

DIVERSIONS

THE STYLE INVITATIONAL

Re-tale outlets: Nursery lit seen anew

BY PAT MYERS

In Week 1432, inspired by Melissa Balmain's new poetry collection, "The Witch Demands a Retraction: Fairy Tale Reboots for Adults," the Empress asked for fresh takes — either poems or mini-stories — on folk tales, nursery rhymes or children's stories.

4th place:

The Little Dutch Boy

He discovered a leak from a hole in the dike, Which he plugged single-handed, though only a tyke. His heroic decision, the townspeople say, In a literal way kept the water at bay. For his age, he exhibited rare self-reliance; Was he driven as well by a sense of defiance? We can't say for sure, but all night he would linger, Insistently giving the ocean the finger. (Alex Steelsmith, Kailua, Hawaii)

3rd place:

Mary had a little lamb,

Along with some mint jelly. It went wherever Mary did 'Cause it was in her belly. Mary finished up her meal And drifted off to sleep Meanwhile, someone got a call: "I've got bad news, Bo Peep." (Hildy Zampella, Alexandria)

2nd place and a signed copy of Melissa Balmain's 'The Witch Demands a Retraction':

The Emperor's New Clothiers

"Trust the media mob, in its crudity, To sell papers by hyping up nudity And implying his garb was aberrant, When our liege was just being transparent!" (Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif.)

And the winner of the Clowning Achievement:

Georgie Porgie, pudding and pie,

Kissed the girls and made them cry. Then he made them go away Encumbered by an NDA. (But richer by one-thirty K.) (Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase)

Aesop's Fables: Honorable mentions

Red Riding Hood

carried a basket so fine Of toothsome delectables, pastries and wine. Her mother made sure she was beautifully dressed — This girl who on paper seems privileged and blessed. And so it is odd that this child wasn't more Successful at keeping the wolf from the door. (Jonathan Jensen, Baltimore)

Bumble and the Beast

If the Beast had tried dating online, Of true love he might still be bereft. Belle would certainly not think him fine And with nary a pause would swipe left. Then again, if he's much like most guys, To such fate he'd not meekly submit: He'd just puff up his profile with lies — And some Photoshopped pix of Brad Pitt. (Jesse Frankovich, Lansing, Mich.)

Three sight-impaired mice!

Three sight-impaired mice! See how they run, see how they run (actually, don't stare — it makes them uncomfortable; they can sense it!) They all ran after the farmer's wife (which triggered her, though aversion to mice is a sexist trope), Who cut off their tails with a carving knife (unjustified species-ist overreaction); Did you ever see such a — (wait, why are we taking joy in the misfortune of these poor souls?) Three sight-impaired mice! (Mark Raffman, Reston)

Jesus saw the fish were few,

the loaves not half a dozen. But still he gave the order to feed, to his posse and his cousin. And lo! It sufficed, as if multiplied through a mirror or a prism. From the back of the crowd, old Mitch calletth out: "No way! This is socialism!" (David Young, Falmouth, Mass.)

There once was a boy who cried

"Wolf" whenever he saw a wolf. A second boy cried, "Fake cry! It's



BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

New contest for Week 1436: Haven't seen it: Fun with movie titles

"Spring Break": A child is traumatized when his beloved Slinky rusts out. (Tom Witte)

"Baby Makes Three": A new mother finds something really, really disgusting in a used diaper. (Russell Beland)

"The Asphalt Jungle": In this series finale, Tarzan suffers his untimely death. (Kevin Jamison)

Here's a contest that we've done, in slightly different forms, back in 2005 and once again in 2017. This week: Misinterpret a movie title in a supposed plot description, as in the inking entries above from Week 625, the first go-round.

Submit up to 25 entries at wapo.st/enter-invite-1436 (no capitals in the Web address). Deadline is Monday, May 24; results appear June 13 in print, June 10 online.

Winner gets the Clowning Achievement, our Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives a genuine brand-new big red "Biggest Loser" T-shirt — so big,



frankly, that it must be intended for the early steps of the wearer's fitness journey. Donated by 86-time Loser Pie Snelson.

Other runners-up win their choice of our "For Best Results, Pour Into Top End" Loser Mug or our "Whole Fools" Grocery Bag. Honorable mentions get one of our lusted-after Loser magnets, "No 'Bility" or "Punderachiever." 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 "Re-tale Outlets" is by Jeff Shirley; Tom Witte wrote the honorable-mentions subhead. 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; and follow @StyleInvite on Twitter.

The Style Conversational: The Empress's weekly online column discusses each new contest and set of results. See this week's at wapo.st/conv1436.

not wolves, it's sheepdogs masquerading as wolves." The villagers argued and argued about which boy was right until a third boy cried, "Let's stop arguing and all work together to save our sheep!"

The villagers finally realized that this boy was really annoying and they ran him out of town. And they all lived sheeplessly ever after. (Gary Crockett)

(Jack Sprat could eat no fat; his wife could eat no lean)

Jack Sprat isn't fond of cooking. Lets his wife do all the work. She takes tastes when he's not looking; Payback (because Jack's a jerk).

Jack Sprat's wife is fond of butter, Cheese and chocolate are her fun. Now her heart's gone all aflutter, Jack is calling 9-1-1.

Triple bypass cannot save her, 'Cause she's never eaten clean. Jack's bad cooking has no flavor, Now he's stuck with Lean Cuisine. (Francesca Kelly, Highland Park, Ill.)

Goose Who Laid the Golden Egg: The trader bought a golden goose; His profit scheme, alas, was thwarted:

In Reddit, soon, the news got loose That EggStop shares had all been shorted. (Duncan Stevens, Vienna)

Humpty Dumpty: The Prequel Humpty Dumpty stood near a wall. "Bring me a ladder!" came Humpty's loud call.

"The top of this wall is the best place for nappin'! And, after all, what's the worst that can happen?"

He wasn't the first egg and wasn't the last to be so shortsighted. The king stood aghast As all of his horses and all of his men shook their heads sadly and cried, "Not again!"

(Robert Schechter, Dix Hills, N.Y.)

Humpty Dumpty 2020 Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall

(The dang fool wouldn't be vaccinated) Humpty Dumpty had a great fall (He got covid and was soon intubated) All the king's horses and all the king's men (They all struggled to save his dumb tush) Couldn't put Humpty back together again (Now he's buried deep under a bush) (Jon Ketzner, Cumberland, Md.)

The young Jack Horner grew to be A doctor of proctology. And now he gets to use his thumbs When pulling things from people's bums. (Chris Doyle, Denton, Tex.)

Peter Piper picked a peck of PICKLED peppers? No proper pepper's pickling precedes picking! (Gary Crockett)

The Little Mermaid gave her voice up For a handsome man. As problematic as that sounds, Bear with me if you can: When she opened up her mout' Gilbert Gottfried's voice came out. The next time that she got to talkin' She sounded just like Christopher Walken.

The third time, from her mermaid maw, Emerged the voice of Ringo Staw. 'Twas this last straw prompted her choice To, there and then, give up her voice. The pair report their bond's much better Communicating via letter. (Kate Baughman, Arlington)

More honorable mentions in the online Invite at wapo.st/invite1436.

Still running: Our contest for dioramas (or other art) featuring at least one cicada. Deadline May 24 (possibly later if the critters are late showing up). See wapo.st/invite1435.

L.A. TIMES SUNDAY PUZZLE

EDITED BY RICH NORRIS AND JOYCE NICHOLS LEWIS

- "EXTRA BEDROOMS" By ROLAND HUGET
- ACROSS
- 1 Bleak genre
- 5 Monthly bill
- 10 Keep time, in a way
- 14 Mosey
- 19 Locale of the Tomb of Akbar the Great
- 20 Set boundaries for
- 21 Tanning target
- 22 "The Sound of Music" matriarch
- 23 Toaster oven user?
- 26 Steinbeck migrants
- 27 Mounted security system component
- 28 Dr. Al Robbins on "CSI," e.g.
- 29 Stressed out
- 30 Coil of yarn
- 32 Pearly coating
- 33 "1984" working class
- 34 Barbecue guests?
- 38 Milwaukee MLBer through 1965
- 39 Student in English class?
- 40 Shed item
- 41 Certain hip-hop dancer
- 43 Breakfast choice
- 46 "Wanna _?"
- 47 Section that doesn't include the sax, surprisingly
- 49 Looks rudely at
- 51 Team golf event
- 52 Fraternity news contacts?
- 55 Hindu title
- 56 Fred Flintstone's boss
- 59 Geeked, so to speak
- 60 Rachel Brosnahan's "Marvelous Mrs. _"
- 62 First name in design
- 63 Winter Palace rulers
- 66 Really ticked
- 68 Little bit
- 69 Use Listerine, say
- 71 Deep sleep
- 73 Progressive decline
- 75 It shares a small border with BC
- 76 Really dangerous edge?
- 80 Abate
- 82 Idyllic places
- 83 Drake production
- 84 Pre-holiday time
- 87 It might be picked
- 88 Holiday desserts
- 89 iPad assistant
- 90 Red or Card
- 91 Tribe also called the Wyandot
- 93 Structural pieces for a tiny Christmas village?
- 97 Storied
- 99 Writer Rogers St. Johns
- 101 Slow-moving tree dweller
- 102 Words on some Québec road signs
- 103 Creative kind of thinking
- 106 Tia's mom
- 109 Author Calvino
- 110 Ship's rope?
- 112 Pisa landmark
- 113 Neglect
- 114 The "five" in "take five," e.g.
- 115 Impressed?
- 116 "The Planets" composer
- 117 Spoil, with "on"
- 118 Taps feed them
- 119 Red ink
- DOWN
- 1 Collars
- 2 Fairy tale baddie
- 3 Removes, as wrinkles
- 4 Abrasion result
- 5 Service leader
- 6 Half of a vacation rental app
- 7 Admired coll. guy
- 8 Slimming surg. procedure
- 9 Timeless
- 10 Uncertain
- 11 Soda bottle size
- 12 Cherish
- 13 Word in many rates
- 14 Supreme
- 15 Create a new look for
- 16 Dirt at the stable?
- 17 Feudal subject
- 18 Relaxes
- 24 Yule tune
- 25 Color at the stable
- 29 Nashville attraction
- 31 Jots down
- 34 The other half of 6-Down
- 35 Future fish
- 36 Dance in a pit
- 37 Mug for a selfie
- 38 Winter pear
- 41 Like a darker purple
- 42 Immortal catcher with "ism" associated with his first name
- 44 Nephew of King Arthur
- 45 The ___ Company: Walmart foe in 2000s lawsuits
- 47 Maidentform purchase
- 48 No-good
- 49 Mexican mama bear
- 50 "Make it happen, sister!"
- 51 Free TV spot
- 52 Place for a post
- 53 "Wheel of Fortune" action
- 54 Ipecac, for one
- 56 Jimmy ___
- 57 Trucker's competition
- 58 Fight among poor pool players?
- 61 "No harm done"
- 64 Remark to the audience
- 65 Gift to a Valentine
- 67 La Brea formations
- 70 Backtalk
- 72 Delivery room docs
- 74 Boxing match unit: Abbr.
- 77 Style of expression
- 78 Composer Satie
- 79 Unfurnished
- 81 Luau
- 84 One who finesses the tab, facetiously
- 85 Notch shape
- 86 Hesitant sounds
- 88 Whale groups
- 89 Hieroglyphic beetles
- 90 One with inborn talent
- 92 One might begin, "Oh, yeah?"
- 93 Small dress size
- 94 Couturier
- 95 Shuts out, in baseball
- 96 Stark heir on "Game of Thrones"
- 97 Religious belief
- 98 Threepio's pal
- 99 Enterprise competitor
- 100 Lifeboat crane
- 104 Bell town in a Longfellow poem
- 105 Property claim
- 107 "None of it is true!"
- 108 Puts in furniture wood
- 110 Auction gesture
- 111 Furniture wood

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Answers to last week's puzzle below.

HOROSCOPE

BY GEORGIA NICOLS

HAPPY BIRTHDAY | May 16: You are reserved, and yet you have an appealing, almost dashing style that impresses others. You are likable in a friendly way; nevertheless, people know you're serious about what you are doing. (No question about that.) You'll be pleased to know that in your year ahead, you might get a promotion, kudos or praise from your peers. Success awaits you.

ARIES (March 21-April 19) Today you are sensitive to the moods of others. This is why you want to do whatever you can to make their life easier. Avoid power struggles. Communications with others are good. You appreciate the beauty of your daily surroundings.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) Don't worry about daydreaming. Einstein said: "Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world."

GEMINI (May 21-June 20) Today you might be tempted to spend money on extravagant, luxurious items. Keep your receipts. (And the box.) Avoid quarrels about money and possessions.

CANCER (June 21-July 22) Today you are sensitive to the moods of others. You can pick up on their feelings (along with acid rock through your Mercury fillings). Walk away from arguments, which will be nasty.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) You're susceptible to the feeling of others today. Therefore, avoid negative people and emotional vampires. Do some soul-searching. Enjoy interacting with younger people as well as creative, artistic types.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) You might put a friend on a pedestal today, which is a setup for future disappointment. If your head is in the clouds, keep your feet on the ground. Stand up for yourself. Bosses and VIPs are impressed with your ideas. Someone will want your creative advice about something.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) You might admire someone in

authority today. Today people are inclined to admire others and see them as more perfect than they are. Avoid power struggles with authority figures. This is a great week to study and learn something new.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) Because your appreciation of beauty is heightened, see museums, art galleries, gorgeous buildings and beautiful parks. Take a picture and post it on Facebook. Steer clear of politics and religion. Your sex drive is strong. Money, gifts and others will come to you this week.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) Because you feel sympathetic to someone who is less fortunate, you will use your influence and your share of resources to help others in need. Remember that you have needs, too. Have discussions about shared property.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) Hopefully you can share your heightened appreciation of beautiful things with someone who is close to you. Be open to this. Avoid quarrels with partners and close friends. Because you are productive, a raise or praise is likely.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) Someone related to your work, your health or a pet might want your advice today. What people mostly need is a sympathetic ear. You can be that person today. Don't try to make improvements. Wait. Enjoy social diversions, sports and activities with kids.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20) You feel tenderhearted to children and their needs today. You also will have a greater appreciation for the arts, the entertainment world and any expression of talent. Be patient with kids and romantic partners.

Answers to last week's puzzle.

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