

DIVERSIONS

THE STYLE INVITATIONAL

From Week 1358, the Wizards of 'Twas

BY PAT MYERS

In **Week 1358**, the Empress asked readers to write something using only the words appearing in the 1823 poem "A Visit From St. Nicholas," a.k.a. "The Night Before Christmas." We used an older version that used the spelling "pedler" and, instead of "had just settled down for a long winter's nap," said, "had just settled our brains . . ." Losers who wrote entries playing dirty on the word "hung" do not get ink. Thanks to Loser Gary Crockett for devising a program to validate the entries to ensure that all words did come from the poem, and weren't used more times than in the poem.

4th place

A chubby jerk came to clatter down my chimney. He shouted that his name was Nicholas, but he laughed with a "he he he," so I knew he was not St. Nick. I threw him out. (*Sam Mertens, Silver Spring*)

3rd place

Nick: "What up, sugar cheeks?" My white teeth, full beard and tight belly must be a happy sight. Head to my house for a wild night?" *Cherry: "I just threw up a little in my mouth. Jerk!"* (*Jeff Shirley, Richmond*)

2nd place and the jelly bean-pooping Santa and reindeer:

When What-His-Name spoke and gave up the what and the when and how it all went down in the White House, I just knew that more of the pack that work there would soon be hung out to dry by "Old Tiny-Finger." (*Brendan Beary, Great Mills, Md.*)

And the winner of the Lose Cannon:

The jerk that settled in the old house there was not around to bundle his leaves . . . and then they were on my lawn! So I flung them on his roof, in his window, down his chimney, on his bed, in his stockings, on his mamma, and in his sugar and jelly. And then I gave him the finger. (*Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.*)

Mistletoenails: Honorable mentions

As he went all around on the stump, a lively old elf with wild white fur on his head shouted that he would not be happy ere he tore down each top pedler on Wall St. (*Jesse Frankovich, Lansing, Mich.*)

I would not back a team with that nick-name. All-so, they were out of it before the leaves had fallen. Not good. (*Mark Raffman, Reston*)

"A-a-a-a!" I exclaim with dread, my eyes filled with the flash of the merry, jolly twinkling from the house in back of our house. "The miniature sleigh and reindeer appear too soon before Christmas! Thistle be the night I dash them all away, jerk!" (*Sarah Walsh, Rockville*)

A Visit From Zombie St. Nicholas A dread elf tore open my roof and came down. He was pawing my belly; I saw long teeth. Nothing was in his eyes; he had a white face, with cheeks like ashes. His finger was a stump. I gave him a bowlful of jelly; he shook his head. "BRAINS!" he shouted. (*Duncan Stevens*)

There was a flash, and the roof rose as the hurricane encircled them. They were not white. Then they heard the spite-filled creature exclaim, "Like I care." (*William Kennard, Arlington*)

Prancer spoke to the A. A. team: "I had fallen and was not happy. I would down a night cap before bed. I had the shutters and dread visions and threw up too." The reindeer held him and fur-gave him. (*Stephen Dudzik, Olney*)

When Mamma danced the twist dressed in tight clothes, them back cheeks shook like a pack of plums in a hurricane! (*Brendan Beary*)

'Twas a while before Christmas, when all through the House, Each creature was stirring around like a mouse; New word was then heard on a matter with care, In hopes the top jerk-face would soon not be there. The Right was then filled with such visions of dread

As all that had spoke there had turned on their head! (*Jesse Frankovich*)

Wondering how reindeer fly?



BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

New contest for Week 1362: The Year in Redo, Part 1

Winner of Week 1319, new words from ScrabbleGrams "racks": DDEELMR > MEDDLR: App designed for yentas to make dating profiles for other people (*Danielle Nowlin*)

Winner of Week 1327, reinterpret a headline by adding a bank head: Real headline: Easy ways to keep your home green without breaking the bank Bank head: I. Don't paint it another color (*Duncan Stevens*)

Winner of Week 1326, "breed" two of the year's Kentucky Derby nominees: Breed Improbable with Skywriting and name the foal WillyouDivorceMe? (*Bill Dorner*)

Did you start reading The Style Invitational just recently? Or did you ever think of the perfect entry to an Invite contest — after the results ran? The Empress is here for you. This week and next, you get another shot at the past year's contests with our annual retrospective. This week we'll cover 24 Invite contests from last November through May, a period that includes such favorites as "joint legislation," foal "breeding," cartoon captions and various neologism contests, plus some one-offs like jokes for the White House correspondents' dinner, and acrostic limericks.

Enter (or reenter) any Style Invitational contest from Week 1307 through 1333, except for Weeks 1309-1311, which are last year's retrospectives plus the 2019 "Year in Preview" (we're previewing 2020 in a contest that's still running). You may enter multiple contests as long as you don't submit more than 25 entries in all. For contests asking you to use that week's paper, use papers and online articles dated Dec. 12-23. For the obit poems, Week 1313, continue to write about people who died in 2018. For the dinner jokes, your references shouldn't be out of date. You may resubmit non-inking entries from earlier contests; for various reasons, some "noinks" have scored in past retrospectives.

See descriptions and links for all the old contests in this week's Style Conversational column at wapo.st/conv1362. Please check the results of that week's contest (four weeks down the list) to make sure your idea didn't already get ink. Please give the week number plus a brief ID of the contest your entry is for (e.g., "Week 1321, problematic inventions"). If you don't subscribe to The Post, email me at pat.myers@washpost.com and, after I ask you why the heck not, I'll give you alternative directions.

Submit up to 25 entries at wapo.st/enter-invite-1362 (no capitals in the Web address). **Deadline is Monday, Dec. 23;** results will appear Jan. 12 in print, Jan. 9 online.

Winner gets the Lose Cannon, our Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives a *fabulous book of Joan Crawford paper dolls* featuring the screen goddess in various foundation garments onto which you could (if you wanted to mess up the book) cut out and attach 28 glamorous costumes from her films from the 1920s through the '60s. Donated by the Glamorous Herself Pie Snelson, 82-time Loser and Loser Brunch Archivist.

Other runners-up win one of our last "You Gotta Play to Lose" Loser Mugs or our "Whole Fools" Grocery Bag. Honorable mentions get one of our lusted-after Loser magnets, "Too-Weak Notice" or "Certificate of (de) Merit." First Offenders receive only a smelly tree-shaped air "freshener" (FirStink for their first ink). See general contest rules and guidelines at wapo.st/InvRules. The headline "The Wizards of 'Twas" is by Tom Witte; Roy Ashley wrote the honorable-mentions subhead. Join the lively Style Invitational Devotees group on Facebook at [on.fb.me/invdev](https://www.facebook.com/on.fb.me/invdev). "Like" the Style Invitational Ink of the Day on Facebook at [bit.ly/inkofday](https://www.facebook.com/bit.ly/inkofday); follow @StyleInvite on Twitter.

THE STYLE CONVERSATIONAL: The Empress's weekly online column reviews each new contest and set of results. Especially if you plan to enter — I'll include synopses and links for of the contests you can use for this week's recap — check it out at wapo.st/conv1362.



FROM "JOAN CRAWFORD PAPER DOLLS IN FULL COLOR" (1983) BY TOM TIERNEY; DOVER PUBLICATIONS

A girdled paper Joan Crawford fits right into (behind) these costumes, this week's 2nd prize.

They down a bowlful of eagles' brains each day. (*John Hutchins, Silver Spring*)

Me: Meet up in my house? Care to see a jolly pack of toys? All there right on the bed! Her: I would dash out my eyes and open my belly to eagles before that. (*Kevin Dopart, Washington*)

Jerk-mouth: For the moment, not an obstacle to be in the White House. (*Kevin Dopart*)

When I would just smoke "happy leaves," my head was right and I was good with myself. But then I turned to "snow" (all-so called "sugar"). And a for-chin went straight up my nose. (*Mark Raffman*)

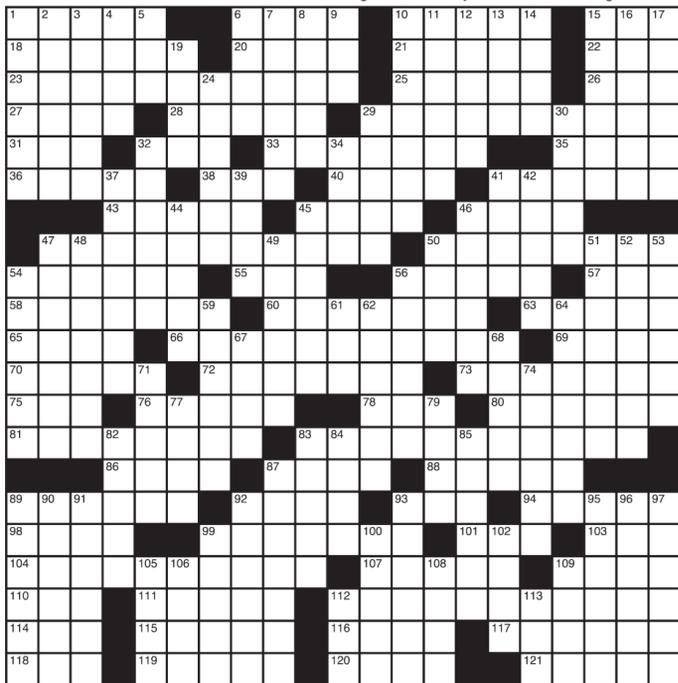
I looked too long on her full, round breast — what visions! — ere the vixen spoke: "My eyes be appear, jerk!" (*Brendan Beary*)

Still running — deadline Monday night, Dec. 16: Our contest for funny 2020 predictions. See wapo.st/invite1361.

L.A. TIMES SUNDAY PUZZLE

EDITED BY RICH NORRIS AND JOYCE NICHOLS LEWIS

- "BLACK MAGIC" By ROBIN STEARS**
- ACROSS**
- 1 Pulitzer-winning Ferber novel
 - 6 PC key not used by itself
 - 10 "Joy to the World," e.g.
 - 15 Costa del
 - 18 Mecedades song covered by Eydie Gormé as "Touch the Wind"
 - 20 Riskily off base
 - 21 All-inclusive adjective
 - 22 Peak pique
 - 23 "Landmark near Waikiki
 - 25 Carafe size
 - 26 Opposite of trans
 - 27 Comes down with
 - 28 Printer supply
 - 29 "Down time on Wall Street?"
 - 31 67.5 deg.
 - 32 Junior
 - 33 '80s soap rebooted in 2017
 - 35 ___ podrida: Spanish dish
 - 36 "Sweeney Todd" tool
 - 38 Mary ___
 - 40 One-named Dao artist
 - 41 Sick to the max
 - 43 What prospective borrowers compare
 - 45 Discipline with poses
 - 46 2015 Best Actress Larson
 - 47 "It's larger than a littleneck"
 - 50 "Where land and ocean meet"
 - 54 Cascades peak
 - 55 Bethesda medical agcy.
 - 56 Cut
 - 57 Society page word
 - 58 Duck named for the long-feathered part of its anatomy
 - 60 Stand-up quality?
 - 63 "Straight Up" singer
 - 65 Bad road condition?
 - 66 "Cowhide accessory
 - 69 One often has ticks
 - 70 "Consequently ..."
 - 72 Snuggled, in a way
 - 73 Broad Eurasian region
 - 75 GATT successor
 - 76 Plain ___ obvious
 - 78 Gist
 - 80 Recall targets
 - 81 "Negative-studier's aid
 - 83 "Kozy Shack dessert
 - 86 MTV sci-fi show "Flux"
 - 87 Quick run
 - 88 Tough tests
 - 89 1964 Nobel Prize decliner
 - 92 Tenth: Pref.
 - 93 Narc's org.
 - 94 Best way to leave the casino
 - 98 "A Death in the Family" writer
 - 99 Land adjoining a mansion
 - 101 "Miss Saigon" setting
 - 103 TiVo predecessor
 - 104 "Fancy decoration
 - 107 Come to pass
 - 109 Phony (up)
 - 110 The "E" in BCE
 - 111 Alaskan native
 - 112 "Former Queens home of the US Open
 - 114 Not of the cloth
 - 115 Victoria, to William IV
 - 116 Computer ___
 - 117 Gets to the bottom of
 - 118 Cry of success
 - 119 Unloaded?
 - 120 Submerged threat
 - 121 Art of verse
 - 9 Honorary degree for attys.
 - 10 Sugar Plum Fairy's instrument
 - 11 Fly
 - 12 Take another shot
 - 13 City on Utah Lake
 - 14 Vega's constellation
 - 15 Tool with a curved blade
 - 16 Protruding windows
 - 17 "The Vampire Chronicles" vampire
 - 19 Word that may precede itself
 - 24 Shrek's bestie
 - 29 River transport
 - 30 Loggers' contest
 - 32 Peloponnesian War victor
 - 34 Noble gas
 - 37 Electra's brother
 - 39 PGA part: Abbr.
 - 41 "Dies"
 - 42 Early fall baby's sign
 - 44 Are losing
 - 45 Talk Like a Pirate Day refrain
 - 46 Cuts at an angle
 - 47 Red wine
 - 48 Sad sack
 - 49 Walk quietly
 - 50 Desertlike
 - 51 Hearth item sometimes called a firelog
 - 52 Extending the life of
 - 53 Mouth formations
 - 54 Urban planner's concern
 - 56 Pin in a ring, say
 - 59 Textbook section
 - 61 Six-yr.-term pol
 - 62 Ditch
 - 64 Complexion spoiler
 - 67 High point
 - 68 Actress Swinton
 - 71 Weasel relative
 - 74 Madhouse
 - 77 Shawn descendant
 - 79 Fraternal gp.
 - 82 Despised
 - 83 Indy entrant
 - 84 Egyptian fertility goddess
 - 85 Voyager 2 destination
 - 87 Harvest goddess
 - 89 How Yoda spoke
 - 90 Trading places?
 - 91 Track events
 - 92 Figure out
 - 93 Formal order
 - 95 Advance in the race?
 - 96 "Supernatural" co-star
 - 97 Beyond "business casual"
 - 99 Dimwitted
 - "We're Back! A Dinosaur's Story" dinosaur
 - 100 Rope loop
 - 102 Liberal ___
 - 105 Chef's collection
 - 106 Potpourri
 - 108 Random House co-founder
 - 109 Hawaii County seat
 - 112 Pelt
 - 113 Kangaroo move



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Answers to last week's puzzle below.

HOROSCOPE

BY JACQUELINE BIGAR

HAPPY BIRTHDAY | Dec. 15: This year could be rewarding if you learn to be flexible. An element of the unexpected runs through the year. You learn to relax and have more confidence in yourself. If single, you cannot count on a new bond being long-term until it is. You will experience many ups and downs. If attached, the two of you find this year exciting. One of your biggest issues will be your lifestyle choices. You will find the right pace and pattern for you. Leo might push you to agree with them, but they mean well.

ARIES (March 21-April 19) When others get near you, they sense vital, exciting energy coming off you. You easily could be persuaded to throw a spontaneous get-together involving the holidays, or you may decide to do away with Christmas in the traditional sense.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) Your loving nature emerges when dealing with a family member or staying close to home. You might choose to get all your decorating done or wrap as many packages as you can.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20) You are likely to see a personal matter in a different light. You have pushed hard to achieve certain results. You might not be ready to say much about your feelings regarding this situation.

CANCER (June 21-July 22) Try to avoid any last-minute shopping. Make up your mind to finish your shopping right now while you still have a few moments to breathe.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) Keep clearing out as much as you can for the holidays. You could find someone's mood at home cantankerous and difficult. Try not to get into a scrap about it.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) You could need a break for today. Stay in bed. Sleep in and pretend it is a snowy day without obligations. Recharging in this manner could help you feel great.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) Be touched by what someone would do to get your attention. Know that you are cared for, perhaps not as you wish, but cared

for anyway. This person could be a friend or admirer.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) You could be overwhelmed by what is happening around you. You seem to have invitations left and right. You cannot possibly be present at all these events at one time. Be realistic.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) Reach out for someone at a distance who you care a lot about. This person often puts a smile on your face — even just speaking on the phone. You might want to make plans to visit soon.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) One-on-one relating is highlighted. You are not always comfortable

with this type of interaction and might exhibit a bit of discomfort — like walking away from the affectionate person.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) Defer to another person whom you care a lot about. You might be strong-willed, but so is this person. Knowing when to pull back and let the other party have more of what they desire is important to your bond.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20) Defer to others who seem to know what they want and what works for them. Your fatigue might be a surprise to you but not to others who have watched your hectic pace this month.

Answers to last week's puzzle.

