

The Style Invitational

Week XCIII: Captions Courageous



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

This Week's Contest: Take any photograph or illustration from today's Washington Post and give it a more interesting caption. Don't send us clips: Just tell us which story it accompanies, and on what page.

We don't want any letters! Just e-mail and faxes! We never want to see a letter again. Only an idiot would open a letter. First-prize winner gets a genuine alligator-head letter opener. It is worth \$100.

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, or by e-mail to losers@washpost.com. U.S. mail entries have been canceled due to rabid, spit-flying fanaticism. Deadline is Monday, Nov. 12. 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 Chris Doyle of Burke.

REPORT FROM WEEK LXXXIX

in which we asked you to come up with life lessons learned from the movies, from TV, from the comics page, or from romance novels. Many people observed that from movies one learns that frumps turn into babes by taking off their glasses and shaking out their hair, and from TV westerns that a six-shooter holds 100 bullets.

◆ Fourth Runner-Up (from movies): **At all speeches, the microphone will squeak once, before allowing the speaker to continue with no further problem.** (Alan Hochbaum, Atlanta; Timothy Gotwald, Chambersburg, Pa.)

◆ Third Runner-Up (from pom movies): **All Asians are female.** (David Kleinbard, Jersey City, N.J.)

◆ Second Runner-Up (from comics): **Villains with superpowers live only in cities with superheroes.** (Joseph Romm, Washington)

◆ First Runner-Up (from romance novels): **No one is named Maxine Fischman or Fred Paczynski.** (Mel Loftus, Holmen, Wis.)

◆ And the winner of the Oral Roberts University key chain: (From comics): **Every doctor in the world, except mine, wears that thingy on his head with the mirror.** (Bob Sorensen, Herndon)

◆ Honorable Mentions:

From Movies

It is impossible to win a sporting event unless you first fall behind by a great amount. After that, it is impossible to lose. (Storm Marvel, Columbia)

Small towns in New England, along with all college campuses nationwide, experience autumn 12 months a year. (Joe Morse, Charlottesville)

If you need advice in a heterosexual relationship, a gay man will have all the answers. (Storm Marvel, Columbia)

A single woman who moves to a small town will discover that the only single man in town is attractive, professional, has a great sense of humor, and doesn't have VD from having been careless with hookers over the years. (Sarah W. Gaymon, Gambrells)

When a man and a woman get very, very mad at each other, it usually turns quickly into passionate kissing. (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

In the future, everyone will wear jumpsuits yet no one will look fat in them. (Kelli Midgley-Biggs, Columbia)

If you're the victim of a crime, don't call the police. They are useless. What you need instead is a drifter skilled in the martial arts, or an Austrian vigilante. (Greg Pearson, Arlington)

Rearview mirrors suddenly become invisible when viewed from over the hood. (Russell Beland, Springfield; Gary Patishnock, Laurel)

Eveboedy vit akhsent spik Engleesh lik deez. (Gary Patishnock, Laurel)

Tires squeal on a dirt road. (Tom Bachand, Clifton; Jim Hamann, Frederick)

Someone who looks like Meg Ryan can live four years in New York City without being asked for a date. (Mike Genz, La Plata)

When there is a murderer, wild animal, alien or monster, black people always die first, no matter what country, time or planet—that is, of course, if they exist at all. (Rashad Horton, Bowie)

Pillow hair is a myth. (Chris Doyle, Burke)

It's easier for one to kill 30 than for 30 to kill one. (John Burton, Herndon)

If you encounter a ragtag team with a terrible record, no good players and an alcoholic coach, bet on it to win the championship. (Mike Genz, La Plata)

Intelligence is inversely proportional to level of education. (Jack Barcheski, Laurel)

When you're chasing a bad guy, the best way to cross the street is (1) get hit by a car and roll, or (2) leap atop the first car you come to and run from car to car on their hoods. Either of these is much faster than waiting for the car to go by. (Jeff Brechlin, Potomac Falls, Va.)

If you shoot a bullet into the trunk of a car, the car will explode. (Michael Biggs, Columbia)

If you cough, you will soon discover that you have a fatal disease. (Mike John, Fort Washington; Fred Dawson, Beltsville)

Nobody wears glasses except scientists and child geniuses. (Mike John, Fort Washington)

From Comics
From "B.C.": Jewish people are okay; they just have a bad religion. (Storm Marvel, Columbia)

Animals do not have genitals. (Roy Ashley, Washington)

African American and Hispanic kids can be unfunny, too. (Roy Ashley, Washington)

Cartoonists draw just as well when they're dead. (Dave Ferry, Leesburg)

Only Canadians age. (Greg Seigle, Vienna)

The more serious and humorless you are, the more facial features you possess. (Greg Seigle, Vienna)

If you run really fast, you can leave a trail of dust even when you're indoors. (Rashad Horton, Bowie)

From Romance Novels
Raven locks are more attractive than black hair. (Jennifer Hart, Arlington)

Men's shirts in the 18th century did not provide adequate nipple coverage. (John Fiorini, Reston)

No one has sex in a bed. (Dave Ferry, Leesburg)

From Pop Songs
People are constantly running off with other people's babies, and no one calls the police. (Howard Walderman, Columbia)

Never, ever leave your cake out in the rain. (Jon Graft, Centreville)

Michael Jackson is a ladies' man. (Rashad Horton, Bowie)

From Television
All family crises, whether large or small, take exactly 22 minutes to solve. (Ed Gordon, Ashburn)

Next Week: Cast Irony

RICHARD'S POOR ALMANAC

HOMELAND SECURITY
WINTER 2001 CATALOG

WORST CASE SCENARIO HANDBOOK VOLS. I-IV (REVISED EDITION)
Last year's beloved bestseller has been revised & expanded to include chapters on terrorism (foreign & domestic), bioterrorism, nuclear terrorism, germ warfare & collapsing civilizations. Also available as an audio book on 6 CDs, read by actor & comic Bobcat Goldthwait.
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A Homeland catalog exclusive! Attaches easily to most mailboxes & requires no special tools. Some knowledge of basic X-ray technology may be helpful.
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Never has coping with an anxiety attack been so easy! Simply pull the ripcord on your Murphy Bed Backpack to deploy a roomy, comfortable bed with plenty of floor clearance for convenient hiding.
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WITH THANKS TO ALLAN JANUS

TELL ME ABOUT IT

TELL ME, From F1

and your chemistry. Some combinations of people find their way slowly to intimacy, kind of scratching around at the surface. Some combinations dig straight down to the clay.

Which is why, ideally, you'll let the timing take care of itself; when you start talking about past relationships, that's a fine honesty op. When the time comes, though, just say it: that some of your exes are men. Women will either accept it or not—we all have our comfort zones, and bisexuality falls outside a lot of them, don't take it personally—so while timing is crucial to fairness, the style points won't really count.

Carolyn:

A few months ago, I learned that a guy I'd known in college was now living not far from me. We talked on the phone and then met for dinner. I learned that he had a girlfriend in another city, but I thought he could be a good platonic friend.

A while later, I invited him to a play. He accepted, but was so rude to me during the evening—making snide comments about my job, classes, almost anything I said—that I went home in tears. Was I wrong to try to be friends with a "coupled" guy? Did he think he was somehow being loyal to his girlfriend by insulting me? BTW, I'm 27, but this feels like high school all over again. —Pittsburgh

Then I'm sending you back to high school to suffer more, like the rest of us.

You extended a friendly invitation. He extended his middle finger, which means he added himself to your list of insufferable people to whom you no longer extend friendly invitations. End of social transaction.

Maybe you're not owning up to an ulterior motive here, the platonic equivalent of showing up naked under your mink. But even then, he could have rejected you gently. Scouring your soul for ways to blame yourself for someone else's rudeness sounds like an easy way to make life a whole lot harder than it has to be.

Carolyn:

I was seeing who I thought was a wonderful guy on a long-distance basis. We had decided we weren't essentially going to be boyfriend/girlfriend, but we were going to keep in contact, visit, etc.

Meanwhile, I had a onetime fling with an ex, which I decided not to tell the long-distance guy about. Well, several days ago Mr. Long Distance called and said he couldn't handle the distance, and wanted to be just good friends, which is fine. At least he was honest. Except, instead of quitting while he was ahead, he said he thought I was more "emotionally involved" than he was. In my utter annoyance, despite the fact that I probably was more emotionally involved, I told him about the ex-boyfriend hookup. He lost it, told me he was hurt, disappointed, etc., and guesses he was more emotionally involved than he thought, because now he's so hurt he can't even speak to me. So, he broke up with me, yet somehow I feel guilty.

—Why Can't Men Just Be Normal?

Thanks.

You whipped out a deliberately hurtful truth, impulsively, out of spite, and slapped him in the face with it—all because he bruised your little ego. And you're wondering what's wrong with men.

Like I didn't already have a hard enough time convincing people that the letters I get are for real.

Thank you so much. When you do hateful and infantile things, you're supposed to feel guilty. I'm not saying this because you flung, though that's only because you and L.D. Guy had apparently agreed not to be exclusive—which is the warm-and-fuzzy equivalent of getting off on a technicality.

No, you earned this bout of post-dump stress disorder with your exquisite gracelessness in the face of unhappy news: that you liked him more than he liked you. But you admit to this yourself, which means his great crime was in agreeing with you—in providing you with more honesty than you were in the mood to receive. Saying stupid things when we're wounded is normal; attempting to justify them is only "normal" for the sandbox set.

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)



WELL, UM, HOW ARE YOU WITH YOUR
BASEBALL TERMINOLOGY? SWITCH-HITTER
CURVEBALL... SWITCH-HITTERR...

BY NICK GALTIANAKIS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST