

The Style Invitational

Week LXXXVI: Don't Spare the Rodney

I tell you, I don't get no respect.
Even lepers won't shake my hand.



I tell you, with my doctor, I don't get no respect. I told him I swallowed a bottle of sleeping pills. He told me to have a few drinks and get some rest.

When I was a kid I got no respect. One time I was kidnapped, and the kidnappers sent my parents a note: "We want five thousand dollars or you'll see your kid again."

This Week's Contest was proposed by Bruce W. Alter of Fairfax Station. Bruce lifted the lines above from Rodney Dangerfield's Web site. Your challenge this week is to come up with other indications that one might not be getting no respect. First-prize winner gets two books: "The Worst-Case Scenario Travel Survival Handbook," featuring advice on such things as how to escape from the trunk of a car, how to jump from rooftop to rooftop, how to cross a piranha-infested river, and how to control a runaway camel. The second book is "Welcome to Your Facelift," c. 1997, by socialite Helen Bransford. Helen discloses that she decided on this surgery shortly after her husband, the famous twit novelist Jay McInerney, interviewed Julia Roberts, and she (Helen) felt threatened. Not long after she had her face sheared off, stretched out and sewn back on to please him, Jay and Helen split up.

First runner-up wins the tacky but estimable Style Invitational Loser Pen. Other runners-up win the coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable mentions get the mildly sought-after Style Invitational bumper sticker. Send your entries via fax to 202-334-4312, by e-mail to losers@washpost.com or by U.S. mail to The Style Invitational, Week LXXXVI, c/o The Washington Post, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071.

Deadline is Monday, Sept. 24. All entries must include the week number of the contest and your name, postal address and telephone number. E-mail entries must include the week number in the subject field. Contests will be judged on the basis of humor and originality. All entries become the property of The Washington Post.

Entries may be edited for taste or content. Results will be published in four weeks. 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 Russell Beland of Springfield.

REPORT FROM WEEK LXXXII,

in which we asked you to take any line appearing in that day's Post, and invent a question that it answers. We offer no apologies for the imbalance in the distribution of winning entries. There is a reason for it. You will find more books by Charles Dickens in the library than books by you. There's a reason for that, too.

◆ **Fourth Runner-Up**—
Line from The Post: *Does this guy club baby seals?*
Question it answers: **What is thought to be the litmus test for a political appointment in Bush's Interior Department?**
(Russell Beland, Springfield)

◆ **Third Runner-Up**—
Line from The Post: *I don't need that long.*
Question it answers: **What is a poor response to give when your date claims it is too late to invite you up to her apartment?**
(Russell Beland, Springfield)

◆ **And the winner of the plate with terrible likenesses of the presidents:**
Line from The Post: *We gain information, via photons, of distant objects.*
Question it answers: **How does Al Gore challenge the notion that he is too wooden and remote, and that he lacks vision?**
(Russell Beland, Springfield)

◆ **Honorable Mentions:**
For about three days I kept expecting to have convulsions and then suddenly explode.
How did you feel when you ate your new wife's first home-cooked meal?
(Penny Barker, Alexandria)

Leesburg is considering building a second.
Is it true that many rural towns don't have flush toilets?
(Russell Beland, Springfield)

According to the 2000 Census, Latinos made up 2.8 percent of its population.
How did the small town of Latinos, Ga., attempt to increase the amount of federal aid it received?
(Russell Beland, Springfield)

The appalling Sidney Farte, owner of the local bait store, has perfected the use of projectile vomiting as a weapon.
What would be a great sentence to find in Book World the week The Style Invitational runs its "Sentence Us to Death" contest?
(Dave Zarrow, Herndon)

... Thomas Jefferson looks like Mamie Eisenhower.
Recently there has been some surprising news about Thomas Jefferson's descendants. Can you cite some evidence for some even more unexpected ancestral connection?
(Carolyn Bassing, Takoma Park)

The infestation runs almost up to Dallas.
Where do most Garth Brooks fans live?
(G. Daly, Dallas)

The snowball has already started to roll, and unless he can do some fancy dancing, he doesn't stand much chance

What are Frosty the Snowman's chances in the National Downhill Skiing Championship?
(Frank Calogero, Jefferson, Ga.)

Included in his country estate are cathedral windows and an indoor pool.
Describe the house Bill Gates built for his dog.
(Jennifer Hart, Arlington)

We cleared the bottleneck at Springfield.
What is the new, updated version of the expression "We cleaned the Augean stables"?
(Jennifer Hart, Arlington)

◆ **Second Runner-Up**—
Line from The Post: *Our first courses were artfully composed salads, including Stilton cheese and roasted apricots.*
Question it answers: **Dear Post food critic, what gave it away that you were receiving preferential treatment while trying to review the F Street Popeye's?**
(Drew Knoblauch, Falls Church)

◆ **First Runner-Up**—
Line from The Post: *It is way over.*
Question it answers: **How does Monica describe her relationship with the former president?**
(Russell Beland, Springfield)

Florence Henderson was riddled with bullets as she cooked and sang in a sitcom kitchen.
Describe a good day in Hell.
(Kelli Midgley-Biggs, Columbia)

Your conscience is talking to you, clap, clap, clap.
What is an example of your conscience warning you about the hazards of promiscuous sex?
(Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

Your haircut is free if we speak first.
What is a sign on the wall of the Ellen Jamesian barbershop?
(Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

And she gave me three pubic hairs.
Can you explain to the committee one more time, Judge Thomas, about your true love on that third day of Christmas?
(Chris Doyle, Burke; Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

It's great practice for the rest of marriage.
What do you think of my fiancée's idea to make the wedding night more special by abstaining from sex for a month?
(Drew Knoblauch, Falls Church)

We put beers in it to stay cold—a mysteriously satisfying way to store beverages.

If Dr. Laura has a heart, what purpose could it possibly serve?
(Drew Knoblauch, Falls Church)

Today was a great day for scoring.
What was Bill Clinton's take on Hillary's first day of campaigning?
(Steve Fahey, Kensington)

I've told my mom, but do I need to call the police, or what?

What did George W. Bush ask Dick Cheney when Jenna told him she had used a fake ID to get drinks at a bar?
(Sally Fasman, Washington)

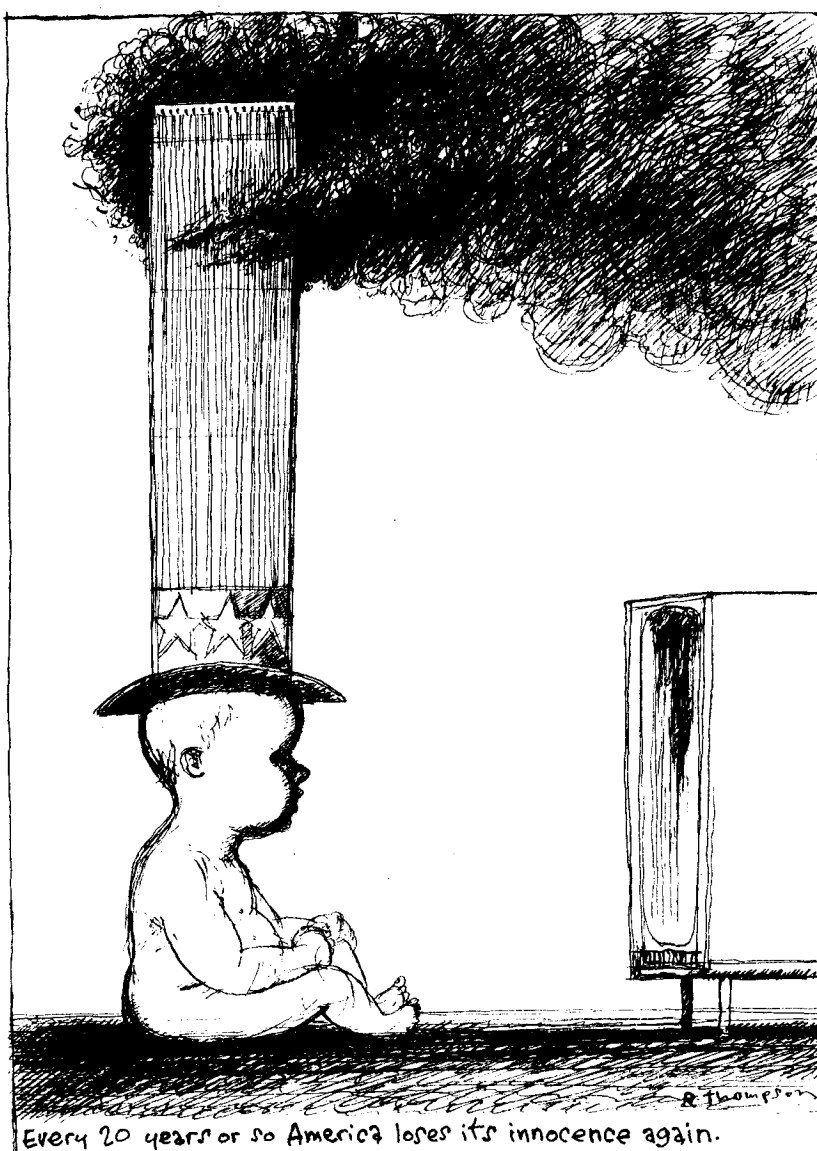
What hurts most is having to keep it all inside.

What is the worst part of a barium enema?
(Frank Calogero, Jefferson, Ga.)

I'm not trying to jump to conclusions.
What code phrase does a writer use to indicate he is about to jump to a conclusion?
(Russell Beland, Springfield)

I'm with that.
What would be a good slogan for a T-shirt worn by a companion of Gary Condit?
(Russell Beland, Springfield)

Next Week: What the If...



TELL ME ABOUT IT

Advice for the Under-30 Crowd



LOOK, IT'S SWEET THAT YOU'RE FLIRTING WITH ME, BUT I SHOULD EXPLAIN A FEW THINGS ABOUT RABBITS.

BY NICK GALIFIANAKIS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Dear Carolyn:

My boyfriend and I have been together for nine months now, and love each other very much. A few weeks ago, though, a good friend of his claimed to have seen me fooling around with another guy. While this friend has seen me only in photos, they were "pretty sure" it was me. While I told my BF that I'm not cheating on him (which I'm not) and that I would never cheat, the thought is always at the back of his mind. Actually he thinks about it a lot, even brings it up lots.

I really don't know what to do, Carolyn. It tears me apart every time he questions me, and I can only say, "I'm not cheating on you." He always comes back with, "How do I know you're not lying to me?" This was never an issue before, but I'm scared it will eventually break us up.

—Faithful in Canada

Faithful, meet Eventually.

You break you up. Now. Use your own words, of course, but all of the following should appear somewhere in the explanation you give for ditching him: "You," "can't," "trust," "me," "so," "you," "don't," "deserve" and "me."

Look at the whole sorry episode this way: He did you such a favor by reacting this way to the friend's accusation. You were given proof at the nine-month mark—meaning, quite early—that your boyfriend is way too immature to handle the leap of faith that is trust. He doesn't know you're not lying to him, because no one ever "knows" that about anybody. This is a guy who needs to grow up, a lot. What he doesn't need to do is grow up on your time, at your expense. You don't need it, either—I don't care how "scared" you are. Have a little more faith in yourself.

Breaking Up Is Good to Do, Part 2:

Carolyn:

My on-again, off-again boyfriend of six months just broke up with me. Truth be told, we were always better as friends than we were romantically. Yet he says we can't be friends—despite the fact that he still sees other exes. His "logic"? They see each other every few months and quickly run out of conversation. We, on the other hand, actually relate to each other, therefore we can't be friends. (Call me crazy, but I prefer the friends I can hold a conversation with for more than a few hours per year.) Is this some other version of "it's not you, it's me"?

—No Witty Moniker

Or another version of "you dodged a bullet." When a guy says you can't be his friend because he likes you,

you assume the presence of issues. Big issues. Issues you don't need.

So. Did that help? It seemed like what you wanted to hear, a pro-you post-breakup analysis, a reassuring rationale to cushion the impact a bit. It's the stuff you look for from she-friends: It wasn't meant to be! You were too good for him!! He wore tasseled shoes!! The staler the better, sometimes, like roses on Valentine's Day. The universal language for people showing they care.

Never does help, of course, especially when your ailment isn't so much *wah-I-feel-ugly* heartbreak as it is what-the-hell-was-that confusion. He disappeared without giving you any say—can't go out with him, can't be friends with him, can't even talk on the phone. It's kind of like having Mommy enforce your bedtime... and you're 25 years old. Hello, I thought this was *my* life; who just rewrote all the rules?

So getting control back really would help—but since you can't change the outcome, your only recourse is to understand it. How's this: He knows you aren't right for each other, but he can't quite resist you, either. Then not being friends would make sense. Yes?

Carolyn:

After some flirting (um, I think), I suggested dinner with a friend and she was enthusiastic, though we haven't set a date. And I'm trying to play it cool, but it makes me all nervous, like, when I see her, which isn't good! Any wise words to help me chill out?

—Downtown

Yeah: Chill out. If she likes you, your nerves will be the disarming kind of charming that you couldn't pull off if you tried. If she doesn't, they'll be irrelevant. Now SET THE DATE.

Dear Carolyn:

Okay, so there is this guy, we get along fantastically when we see each other, there is obvious sexual chemistry between the two of us (just trust me on that one), but he dates everyone else but me. Just last night I went over to his place and we had the most amazing time, but still, he won't date me. What gives?

—Anywhere, USA

I have no idea. Have you asked him?

Write to Tell Me About It, Style Plus, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071 or tellme@washpost.com, and join Carolyn's live discussion at noon Fridays or 3 p.m. Mondays at [washingtonpost.com/liveonline](http://www.washingtonpost.com/liveonline).