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Style

Style Invitational Week 938: Make an Edward Lear limerick your own; plus the compare/contrast of Week 934



(Bob Staake for The Washington Post)

By **Pat Myers**
September 23, 2011

There was an Old Man with a beard,
Who said, 'It is just as I feared!
Two Owls and a Hen,
Four Larks and a Wren,
Have all built their nests in my beard!
 — Edward Lear, from "A Book of Nonsense," 1846




There was an old man with a beard
Who said, "It is just as I feared!
I thought I'd seem straight
With this pretty young date,
But I still hear them calling me 'weird.'
 — Gene Weingarten, 2011

Edward Lear never called them limericks, but the 19th-century poet is widely considered the grandfather of the form, though not its inventor. But as the example above shows, Lear's limericks tend not to be what we in the Invitational Age would call clever, and they certainly have none of the risqué humor now associated with the genre.


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Loser Extraordinaire Kevin Dopart suggests that we rectify that situation.

This week: Write a limerick using the first two lines of any of Lear's 115 limericks (see them here) plus your own three remaining lines, as The Washington Post's Official Dean of Doggerel has done above.

Winner gets [the Inker](#), the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives a dignified game called [Doody Head](#), in which one person wears a "grippy hat" while others toss "super squidgy doodies" (made of brown fabric and foam) at the head of the eager-to-please victim. Donated by Nan Reiner.

Other runners-up win their choice of a coveted Style Invitational [Loser T-shirt](#) or yearned-for [Loser Mug](#). Honorable mentions get a lusted-after [Loser magnet](#). First Offenders get a smelly tree-shaped air "freshener" (FirStink for their first ink). E-mail entries to losers@washpost.com or fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Oct. 3; results published Oct. 23 (Oct. 21 online). No more than 25 entries per entrant per week. Include "Week 938" in your e-mail subject line or it may be ignored as spam. Include your real name, postal address and phone number with your entry. See contest rules and guidelines at washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational. The revised title for next week's results is by Chris Doyle; this week's honorable-mentions subhead is by Matt Monitto.

Report from Week 934

Our perennial contest in which we supplied a randomly compiled list of objects and asked you to tell us how any two were alike or different:

The winner of the Inker

The difference between a **toilet brush** and a **tattoo of Joe Biden**: One's a bristly Number Two tool; the other's merely the *depiction* of one. (*Rob Huffman, Fredericksburg, Va.*)

2. Winner of the of ear buds with little pink pig heads that stick out of your ears: A Twitter hashtag is a pound sign. **Fried butter on a stick** is a pounds sign. (*Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.*)

3. A toilet brush and **okra sorbet**: Faced with either one, most people would rather not lick the bowl. (*Roy Ashley, Washington*)

4. Precious bodily fluids and a **tattoo of Joe Biden**: Both are best kept to yourself on a first date. (*Colette Zanin, Greenbelt, Md.*)

Beyond compare: Honorable mentions

A toilet brush and **three clothespins**: If you don't use the first, it's good to have the second handy for guests. (*Larry Yungk, Arlington, Va.*)

Fried butter on a stick and **Misty of Chincoteague**: Even the French won't eat fried butter on a stick. (*Maria Zimmerman, Berryville, Va., a First Offender*)

Three clothespins differ from a **toilet brush** because the first would be a poor rating in a perfume directory, and the second one even worse. (*Kevin Dopart, Washington*)

Precious bodily fluids vs. **fried butter on a stick**: Most "Twilight" fans think consuming fried butter on a stick is gross. (*Pam Sweeney, Burlington, Mass.*)

The Decent of Menard's tattoo of Joe Biden: Waving either one

just asking to be left alone



4 Why our culture's mild obsession with Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen may never end



5 Perspective
Carolyn Hax: A kiss-and-don't-tell with an ex-boyfriend's buddy



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The Descent of Man and a tattoo of Joe Biden: Waving either one around could get you kicked out of Bob Jones University. (*Christy Tosatto, Brookeville, Md.*)

Misty of Chincoteague and a tattoo of Joe Biden: With Misty you get the whole horse. (*Harold Mantle, Lafayette, Calif.; Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn, Va.; Ira Allen, Bethesda, Md.*)

The Descent of Man and precious bodily fluids: Two things you regularly see on a Metro escalator. (*Barry Koch, Catlett, Va.; Pam Sweeney*)

Misty of Chincoteague and the 25-entry limit: The first, lots of whinnying; the other, lots of whining. (*Beverley Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.*)

A Twitter hashtag is spaceless; **The Descent of Man** is baseless. #ItIsOnlyATheory, Dayton, Tenn. (*Jeff Contompasis*)

Misty of Chincoteague and a Twitter hashtag: Both lead readers to juvenile fiction. (*Michael Reinemer, Annandale, Va.*)

Fried butter on a stick and okra sorbet: Both are treats that Paula Deen would improve by adding a big dollop of mayo, whipped cream and a drizzle of Cheez Whiz. (*Phyllis Reinhard, East Fallowfield, Pa.*)

Three clothespins and fried butter on a stick: Both are related to size XXL underpants. (*David Ballard, Reston, Va.*)

Okra sorbet and a toilet brush: One's like gumbo; the other's for where your bum goes. (*Erika Hoffeld, Silver Spring, Md.*)

A Google+ invitation is supposed to separate the wheat from the chaff. **The 25-entry limit** is supposed to separate the wit from the chaff. (*Chris Doyle*)

Blue suede shoes and precious bodily fluids: Both should be preceded with the warning "Don't you step on my . . ." (*Sheila Randall, Damascus, Md., a First Offender*)

Precious bodily fluids and a Twitter hashtag: two things that Anthony Weiner is keeping to himself these days. (*Dave Hanlon, Woodbridge, Va.*)

A toilet brush and Misty of Chincoteague: A toilet brush scrubs out poop, while Misty poops out scrub. (*Mike Gips, Bethesda, Md.*)

Okra sorbet: Eat to your heart's content. **Fried butter on a stick:** Eat to your heart's contempt. (*Chris Doyle*)

Precious bodily fluids and a Google+ invitation: Both should be shared only among carefully chosen circles. (*Amanda Yanovitch, Midlothian, Va.*)

A Twitter hashtag starts out with the pound sign. **Fried butter on a stick** ends up with the colon. (*Jeff Contompasis*)

Three clothespins and the 25-entry limit: Both are overkill for one T-shirt. (*Danny Brauman, Chicago*)

The difference between **blue suede shoes** and **precious bodily fluids:** Howard Hughes didn't have a [closet full of](#) blue suede shoes. (*Pam Sweeney*)

Precious bodily fluids and a tattoo of Joe Biden: One is related to "[Strangelove](#)," the other to a strange love. (*Chuck Smith, Woodbridge, Va.; Ward Kay, Vienna, Va.*)

The 25-entry limit and a tattoo of Joe Biden: They both reflect the fact that a desire for ink can get out of control. (*Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase,*

Md.)

The 25-entry limit and a toilet brush: Both help keep the crap to a minimum. (*Rob Huffman; Ira Allen; Tim Watts, Temple Hills, Md.*)

The difference between **blue suede shoes** and **a tattoo of Joe Biden:** You can step on a tattoo of Joe Biden. In fact, in some states it is mandatory. (*Andy Bassett, New Plymouth, New Zealand*)

A red fez is like **blue suede shoes:** Both look nice resting on Ottomans. (*Jonathan Hardis, Gaithersburg*)

Precious bodily fluids and **the 25-entry limit:** [Jenna Jameson](#) isn't concerned about preserving either of them. (*Mike Gips*)

Precious bodily fluids and **a tattoo of Joe Biden:** One is where babies come from, while the other could be a form of birth control. (*Tom Witte, Montgomery Village, Md.*)

The 25-entry limit and **The Descent of Man:** Both are considered totally wrong by a bunch of not-so-deep thinkers. (*Roger Dalrymple, Gettysburg, Pa.*)

Precious bodily fluids and **the 25-entry limit:** Both are essential in order to get a life. (*Beverley Sharp*)

A Google+ invitation makes you privy to the useless, while **a toilet brush** is useless in the privy. (*Susan Geariety, Menifee, Calif.*)

Blue suede shoes and **fried butter on a stick:** In Elvis's case, the difference was about 20 years. (*David Genser, Poway, Calif.*)

Visit the online discussion group [The Style Conversational](#), where the Empress discusses today's new contest and results along with news about the Loser Community — and you can vote for your favorite among the inking entries, since you no doubt figured the Empress chose the wrong winner. If you'd like an e-mail notification each week when the *Invitational* and *Conversational* are posted online, write to the Empress at losers@washpost.com (note that in the subject line) and she'll add you to the mailing list. And on Facebook, join the lively group [Style Invitational Devotees](#) and chime in.

Would you like to meet a bunch of Losers in person? The Greater Loser Community — a.k.a. the Not Ready for the Algonquin Round Table Society — is having its own annual Flushies award “banquet” (picnic) on Saturday, Oct. 1, 1 to 5 p.m., at Granville Gude Park in Laurel, Md. Catered barbecue is on the menu; all are welcome. Tickets are \$25 per person to cover costs. The 70th person to send in his check will get the last spot, so if you'd like to attend and you aren't on the Invite's weekly notification list (in which case you should have gotten an invitation), contact the Empress ASAP at myerspat@gmail.com and put “Flushies” in the subject line, and she'll send the details right out to you. This picnic is sponsored by the Losers themselves, not The Post, but the Empress promises to crash it.

Next week: *The 400 Blows*, or *Rhymes Against Nature*



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Pat Myers

Pat Myers is editor and judge of The Style Invitational, The Washington Post's page for clever, edgy humor and wordplay. In the role since December 2003, she has posted and judged more than 700 contests. She also writes the weekly Style Conversational column and runs the Style Invitational Devotees page on Facebook. [Follow](#)

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A bride-to-be sent an invitation to the wrong address. It came back with this note.

"I wish I knew you," the note started. And there was something tucked inside.

Mar 27

