member in the evening. Your attention is more important to this person than you realize.

**VIRGO** (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)  
 Be careful about your choices in the morning, especially as it might be hard to come to an agreement about plans with someone else. You could be upset by the unpredictability of a partner or loved one.

**LIBRA** (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)  
 You wake up ready and willing to enjoy the day. A friend or loved one

might want some more of your time and attention. Make a visit possible, even if you cannot get together today. Be aware of your budget and spending habits.

**SCORPIO** (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)  
 You could feel out of sorts when dealing with someone you don't often see. A friend or loved one is likely to become very controlling. This person might tell you that it's their way or the highway. You have a choice to make.

**SAGITTARIUS** (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)  
 Use the daylight hours to encourage a friend to go along with your ideas. The unexpected allows greater creativity to emerge. Listen to any feedback you get with discretion. Some of what is said could have some validity, but some might not.

**CAPRICORN** (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)  
 You might be tired of not making the impression you would like to. A conversation with someone more sophisticated than you is likely to help you come up with a solution. A friendship could be demanding.

**AQUARIUS** (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)  
 Keep reaching out for answers. You also will want to stop and have a discussion with a friend at a distance. The more ideas you work with, the better your plans or decision will be.

**PISCES** (Feb. 19-March 20)  
 Reach out to a loved one who often does not see eye to eye with you. You could be stunned by what you hear. Give this person some time to rethink their reaction. Consider taking a drive into the country for the afternoon.

Answers to last week's puzzle.

