

The Style Invitational

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

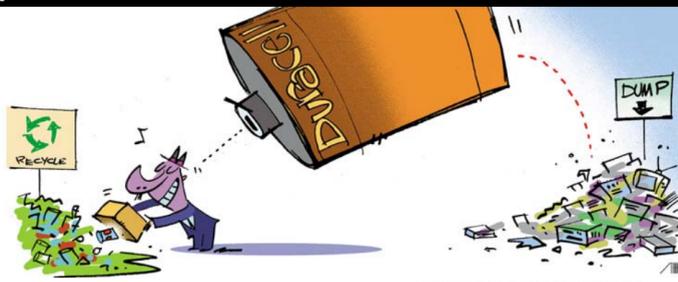
Week 650: King Us

This week's contest comes to us through a string of big-deal writers: BDW No. 1, Stephen King, has just come out with a horror novel, his 967th: It's called "Cell" and is about, what else, murderous cell phones. BDW No. 2, Gregg Easterbrook, author, columnist, Brookings Institution fellow, general *uomo universale*, mentioned King's book in the middle of his (go figure) online football column, Tuesday Morning Quarterback. Then he came up with several devilishly clever scenarios for Stephen King novels featuring everyday items, as in his own example above. Loser Andrew Hoenig of Rockville (well, to us he's a BD) told the Empress about it.

So now it's your turn: **Give us a scenario for a horror novel based on an everyday item. Maximum 75 words but it can be much shorter.**

Winner receives the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. First runner-up gets a tube of Boudreaux's Butt Paste and a Butt Paste bubblehead, smuggled out of Louisiana pre-Katrina by Loser Deborah Guy of Columbus, Ohio.

Other runners-up win a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable mentions get one of the lusted-after Style Invitational Magnets. One prize per entrant per week. Send your entries by e-mail to losers@washpost.com or by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Feb. 27. Include "Week 648" in the subject line of your e-mail, or it risks being ignored as spam. Include your name, postal address and phone number with your entry. Contests are judged on humor and originality. All entries become the property of The Washington Post. Entries may be edited for taste or content. Results will be published March 19. No purchase required for entry. Employees of The Washington Post, and their immediate relatives, are not eligible for prizes. Pseudonymous entries will be disqualified. The revised title for next week's contest is by Tom Witte of Montgomery Village.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Double-A . . . What if batteries are angry about being thrown away? What if a supernatural demonic being from another dimension gave the batteries the power of revenge? Remember, they're full of deadly acid.

REPORT FROM WEEK 646

In which we asked how two different people or groups would interpret any of these cartoons: A lot of Losers evidently interpreted all of them as an impossibility; even the original suggester of this contest, the Invitationally pathological Russell Beland, sent a grand total of seven entries (one submitted jointly with his kid), a bit shy of his Invitational weekly record of 487. But enough of you were able to extract meaning from utter nonsense; your seminar in *Deconstructive Literary Analysis of "Good Morning Starshine"* starts Monday.

4 A woman would say that the guy is calling for a woman to clean up his mess. A man would say that this dork doesn't seem to know about the five-second rule about dropped food. (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

3 To a human, it's bad luck. To a dog, it's effective use of psychokinesis. (Dave Prevar, Annapolis)

2 the winner of the Eggbutt Horseball: The average clergyman says: "Every life has some disappointments." Pat Robertson says: "Look, Vermont was the first state to offer civil unions. Ben & Jerry's is from Vermont. Just connect the dots here, and I think you know what I'm saying: God will not be mocked." (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

AND THE WINNER OF THE INKER

1 This reminds King Kong: "Next time, swat at the planes with the hand without the girl in it." This reminds Fay Wray and Naomi Watts: "Always wear clean underwear — you never know when half of Manhattan will be looking up your skirt." (Pam Sweeney, Germantown)

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Cartoon A

To a union organizer, this is a man to be for. To a sex-change surgeon, this is Amanda, Before. (Jay Shuck, Minneapolis)

To a business major: A summer job that not only provides some money but also gives real-life experience that looks good on a résumé. To a philosophy major: A career. (Art Grinath, Takoma Park)

To the Office of the Surgeon General: The three most common threats to life expectancy: genetic (obesity), environmental (carcinogenic chemicals from smoking) and accidental (unsafe workplace). To the Social Security Administration: Our master plan. (Elwood Fitzner, Valley City, N.D.)

To a boss, this guy is going to be fired for smoking on the job and trying to destroy the evidence in the oven. To a shrink, he's orally fixated, as evidenced by his obvious overeating and his need to always have something in his mouth, a result of his being breast-fed by his mother until he was 15. (Bill Moulden, Frederick)

Unions see a food-service worker, with no safety equipment, exposed to a dangerous oven. Right-to-work advocates see clear evidence that even minimum-wage workers aren't missing meals. (Adam and Russell Beland, Springfield)

Cartoon B

An AARP executive sees a senior frustrated by the new Medicare prescription rules. A



Cartoon A

Cartoon B

Cartoon C

Cartoon D

pharmaceutical executive sees an ED patient whose Canadian-filled prescription increased blood flow to his foot. (Wilson Varga, Alexandria)

To a man: "She's always losing the key to the safe-deposit box." To a woman: "Even my mother's ashes he doesn't

treat nice." (John O'Byrne, Dublin)

USA Today: "We're Loving Step Aerobics." Weekly World News: "Alien Tortures Al Gore Clone!" The New York Times: "Deconstructing Putin's Khrushchev-Style Diplomacy." (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

A kid would say: "Look, a crazy old coot in his underwear." An AARP member would say: "In our day, we didn't have those fancy Hacky Sacks, we just had a brick, and we just pushed it along the floor with our feet. And we were happy to have that! Now you danged hooligans get off my lawn!" (Brendan Beary)

To a morning person: Someone getting up bright and early to shine his shoes. To an evening person: Someone destroying once and for all the evil that is the Radio Alarm Clock. (Art Grinath)

Producers for "Nova" say: "If we're doing a show on mental illness among the elderly, be sure to preserve the guy's dignity." Producers for David Letterman say: "Brick-kicking isn't much by itself, but we might still get you on Stupid Human Tricks if you could, say, knock the ice cream cone out of that Picture D guy's hand." (Brendan Beary)

To a grade-school art teacher, this cartoon lacks proper perspective, dimension and proportion. To the correspondence course that advertises in the back of Popular Mechanics, this shows that Bob Staake, too, could one day be a professional artist! (Cecil J. Clark, Asheville, N.C.)

Cartoon C

To a middle manager, this shows you can't get away from the office. To a TV watcher, this shows you can't get away from Carrot Top. (Jay Shuck)

A man: "She's always late because she won't get off the freakin' phone." A woman: "He never waits for me." (John O'Byrne)

Tobacco lobbyist: "Guess what? They have a smoking section again!" Telemarketer: "Use your long-distance calling plan for instantly redeemable frequent-flier miles!" (Mary Ann Henningsen, Hayward, Calif.)

A doctor sees a dislocated shoulder, altitude sickness and frostbite. A lawyer sees big bucks over a phone that should have been labeled "Do Not Use While Wing-Walking." (Steve Fahey, Kensington)

Cartoon D

A Republican sees a Democrat who's just let one more sweet opportunity slip out of his hands. A reporter sees a congressman who's just been told that Jack Abramoff bought him that ice cream cone. (Barbara Turner, Takoma Park; Mel Loftus, Holmen, Wis.)

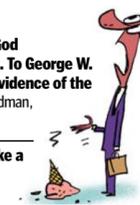
To viewers of "The Jack Benny Show": Just another of life's comic indignities. To viewers of "CSI": Madonna's been buried in a shallow grave! (Elwood Fitzner)

To Dorothy, it is a painful reminder of the litigation filed after she threw water on the Wicked Witch; to the Witch Witch, it's proof that she should have put her money into waterproof fabrics instead of high-priced attorneys. (Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.)

All the cartoons

To Pat Robertson, all the cartoons show God punishing liberal Americans for their sins. To George W. Bush, all the cartoons show convincing evidence of the need to continue occupying Iraq. (Dan Seidman, Watertown, Mass.)

Next Week: Paste Imperfect, or Let's Make a Dele



BRIDGE | Frank Stewart

Neither side vulnerable

NORTH

♠ K J 10 4 2
♥ K 9 6 2
♦ 6 5 3
♣ K

WEST

♠ 8 7 5 3
♥ A 5
♦ A K
♣ J 10 9 4 2

EAST

♠ A 9
♥ 8 4
♦ J 10 9 7 2
♣ 8 7 6 5

SOUTH (D)

♠ Q 6
♥ Q J 10 7 3
♦ Q 8 4
♣ A Q 3

The bidding:

| South | West | North | East |
|-------|------|-------|----------|
| 1♥ | Dbl | 1♠ | Pass |
| 1NT | Pass | 3♥ | All Pass |

Opening lead: ♦ A

"I heard you wrote about 'saving partner' this week," said Grapefruit, our club member who always looks and acts as if he had just been cut out of a will. "The ones I have are like old milk cartons: not worth saving."

As today's West, Grapefruit led the ace and then the king of diamonds against three hearts, showing a doubleton. East played the two and seven, and Grapefruit shifted to a club.

South overtook dummy's king with his ace, discarded dummy's last diamond on the queen and led a trump. The defense got only the major-suit aces, South made his bid, and Grapefruit informed East that his defense wasn't as bad as it looked — it was worse.

On the second diamond East must help out by playing the jack as a suit-preference signal: a high diamond to suggest an entry in the high-ranking side suit. If West leads a spade at the third trick, East wins and gives West a diamond ruff.

Really, Grapefruit should have led a spade at Trick Three no matter what. East needs a black ace for the defense to have a chance. If he has the ace of clubs, Grapefruit will have time to lead a club when he takes the ace of trumps. (Even if South has A-x in spades, he can't get a quick diamond discard on the spades since East can ruff.) But if South has the A-Q of clubs, West must lead a spade promptly.

Still, it's a fact of bridge life that partners are apt to do the wrong thing. Whether your partner is a Grapefruit or a world champion, save him from going wrong if you can.

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BY MAX ROSSI — REUTERS

Above, Shani Davis won the 1,000-meter speedskating competition. Below left, Chad Hedrick enhanced his heartthrob status by winning the gold in the 5,000-meter. Seth Wescott took top honors in the men's snowboard cross while some showboating cost Lindsey Jacobellis a gold medal in the women's cross. She settled for silver.



BY MATT DUNHAM — ASSOCIATED PRESS



BY GREG BAKER — ASSOCIATED PRESS

A Languorous Chic Heats Up the Games

LETTER, From D1

But no. He holds out the coat and helps us into it.

We find ourselves watching speedskating, that most lethally cool of sports, for some insight into the sexiness of these Winter Games. The athletes skitter like spiders, bent parallel to the ice, skin suits encasing their rock-hewn thighs, emblazoned with USA or NOR. In the 5,000-meter, they sometimes skate with both arms behind their backs, taking *loooooong* strokes, all slo-mo and underwater-like, looking for all the world as if they're out for a Sunday constitutional. They seem not to be working nearly as hard as we know they must be, which is rather like the Turinese.

How could anyone prefer the Summer Games' track and field to this? Why run when you can glide?

Speedskating is terribly sensual. It's not only the skating itself, the aerodynamism and the buggy goggles and the way they whoosh around, their metal skates clicking. It is also the way they finish, pushing their hoods back, propping their goggles on top of their heads and coasting, hands on knees. It is the way they look on the big screen at the end, like victorious superheroes returning to their bat caves. (Even when they're mad, they're sexy. Last night, Russian Alexey Proshin finishes his race and yanks the zipper on the front of his skin suit, baring his chest and waving his arms in apparent disgust.)

In the 5,000, more than a week ago, Texan heartthrob Chad Hedrick — he of the blue eyes and white teeth and healthy ego, who talked of achieving five first-place finishes — took the gold. He cried before the race, which coincided with the anniversary of his grandmother's death, and this only enhanced the coo factor. Last night, before racing in the 1,000-meter, Hedrick gives the audience a *gimme* gesture with his fingers, inviting their applause.

In the end, Hedrick doesn't finish in the top three, but two other Americans take the gold and silver. In first is Shani Davis, a loner type who does whatever he wants and doesn't care what anyone thinks. (A few days ago, Davis skipped the three-man team pursuit, saying that he'd rather be well-rested for the big race on Saturday. The United States lost the team pursuit but Davis won the 1,000-meter. So there.) In second is

adorable tousle-haired Joey Cheek, who last week announced he planned to give his winnings derived from earning the 500-meter gold medal to needy children in Sudan. This made Cheek infinitely cuter.

The victories of these Americans are only more dramatic in contrast with the apparent casualness of some of their brethren. There's Lindsey Jacobellis, who Friday appeared to have the snowboard cross gold all wrapped up until she grabbed her board, apparently attempting a trick, and tumbled to a silver. "I messed up," she said. "Oh, well. It happens."

There's downhill skier Bode Miller — who has thus far been in three races and only finished one, with nary a medal in sight — hardly living up to the hype of himself shirtless and dusted in snow on the cover of Newsweek. You get the sense he's not stressing too much over these Olympics, though he'd be happy to glide to a gold if it works out.

"It is other people who want me to win medals," he recently told an Italian newspaper.

We, meanwhile, are gliding toward an understanding of this place, where nothing is ever where it's supposed to be but everything works out nonetheless, in time. Here, venue staffers give you a lift down the mountain when the last shuttle has left, and if you need a ride home from a bar, the bartender pulls out his cell phone and calls his friend, who just happens to drive a taxi. (The guy never shows up, but that's okay. There are always more cabs.)

There's a casual fabulousness in the air. Turin is like a one-night stand who leaves a note on your pillow. The olive oil that comes in condiment packets at the airport is better than the best olive oil in our cupboard at home. The bus drivers are as handsome as cologne models. The guy who works at McDonald's gives us free coffee and asks us out to dinner, and when we show him our ring, he says, "Don't worry," and shows us his.

There is a saying, says a woman we meet at a party, when we ask about the aggressiveness of certain men. *Basta che respira*. This translates roughly to, *Enough that she's breathing*.

At which point, we laugh, buoyed by the healthy ego of this place. And then we head home, having had just a little too much wine. Why run when you can glide?