

The Style Invitational

Week XCVIII: Please Bear With Us . . .



This week's contest: There is no contest. Today The Style Invitational goes into a six-week hibernation as The Czar embarks on a mission so sensitive it can be described only in code: >#0/306. In mid-January, everything will resume as though nothing had happened. The Czar requests that you all use this time productively, to reflect on the nature of consciousness, the question of man's role in the biosphere, the paradox of why toilet paper comes in squares so small no one can use just one, etc. Meanwhile he wishes to address the legitimate gripes of many of you who complain bitterly about the same names appearing in this space week after week, month after month. You keep asking: Who the hell do these people think they are? Thanks for asking. Now they'll tell you. We asked the all-time top winners of The Style Invitational to submit their photos and autobiographies, and we'll be running them in this space during the next few weeks. The rules were simple: One hundred words, max. And to make it interesting, each autobiography must contain one, and only one, lie.



CHUCK SMITH

I was born at an early age and have now spanned two centuries, not to mention numerous belt sizes. I came to prominence (if not infamy) in the Washington area by being printed in The Style Invitational during its infancy (not to mention its immaturity) but have been writing for various national comic strips for 10 years. I have had one of my one-act plays performed off-Broadway, have appeared in several major motion pictures, have played a dead body on "Homicide" (the bloating was my idea) and have appeared at the Kennedy Center with Plácido Domingo. (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)



JEAN SORENSEN

I'm a cartoonist. Everyone is fodder. I enlarge noses to protect the humiliated. My twin and I grew up on Long Island. Mom gave us rosary beads; Dad, Roosevelt Raceway. Despite even-the-carny-guy-with-one-shoe-scored-higher SATs, I was smart enough to marry my high school sweetheart. For a time I juggled accounting and mothering, until I nearly dropped my youngest. So I hung up my CPA hat for MOM stretch marks. My three children give me lots of love, laughter and laundry. I donate time to school and church because it's cheaper than cash. I cook gourmet. And I draw on life. It's pretty funny. (Jean Sorensen, Herndon)

TODAY'S HOROSCOPE | Sydney Omarr

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Some of your hopes and desires will be fulfilled, especially in connection with home, marital status. Your fortunate number today is 6. Sing out loud, dance to your own rhythm.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): You will be offered task that requires pressure of responsibility. Agreement needs review. Deception involved, deliberate or otherwise. Pisces will play mysterious role.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Focus on organization, recognition of priorities. Lunar position highlights publishing and communication. Refuse to be limited; reach beyond where you are—perhaps overseas.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): People are looking for you. Maintain aura of exclusivity. Separate from one who takes you for granted. Added recognition due if you so permit. Libra will play dramatic role.

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Stick close to home base. What is promised far away may have "no legs." Deception involved; don't be deceived by rhetoric. Pisces, Virgo

play outstanding roles.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Pressure on, more responsibility; you will be up to it if you keep resolutions concerning health. This includes exercise and diet. Employment picture shows marked improvement.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): You exude aura of universal appeal, sensuality and sex appeal. Project begun two months ago can be completed. Participate in humanitarian endeavor. Aries figures prominently.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Real estate transaction will be completed—to your advantage. Travel plays role. Journey could take you far from home. Separation from loved one is temporary. Leo represented.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Visits include relatives. You will be busy on the road; take special care in traffic. Focus on partnership, marriage. Decide on direction, clarify motivations. Capricorn involved.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Diversification

necessary. Income potential highlighted. Sense of humor enables you to win friends and influence people. Gemini, Sagittarius individuals play meaningful roles.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Obstacles will be pushed aside. Lunar cycle high; you will be at right place almost effortlessly. Emphasis on personality, winning ways. Taurus, Scorpio lend color to scenario.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Get story and report it. Visit individual temporarily confined to home or hospital. Theatrical production proves inspiring. You obtain secret knowledge. Gemini featured.

IF DEC. 9 IS YOUR BIRTHDAY: You seldom are satisfied with status quo. You reach far beyond the immediate; you are romantic and could "find love" during travel. You are fascinated by language and romance. You will fight when cause is right; you are passionate with "right person." Aries, Libra persons play major roles in your life, could have these letters in names: I, R. January and October will be your most memorable, romantic and profitable months of the year.

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ANN LANDERS

Dear Ann:
The holiday season is approaching, but for many, especially in light of recent events, this is anything but a time for joyous celebration. I am referring to those parents, brothers, sisters and grandparents who are grieving the death of a child—whether young or old, recent or long ago.

When your future has been clouded with grief, dragging yourself out of bed in the morning can be difficult, and it is not easy to enjoy the holidays. I felt that way when my 8-year-old daughter and 5-year-old son died in an auto accident 11 years ago. For your readers who have suffered great losses, I bring the message that so many of us have learned: Light can emerge from darkness.

Please ask your readers to remember all children who have died by joining in the Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting today at 7 p.m. local time. Starting in New Zealand, as candles burn down after one hour, they are lit in the next time zone, creating a virtual 24-hour wave of light. Last year, during the candle lighting, we received postings from Australia, the Bahamas, Belgium, Canada, England, France, Germany, Israel, the Netherlands, South Africa, Switzerland and all over the United States.

This simple act reminds us that our children are forever loved, missed and remembered. Please join us, so their light may always shine.

Patricia Loder, executive director, the Compassionate Friends

Thank you for reminding my readers once again to light a candle at 7 tonight in remembrance of all the children who have died. It is a small act that can provide a great deal of comfort to parents who have lost their children. Those who want more information should call 1-877-969-0010 or go to www.compassionatefriends.org.

Dear Ann:
I am in love with a married man, and he is in love with me. We never intended to fall in love, it just happened. I know this is a story you've heard over and over. So have I, but when it hits home, it hurts like the devil.

I do not want to break up this man's home. He has two young children, and it would be devastating for them. I also don't want to break up my home. My husband is a great guy, and I don't want to hurt him.

The trouble is, I'm miserable. I cannot live like this any longer. I know I should not keep seeing "Mr. X," but I can't bear the thought of life without him. We are not teenagers, Ann. We are middle-aged. Neither of us has ever had an affair before. I'm a wreck. Please tell me how to get my life back together without giving him up.

East Coast Misery

You are asking me to tell you how you can eat your cake and have it, too. The answer: It's impossible.

You must give up this married man, and then the pieces will fall into place. As things stand, you're sitting on a keg of dynamite. Difficult? Of course, but it's the only way you will find true peace of mind and regain your sense of dignity.

Dear Ann:
I have been married to "Flora" for seven years. We met in an online chat room and fell in love. I thought it would last forever, but, for the last two years, Flora has spent every waking moment in front of her computer, chatting with a group of idiots. She developed a "special relationship" with a man, and there were hints that she planned to visit him. I told her if she went, it would be the end of our marriage. She decided not to go and ended their correspondence.

I thought things would get better after that, but I was wrong. Nothing has changed. Flora is back online, and frankly, I no longer care to put forth the effort to save our marriage. She has admitted it doesn't matter to her if we have sex, and she has no interest in being a mother to my children from a previous marriage. I suggested counseling, but she said she doesn't believe in it.

I have been totally faithful to Flora in spite of all this, but I now doubt that things will ever improve. I'm considering divorce, but I'd have to sell my home and move into something smaller. Advise me, please.

Depressed in Omaha

Face the truth: Your marriage is a goner. If you must sell your home, do it. It will be worth the peace of mind.

To find out more about Ann Landers and read her past columns, visit the Creators Syndicate Web page at www.creators.com.

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BRIDGE | Frank Stewart

Both sides vulnerable

NORTH
♠ Q J 5 4
♥ K 9 8 4
♦ 9 8 4
♣ 9 5

WEST
♠ A 10 8 2
♥ 7
♦ A Q 10 5
♣ K 10 6 2

EAST
♠ 7 6 3
♥ 5 2
♦ K 6 3
♣ J 8 7 4 3

SOUTH (D)
♠ K 9
♥ A Q J 10 6 3
♦ J 7 2
♣ A Q

The bidding:
South West North East
1 ♥ Dbl 2 ♥ Pass
4 ♥ All Pass

Opening lead: ♣ 2

Cy the Cynic says you should never trust a psychic who has Caller ID, but I'd sooner do that than trust a declarer who knows something about deceptive play.

In today's deal, West had an uncomfortable choice of leads against South's four hearts. He might have judged that a trump lead was safe — and that no aggressive lead was necessary since North had advertised limited values. But West led a club, hoping East had a high club.

When South won with the queen, West groaned, but South drew trumps and led the king of spades to West's ace. West could then count two clubs, two spades and six trump tricks for South. (East had played the deuce and then the five on the trump leads, suggesting a doubleton trump.) Hence the contract was unbeat-

able if South had the king of diamonds. So West shifted to a low diamond, East produced the king and returned a diamond, and West took the ten and ace. Down one.

West survived his questionable opening lead (only the inspired lead of a diamond would earn a second undertrick), but it might have been costly if South were a master of deception: Suppose South wins the first club with the ace! He draws trumps and leads the king of spades to West's ace.

Put yourself in West's place. You're sure East has the queen of clubs, and you want him in to lead a diamond through South to your A-Q. So you lead a second low club, and South proves untrustworthy: He takes the queen and then the Q-J of spades to discard a diamond, making the contract.

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