

Style Invitational

BY PAT MYERS

Report from Week 954

in which we asked for jokes ending "... and then the fight started." Not all that surprisingly, only a few entries transcended the "Lockhorns"-type mean-spouse digs that the genre is known for.



Mechanic: "Your car's engine is in bad shape. But it's kind of hard to explain."
Customer: "Go ahead. I'm an engineer."
Mechanic: "Well, lady. Basically Mr. Vroom Vroom is verrrry sick...
And then the fight started...
(David Genser, Poway, Calif.)

2 Winner of the books "Go to Hell" and "Fart Proudly":

Religious guy: "What will save this country is the Peace of God."
Secular guy: No, no, we need a peace based on rational principles of self-preservation."
And then... (Ann Martin, Bracknell, England)

3 Barack Obama: "I..."
And then the fight started. (Mike Gips, Bethesda)

4 "Turn right at the next corner," Siri said, but my car's navigation system interrupted and said, "Turn left."
If Siri had eyeballs, she would have rolled them. "Dashboard lady," she said, "where did you get your maps? Did Vasco da Gama have a garage sale?"
And then... (Robert Schechter, Dix Hills, N.Y.)

was hiding, so I helpfully swirled my laser printer at the bush on the left... (Martin Bancroft, Rochester, N.Y.)

Wife: "Just look at all these wrinkles! I'm so depressed! I want a facelift."
Husband: "Wouldn't an iron be cheaper?"
And then... (Beverly Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.)

Woman, waving her diamond ring: "Look, I'm engaged!"
Co-worker: "Well, if you let a guy ride the clutch enough times, he'll eventually get it right."... (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

Woman: "Ewww, what do people see in necrophilia?"
Husband: "I don't know, but I can relate."
And then... (Dave Prevar, Annapolis)

"My shrink thinks I've hated my mother since the day I was born!" my wife informed me.
"Hey, a lot of people started hating her that day," I said... (Robert Schechter)

"Do I still float your boat?"
"If my boat were the Costa Concordia."... (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

They're celebrating their fifth anniversary at dinner. As they start on dessert, they suddenly say, simultaneously, "I have something important to tell you."
Again they say simultaneously, "You go first."
So, once more at the same time, they tell each other: "I just found out I'm pregnant." / "I just found out I'm sterile."... (Elizabeth Miller, Vienna, a First Offender)

The sign said it was a country music club, so I asked to hear some music from the country of Pakistan... (Jerry Birchmore, Springfield)

Next week: Twits' twist, or A sick crew's wisecracks

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Week 958: All's Weller

"We'll have to rehearse that," said the undertaker as the coffin fell out of the car.

"It was a night to remember," said John Bobbitt's ER surgeon.

It's called a wellerism, after two witty characters named Weller in Dickens's "Pickwick Papers." It's a sentence that starts with a quote, often a short proverb, and goes on to include some sort of wordplay on something in the quote. Stuart Rogers of Toronto was the first example above in a recent contest from A.Word.A.Day; he figured that the Invitational Losers might do better. Or weller. So, in honor of Dickens's bicentenary this month, let's give it a try. This, like the similar Tom Swifty genre, is a pretty easy contest to come up with *something* for; the trick is to make it novel, perhaps timely, and especially clever.

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives a trophy that's arguably even nicer: this little pewterish bucking horse whose hindquarters are on a spring; it's basically a bobblebutt. Donated by Such a Loser Craig Dykstra.

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 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, Feb. 13; results published March 4 (March 2 online). No more than 25 entries per entrant per week. Include "Week 958" 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 is by Kevin Dopart; the subhead for this week's honorable mentions is by Brad Alexander. Join the Style Invitational Devotees on Facebook at on.fb.me/invdev.

STYLE CONVERSATIONAL Have a question for the Empress or want to talk to some real Losers? Join us at washingtonpost.com/stylconversational.

Joust kidding: Honorable mentions

Watching schoolkids go by, a Southern Baptist groused to the man next to him, "I can't believe the clothes they allow children to wear."
"And don't get me started on the swearing and blasphemy," the man replied.

"Yup," seconded the Southern Baptist. "You'll never see my children involved in such sinful activity."

"Mine, neither," replied the man enthusiastically, "Praise Allah."

And then... (Art Grinath, Takoma Park)

I noticed that some people at the movie didn't see where the bad guy



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SECOND PRIZE FOR A FEW BUCKS: The equine bobblebutt.



NATHAN PRESLEY/BIG HASSLE

BASEMENT BLUES: From left, Jesse Ebaugh, Dave Colvin, Erika Wennerstrom and Mark Nathan make up the Heartless Bastards.

POP CD REVIEW

Heartless Bastards ARROW



It used to be easy to confuse the Heartless Bastards with the Black Keys, their brothers in the

overpopulated field of neo-garage rock. Like the Keys, the Bastards have a fondness for American classic rock in all its unruly, backward-looking forms, though this takes the band down vastly divergent avenues on its fourth disc, "Arrow." The new album distills everything

that makes the band great down to the bare essentials: throaty, chugging-bar blues and mournfully plucked ballads. It's a lonesome, spacious album, the first one the band has made that seems as equally suited to the prairies as the bars.

The group is fronted by Erika Wennerstrom, whose miracle of a voice sounds as if it were wrapped in 10 miles of barbed wire and honey, then dragged through a swamp. Whether hard-charging her way through these retro basement blues numbers (like the Kinks homage "Skin and Bone") or picking through them with an excess of caution ("The Arrow Killed the Beast"), Wennerstrom has one

of those voices that is utterly incapable of falsehood. You'll believe everything she says, even when she's not saying much.

It's not for nothing that Wennerstrom is so often compared to Janis Joplin, another weather-beaten singer overmatched to her material. "Arrow" is a memorable album without a truly memorable track. Its songs are remarkable for no reason other than she decided to sing them, enlivening the good songs and making the lesser ones, like the endless, formless opener "Marathon," sound better than they deserve to.

— Allison Stewart