

The Invitational, Week 8: Poke Us Till We Giggle

This week's contest: Write a 'poke,' or a joke recast as a rhyming poem. Plus the winners of our first on-Substack caption contest.

A Fruitful Encounter

*A baby kumquat cried and cried.
She said to me: "How sad I am."
And then explained, all teary-eyed:
"My mother's in a jam."*

A Show of Hands

*Tick tock tick tock tick tock.
Yesterday I ate a clock.
I do not know what you're presuming,
But it was VERY time-consuming.*

Honkering Down

*In the grocery store a snowman
Was roaming the produce rows.
It was odd, but made some sense —
He was simply picking his nose.*

Question to a Job Seeker

*A guy with a résumé had on the desk lain it.
And the manager, reading it, sensing a Fail,
Said: "There's a four-year gap. Can you explain it?"
The applicant said, "I spent four years in Yale."
"That's great," said the manager, "we all love a scholar!"
"You're hereby hired — welcome aboard, Bob!"
Bob smiled and relaxed and loosened his collar ...
"Thank you," he gushed. "I really needed this job."*

By Gene Weingarten and Pat Myers, Czar and Empress of The Invitational

This week, for **Week 8 of The Invitational: Recast a joke – something with a punchline – as a rhyming poem, or “poke,”** a term Gene coined years ago. As the examples above show (they’re from his old columns), you have great leeway in both form and substance; the jokes can be short and dumb, long and elegant, or anywhere in between. The poems can fit any rhyme scheme or genre. They can even be risqué, now that we are freed of the corporate yoke of propriety. They can be parodies of existing poems, or something you simply made up to convey your joke. They can have titles or not, as is your wont. See, it’s easy!

(The Czar is most proud of [this lengthy poke](#), a loose parody of “The Raven.” It involves a chicken, shocking vulgarity and the specter of death by torture.)

As always, you may submit up to 25 entries, all at once (which we like) or separately. You don’t need any special formatting – just write it as what it ought to look like.

[CLICK HERE FOR THIS WEEK’S ENTRY FORM.](#)

Deadline is 4 p.m. ET Saturday, March 4. Results will run here in The Gene Pool on Thursday, March 9.



Winner receives these nifty socks on which are printed sandaled feet, complete with multicolored pedicure. They *just* fit the Empress's size 7 feet, so they might be better for the Junior Future Loser of your choice.

First Offenders receive the [Fir Stink for their first ink:](#) a smelly tree-shaped air "freshener."

The last contest results are below, but first two paragraphs of boring but necessary boilerplate:

After the intro (which you are reading now), there will be some early questions and answers -- and then I'll keep adding them as the hour progresses and your fever for my opinions grows and multiplies and metastasizes. To see those later Q&As, just refresh your screen every once in a while.

As always, you can also leave comments. They'll congregate at the bottom of the post, and allow you to annoy and hector each other and talk mostly amongst yourselves. Though I will stop in from time to time.

First-Round Daft Pics: Captions From Invitational Week 6

In [our first caption contest](#) of the Substacked Invitational, we presented the seven motley images below and received about 900 entries, the most so far in our new home. This week's back 'n' forth (it varies by the week): The Emp winnowed the list – as always, the writers' names aren't attached when she sees it – to about 200; the Czar chopped it down to about 35; and then the E put a few back in and chose the top four.



The winner of the tin of [Instant Underpants](#): The remake of Hitchcock's "The Birds" lacked a little something. (Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.)

"Wow, inflation has really gotten ridiculous!" (Jesse Frankovich, Lansing, Mich.)

[Keepers at the Dallas Zoo didn't notice the substitutions for weeks.](#) (Sam Mertens, Silver Spring, Md.)

Merch of the Penguins (Chris Doyle, Denton, Tex.)

Redesigned Chinese balloons easily evaded U.S. radar defenses. (Kevin Dopart, Washington, D.C.)

The flamingo swore she would never trust a dating app again. (Mark Raffman, Reston, Va.)

“Well, Sid, I’ll tell ya – it beats being an inflatable love doll.” (Jon Ketzner, Cumberland, Md.)

The penguins were actually on a street in Alexandria, Va.; photo taken by the Empress during a walk in January;



First runner-up: And thus, with the executioner summoned, Western civilization would be spared from yoga for another 400 years. (Jon Carter, Fredericksburg, Va.)

At that moment, the king conceived the idea of underpants. (Terri Berg Smith, Rockville, Md.)

The world is introduced to its first stuntman, Medieval Knievel. (Jesse Frankovich)

As if his death sentence weren't enough, James had to hand-walk to the lion's mouth. (Leif Picoult, Rockville, Md.)

Early gynecological practice gets off to a rough start. (Rob Cohen, Potomac, Md.)

Medieval perverts could even find upskirt pics in illuminated manuscripts. (J. Larry Schott, West Plains, Mo.)

"No, Melchior, the baby Jesus probably won't care about your gymnastics skills. Let's just go with the myrrh." (Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.)

The picture is actually of the princess Salome dancing on her hands before the feasting Herod and Herodias, from the 14th-century English missal "The Taymouth Hours."

Picture C, below, in a .gif enhancement from Loser (and Imperial Scion) Valerie Holt. The (static) engraving is from an 1898 edition of the Illustrated Police News.



Dianne Feinstein recalls the challenges of her first day in the Senate. (Jon Carter)

“Keep my wife’s name out of your effin’ mouth.” (Roy Ashley, Washington, D.C.)

"I told you to unwrap your candy *before* the show starts!" (Judy Freed, Deerfield Beach, Fla.)

Late arrivals now become part of the show. (Paul MF Styrene, Olney, Md.)

Despite an unfortunate typo, the new sport of mixed marital arts proved wildly popular. (David Sarokin, Washington, D.C.)

The caption on the original engraving: “A fair acrobat soundly thrashes a man who has made himself objectionable to her father.”



When chessmen realize they've been watching too much pawn. (Jesse Frankovich)

The Fourth Wise Man arrived too late, but his gift of amphetamines helped keep them all awake on the long journey home. (Jeff Shirley, Richmond, Va.)

After mastering the dark arts, Nancy Pelosi was able to turn key Republicans to stone. (Neil Kurland, Elkridge, Md.)

"So how much longer does this State of the Union thing go on?" (Steve Bremner, Philadelphia)

The "Lewis Chessmen," made probably in Norway of walrus ivory and dating to the 12th or 13th century, were discovered on the shore the Isle of Lewis, Scotland, in 1831.



“And then I chased the cat out of the trash. No need to thank me.” (Jon Carter)

“You know, feeding me the scraps directly would save us both a lot of trouble.”
(Judy Freed)

After the earth’s atmosphere shrank his spacecraft and caused him to assume the shape of a household pet, Zorg hoped his eyes would not give him away. (Mark Raffman)

Feared even more than the Cone of Shame is the Collar of Culpability. (Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn, Va.)

Ranger hadn’t believed them when they said he’d go blind if he kept raiding the trash can. (Pam Shermeyer, Lathrup Village, Mich.)

The Empress’s beloved dog Henry upon greeting the returning family at the front door one afternoon (pre-digital photo from the late 1990s). The Royal Consort’s paper-clip repair on the lid’s hinge continues to hold to this day.



Second runner-up: Somehow fame and fortune on the runway still left Ingrid feeling hollow inside. (Jeff Contompasis)

“All my other clothes are from L.L. Bean.” (Jon Ketzner)

“Hey, you jerk. My crotch is down here!” (Jon Gearhart, Des Moines)

It’s even more obscene with the mop handle left in. (Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase, Md.)

The photo: In Paris this month, haute couture from the Viktor & Rolf show.



Third runner-up: Dr. Frankenstein soon learned that it wasn't easy working from home if you owned a cat. (Kevin Dopart)

True, Ginger was thrown out of the house — but she did get a meaty severance package. (Stu Segal, "Southeast U.S.")

He regretted having used his third wish to "get my junk inside a little pussy." (Mark Raffman)

"What's the matter, Gene? Cat got your dong?" (John Winant, Annandale, Va.)

"No, no — you were supposed to draw Cock *Robin!* (Dottie Gray, Alexandria, Va.)

A detail from a cryptic 1555 engraving in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. [More on it here.](#)

"Daft Pics" in the headline for the results is by Kevin Dopart.

Still running – deadline one moment before midnight Friday, Feb. 24 (well, if you're a day late this week, it's okay – we're busy till late Saturday afternoon, to be honest): **Our Week 7 contest for ideas for novel artworks.** [Click here](#) or type in bit.ly/inv-week-7.

Sunday, March 19: Ingest foodstuffs with genuine Losers! Next month's Loser Brunch will be at the Spanish Diner, José Andres's home-cooking place in downtown Bethesda, Md. (free parking in the garages). The Empress and Royal Consort plan to be there. More info and RSVP at [Our Social Engorgements](#) on the Losers' website, NRARS.org.

Banter and share humor with the Losers and the Empress in the [Style Invitational Devotees](#) group on Facebook; join (tell them you came from The Gene Pool) and the Devs will anagram your name every which way. And see

more than 1,000 classic Invite entries in graphic form, also on FB, at [Style Invitational Ink of the Day](#).
