DIVERSIONS

THE STYLE INVITATIONAL

Laugh-long relationships: Report from Week 1167

BY PAT MYERS

Week 1167 was one of our perennial compare-and-contrast contests in which the Empress listed 18 random items and you had to explain how any two were similar, different or otherwise linked.

4th place

The Cat in the Hat and Hillary's emails: In both situations you wonder where all the grownups are. (Danielle Nowlin, Fairfax Station, Va.)

3rd place

The Apple Store Employee of the Month works hard to sell iPhones; tinv hands work hard to manufacture them. (Kristen Rahman, Silver Spring)

2nd place and the winner of the 'Back to the Future' manure car: An all-you-can-eat buffet and leftover Valentine's candy: Oh, you Match.com Casanova, you! (Kathy El-Assal, Middleton, Wis.)

And the winner of the Inkin' Memorial

Hillary's emails are just like three inches of snow: not enough to keep you from running for the office, but danged if they don't make the route hell. (Mike Ostapiej, Mount Pleasant, S.C.)

They begged to differ: honorable mentions

Both tiny hands and Hillary's emails: The American people are sick and tired of hearing about yer damn . . . (Ellen Ryan, Rockville)

Both the Cat in the Hat and seventh-grade boys have an optimistic view of what your mother won't mind at all if you do. (Dudley Thompson, Cary, N.C., and father of two sons)

Hillary's emails vs. an all-youcan-eat buffet: The feeding frenzy brought on by the latter is somewhat more dignified. (Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.)

President Taft's bathtub: ring; Leftover Valentine's candy: no ring. (Jonathan Hardis,



BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

New contest for Week 1171: What's my (next) line?

O say can you see, by the dawn's early light, (Francis Scott Key) That some kids put TP in our front yard last night? (Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.)

Where have all the flowers gone? And why's there crabgrass in my lawn? (Pete Seeger/Duncan)

Baby, you're a firework (Katy Perry) That went off prematurely - jerk. (Katy Perry/Duncan)

They're called tailgaters: You quote a line from a poem and follow it with a line of your own. We had a tailgater contest four years ago, but this time we'll have a musical twist, suggested by Loser Duncan Stevens, who happened to get his first blot of Invitational ink in that contest: Take a line from any song and pair it with your own second line to make a humorous rhyming couplet; the second line should match the rhythm of the first, rather than the second line of the song itself, as in Duncan's examples above. Be sure to include the title of the song you're quoting.

Winner gets the Inkin' Memorial, the Lincoln statue bobblehead that is the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place appropriately receives a kit called "How to Kazoo: User's Guide & Practitioner's Manual," complete with "professional quality kazoo" and tips on playing songs of all genres. Best thing about a kazoo: The player can't sing at the same time.

Other runners-up win their choice of a yearned-for Loser Mug, the older-model "This Is Your Brain on Mugs" mug or a vintage Loser T-shirt. Honorable mentions get one of our lusted-over Loser magnets, "Magnet Dum Laude" or "Falling Jest Short." First Offenders receive a smelly tree-shaped air "freshener" (FirStink for their first ink). Email entries to losers@washpost.com. Deadline is Monday night, April 25; results published May 15 (online May 12). You may submit up to 25 entries per contest. Include "Week 1171" in your email subject line or it might be ignored as spam. Include your real name, postal address and phone number with your entry. See contest rules and guidelines at wapo.st/InvRules. The headline

SUNDAY CHALLENGE

BY MARTIN ASHWOOD-SMITH © 2016 CROSSYNERGY SYNDICATE LLC

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HOROSCOPE

BY JACQUELINE BIGAR

HAPPY BIRTHDAY | April 17: This year you could feel awkward about discussing your feelings, even in the most professional situations. You often will have mixed feelings that don't seem to work well together. Let others know where you are coming from anyway. If you are single, attracting someone is easy. Maintaining and experiencing a successful relationship could be more challenging but doable, especially if you hook up after August. If you are attached, the two of you often find anger to be an issue. Understand where it is coming from or what triggers it. You might not realize how profound this experience has been for you your whole life. Nearly anything that reminds you of the past might trigger you. Virgo can be a stick in the mud.

ARIES (March 21-April 19) You could wake up out of sorts

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) Surround yourself with your friends. You might want to hang with them more often. You could discover that tension is building with someone over a money matter. Do yourself a favor, and nix any risk-taking for the next few months. Observe a tendency to indulge when you are hurt or angry.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) Your mood could transform at

E15

Gaithersburg, Md.)

Seventh-grade boys will find it hilarious if you tell them tiny hands are a bad thing for a pianist. (Pam Sweeney, Burlington, Mass.)

The Pentagon: Think eyes on Iraq.

Scrabble tiles: Think I's on a rack. 7th-grade boys: Think eyes on a rack. (Chris Doyle, Denton, Tex.; yeah, the contest said to compare two items, but it's just too good)

An all-you-can-eat buffet vs. Hillary's emails: It's unlikely that anyone will end up eating crow at the buffet. (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

An all-you-can-eat buffet and three inches of snow: Each can lead to a run on toilet paper. (Kevin Dopart)

An all-you-can-eat buffet and three inches of snow: In D.C., there's a good chance that either will clog vital arteries. (Mike Gips, Bethesda, Md.)

At the Pentagon: rank on their shoulders; with 7th-grade boys: rank in their armpits. (Dudley Thompson)

The windchill factors in when going out in three inches of snow. A winch'll factor in when getting out of President Taft's bathtub. (Chris Doyle)

The Apple Store Employee of the Month might get free Nats tickets. Walmart mulch might come with free gnats, ticks, etc. (Danielle Nowlin)

The last Cheeto in the bag vs. Tiny Hands: One is an unnatural orange mess that leaves a bad taste in your mouth; the other one isn't a nickname of someone running for president. (Paul Totman, Edmonton, Alberta, a First Offender)

The Pentagon vs. Scrabble tiles: You can usually get a comprehensible word out of Scrabble tiles. (Andy Bassett, New Plymouth, New Zealand)

For three inches of snow it's not worth firing up the big plow, but with your tiny hands you probably don't have a big plow anyway. (Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase, Md.)

Bunions: Unwanted trait of the feet.

Leftover Valentine's candy: Fate of the unwanted treat. (Jesse

for this week's results is by Jesse Frankovich: the honorablementions subhead is by Beverley Sharp. 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; follow @StyleInvite on Twitter.

•THE STYLE CONVERSATIONAL: The Empress's weekly online column discusses each new contest and set of results. Especially if you plan to enter, check it out at wapo.st/styleconv.

DINGDINGDING! IMPORTANT LOSER ANNOUNCEMENT! It escaped the Empress's notice three weeks ago that Jeff Contompasis's joke about camel urine in the Week 1164 results was his 500th blot of ink - thereby admitting JefCon to the den of iniquity that is the Style Invitational Hall of Fame, as its 11th member in the Invite's 23-year existence. Jeff, who's renowned for making fun of his own nerdiness - "Is it just me who interprets the restroom sign 'Wet Floor' as a command?" - tells a bit about himself, and about his weekly process of entering the Invite, in this week's Style Conversational at bit.ly/conv1171.



COURTESY OF JEFF CONTOMPAS

Invite artist Bob Staake examines Loser Jeff Contompasis's ear (or tries to ignore him?) when Bob was promoting his children's book "Bluebird" at Politics & Prose in 2013.

Frankovich, Lansing, Mich.)

Seventh-grade boys vs. the Cat in the Hat: The cat doesn't leave your house both destroyed and smelling of Axe body spray. (John Hutchins, Silver Spring, Md.)

An all-you-can-eat buffet and embalming fluid: You belly up to get one; you're belly up when you get the other. (Kevin Dopart)

An all-you-can-eat buffet and Hillary's emails: In both cases, using an official server might have kept things from getting out of hand. (Hildy Zampella, Falls Church, Va.)

An octagon vs. three inches of snow: Metrobuses run through a stop sign once in a while. (Kevin Dopart)

What's the difference between

Scrabble tiles and seventhgrade boys? It takes at least a bit of skill for teenage girls to successfully manipulate Scrabble tiles. (John Hutchins)

With an octagon, you've got a figure that has eight sides. With an all-you-can-eat buffet, you lost your figure when you ate the sides. (Mark Raffman, Reston, Va.)

The last Cheeto in the bag and bunions: Both are crunchy, zesty, delicious snacks! Oh, wait, that's Funyuns. (Bill Dorner, Indianapolis)

With seventh-grade boys, there's no such thing as leftover Valentine's candy. (George Smith, Frederick, Md.)

Still running – deadline Monday, April 18: Our famous foal name "breeding" contest. See bit.ly/invite1170.

and not ready to deal with what could come down the path. In fact, this sense of irritation or not feeling up to snuff might continue for a while. Be careful when exercising today, because you could go overboard and hurt yourself.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) You appreciate kind and gentle interactions. Strap on your seat belt, because in the next month, anger and frustration could be likely comrades when dealing with relationships. Start practicing self-discipline. Listen to another person's complaints, knowing that they might be slightly exaggerated, but this person needs you to respond.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

You could find that your somber and sullen pal of late has turned into a fiery, expressive and angry individual. You might start longing for the other personality. What you are hearing is this person's hurt that he or she swallowed which has evolved to anger. Resolve this, and you resolve the issue between you.

You are likely to feel as if you can't do anything right in the

CANCER (June 21-July 22)

several people around you might be on the warpath. Just because they are expressing their frustrations and anger, it doesn't mean you did anything wrong.

near future, as someone or

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) Curb a need to be possessive and have things your way. A child or new friend demonstrates the extremes of his or her temperament in the next month, starting today. Angry words reflect a hurt that has been suppressed. Listen carefully without getting defensive.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) You might feel great; however, someone very close to you could be putting on war paint, and before you know it, you are angry too. Be smart, and defuse the situation quickly, if possible. Listen to this person's gripes, knowing that in his or her eyes these feelings are grounded. Be understanding and not defensive.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) Know when to politely exit the scene. You could find a partner or someone you are very close to belligerent and angry. You are unlikely to be able to defuse this situation with ease. Learn to interact with this person with greater sensitivity.

any time, as anger that you have been sitting on explodes. Some of you will find that your associates or loved ones will be relieved that you are not cloaking your feelings anymore. Others might react strongly. You need to clear out some resentment.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) You try to be disciplined and not impulsive. Nevertheless, you could feel ripples of hurt, frustration and perhaps some anger budding. Try to handle these feelings with the person or people involved in the triggering

situations.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) One-on-one relating often draws strong reactions. What will surprise you in the next few weeks is the volatility of a friend. Understand when you have had enough and explain your feelings. The time to clear the air with several people has arrived.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20) Others seek you out. Some of you might not be findable, as you might be dodging a key person's upset or anger. Perhaps this person is a boss or parent. This matter is resolvable, but the work is not all yours. Keep discussions open and non-threatening.

Longtime friendship needs a freeze

Dear Amy: My Ask Amy husband and I decided to end a AMY DICKINSON 25-year couple friendship after many years of

putting up with the wife's veiled, and not so veiled, insults. In addition, we dealt with her unceasing competitiveness and childish bragging.

We have no good excuse for not calling her on her behavior from the beginning. It was a slippery slope of weeks of good times, then the mean zinger or insult.

Our choice finally came after a dinner party during which she asked me if one of my daughters was still struggling with her weight problem.

During that same evening, we were introduced to their new friends. She "accidentally" shared our recent private financial setback and imminent foreclosure with them in front of us. Her husband, as always, didn't hear any of this. Both incidents really hurt.

We chose to simply stop calling, never making plans with them and refusing invitations. If invited to mutual friends' events, we go and are polite, but distant.

Our nonconfrontational "freeze out" is because we don't believe anything in her behavior will change. She is what she is, and they are a couple. We do not wish them ill, but we do not want to resurrect the relationship.

My daughter feels it is we who have changed. She also says that after all those years, we owe them an explanation. Do we?

Moving On

Moving On: If your former friend contacts you and asks for an explanation, you should be truthful. However, in my experience, people who behave as she does tend to blow through friendships and don't seem to care much about the consequences of their actions. She is not likely to ask a question that might prompt personal reflection on her part.

Otherwise, you should be inspired by your former friend's behavior and do exactly what you want to do. Avoidance and politeness on your part is better than she deserves, but I agree with your choice.

Write to Amy Dickinson at askamy@tribune.com or Ask Amy, Chicago Tribune, TT500, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, III. 60611. © 2016 by the Chicago Tribune