

The Style Invitational

Week CXLII: Bad Connection



This week's contest was proposed by Bird Waring of New York, whose name sounds mighty fishy to us. Bird suggests that you manufacture a flap by taking any two seemingly unrelated stories from anywhere in today's Washington Post, washingtonpost.com, and/or tomorrow's USA Today, and explain how their subjects are linked in some unholy conspiracy or other suspicious way. Specify the headlines on the stories you use. First-prize winner gets what appears to be a genuine elegant ostrich-feather duster distributed to the media in the hopes of obtaining fawning publicity for "Maid in Manhattan." This is a new film starring Ralph Fiennes and Jennifer Lopez, a pairing that seems, in terms of sexual chemistry, like casting Laurence Olivier opposite Roseanne.

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 are no longer accepted. Deadline is Monday, Oct. 21. 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 Forsyth, Mo.*

Report from Week CXXXVIII

This was the contest proposed by schoolteacher Kelli Midgley-Biggs, in which you were supposed to come up with creative excuses for not doing your homework, forgetting your spouse's birthday, failing to file taxes or not going to church.

◆ Second Runner-Up— *Excuse for not doing your homework:*

My dog ate it. Granted, I had to shred it, soak it in gravy and mix it with his kibbles and bits, but he did eat it.
(Seth Brown, Williamstown, Mass.)

◆ First Runner-Up— *Excuse for not doing your homework:*

My printer ran out of ink. So what looks to you as several blank pages is in fact a printout of my entire assignment, but without the ink.
(Michael Rae, Potomac)

◆ And the winner of the Tea Boy penguin tea-bag dunker:

Excuse for forgetting your spouse's birthday:
Your birthday brings you one year closer to death. I can barely face that dreadful fact; I certainly do not intend to celebrate it.
(Kelley Lund, Ashburn)

◆ Honorable Mentions:

Excuses for Forgetting Your Spouse's Birthday

There was a Monday deadline for The Style Invitational, and I just had to win you the Tea Boy.
(Stephen Dudzik, Olney)

Well, you forgot the anniversary of the day I bowled 226.
(Mike Genz, La Plata)

Excuses for Missing Church

I do not wish to offend our wonderful friend and ally, Saudi Arabia.
(Tom Witte, Gaithersburg)

Well, if that wasn't Jesus who left the message on my answering machine telling me to skip church, who was it?
(John Griessmayer, Roanoke)

What, it's every Sunday now?
(John Griessmayer, Roanoke)

I use the Mayan calendar, with its 13-day weeks. Thus, Sunday occurs once every 13 days, and I should really only be in church once every 91 days, when our calendars align.
(Danny Bravman, Potomac)

Because God is everywhere, He and I are staying home to watch cartoons.
(Seth Brown, Williamstown, Mass.)

I thought it was a bye week.
(Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

I won't go to any fancy brick church when there are children in China worshipping in tar paper shacks.
(Elden Carnahan, Laurel)

If I suddenly start going to church, the terrorists will have won.
(Elden Carnahan, Laurel)

Excuses for Not Filing Taxes

I couldn't find the category for self-unemployed.
(Seth Brown, Williamstown, Mass.)

I am still awaiting a ruling on the deductibility of "Take a Penny, Leave a Penny" contributions.
(Milo Sauer, Fairfax)

My refund will only add to the federal deficit. Therefore, I would prefer that you keep it to pay for well-deserved increases to IRS staff salaries.
(Robin D. Grove, Pasadena, Md.)

Excuses for Not Doing One's Homework

I found the topic of my homework assignment so original and challenging that it inspired me to apply for a National Science Foundation grant. The grant process is rather lengthy.
(Michael Rae, Potomac)

Algebra was invented by the Arabs, so in these troubled times, I am making a political statement.
(Seth Brown, Williamstown, Mass.)

My pit bull, here, ate it.
(J.D. Berry, Springfield)

The dog ate my friend's homework that I was going to copy.
(Roy Ashley, Washington)

I ate my dog, which, unbeknownst to me, had eaten my homework.
(Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

My book report on "Waiting for Godot" will be here soon.
(David Moss, Arlington)

It doesn't matter. It's all a dream anyway. That's why I'm not wearing pants.
(Bird Waring, New York)

Local zoning laws prohibit me from working in my home.
(John Griessmayer, Roanoke)

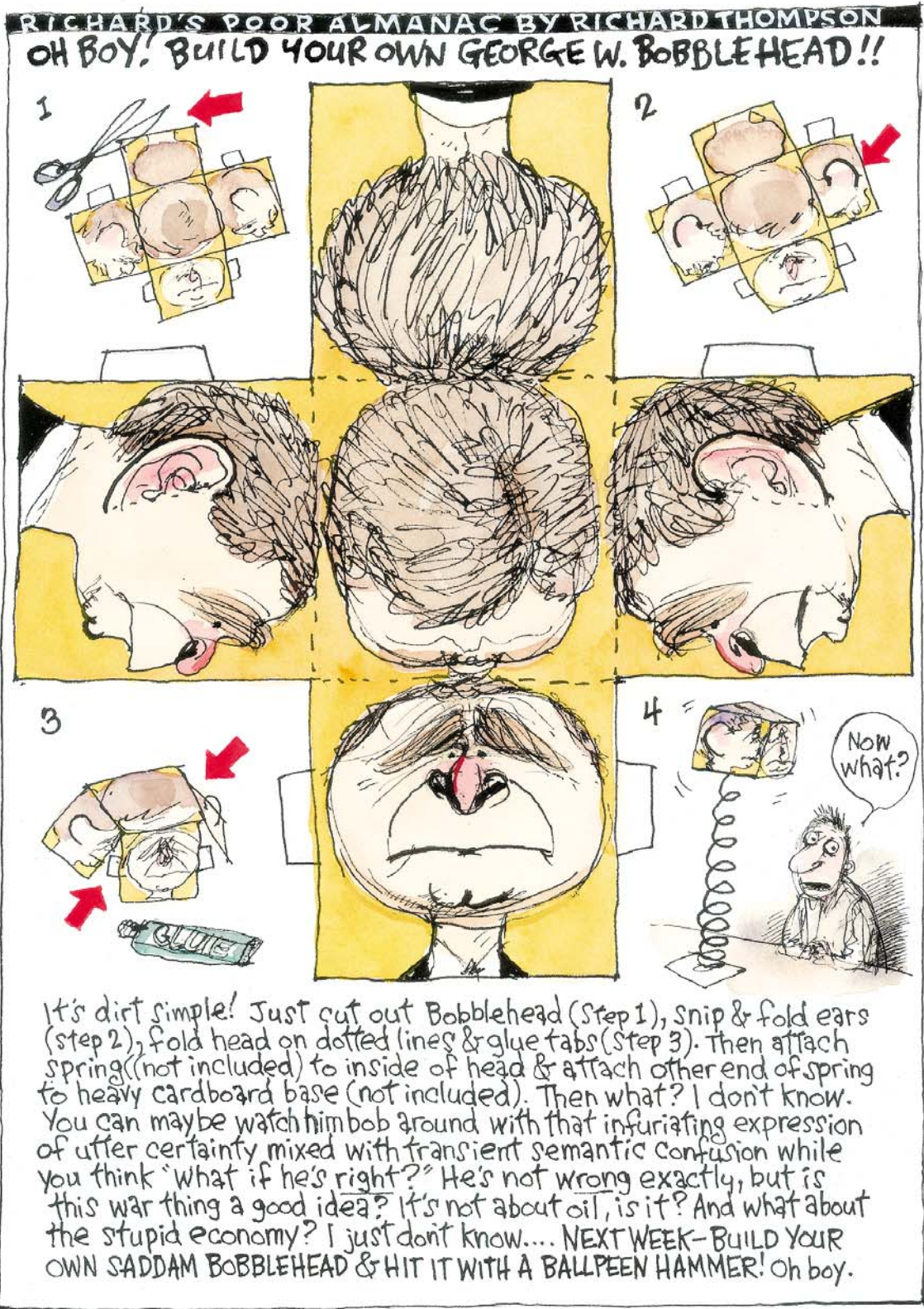
I will gladly turn over my homework once you file a Freedom of Information Act request.
(Robin D. Grove, Pasadena, Md.)

I am sorry but I couldn't take any assignment seriously from someone named "Midgley-Biggs."
(Danny Bravman, Potomac)

And the winner of a Style Invitational T-shirt for a special "Truth IS Better Than Fiction" entry:

Last year I was taking Spanish I. I thought I was doing okay until my parents got a note from my teacher saying that I was always late with my homework. It wasn't until we had a conference with the teacher that we figured out the problem: Every time my teacher gave my homework assignment, she would say "Okay, in 10 days." Well, it turns out that what she was saying was, "Okay, entiendes?" which means, "Do you understand?" Obviously I didn't.
(Kate Ritzenberg, 14, Bethesda)

Next Week: **Aqueous Humor**



TELL ME ABOUT IT

TELL ME, *From F1*

year after that. New BF said, "Hi, my name is X, not Y."

So my question is, how do I stop making comparisons? New BF is much better and I am very happy, but can't help but compare.
—*New BF vs. Old BF*

You say comparisons, I say defenses. To-mayto, tomahto.

Old BF blindsides you. (Translation: Makes you feel stupid.) Old BF pulls a tuxedoed crawl-back and gets you to fall for it. (Translation: Makes you feel stupid.) New BF arrives. (Translation: Will not be allowed to make you feel stupid this time if it kills you.)

So, when New BF says anything remotely suggesting a future, you're right there with passive-aggressive proof that you're waaay too smart this time to assume you even have a future, with him or anyone else.

There's a problem with this logic, and it isn't that you're wrong to suspect things might end before the holidays. They might. Everything ends somehow, and you haven't come to the right place to be told otherwise.

The problem is in your thinking that there was ever security in anyone but yourself. So you believed the first relationship would last—that wasn't stupid, that was a good thing. Never beat yourself up or apologize for having faith in a person's love. Yes, the faith will be misplaced sometimes, and yes, sometimes you'll get hurt. But if there's any fault here to be parceled out—and often there just

isn't, since people do fall out of love sometimes without premeditation—it lies with anyone who abuses or takes advantage of your faith.

Even when that happens, though, the answer isn't to assume every guy thereafter will try to take advantage of you and then to brace yourself accordingly. That's like carrying an umbrella everywhere you go because you got rained on once when you were 12. You probably figured out you should grab one when it looks cloudy; it's called learning a lesson the hard way. Likewise, you learn to recognize boyfriend clouds, and then anticipate rain.

And until you see clouds with this guy, quit harping and lol in the sun.

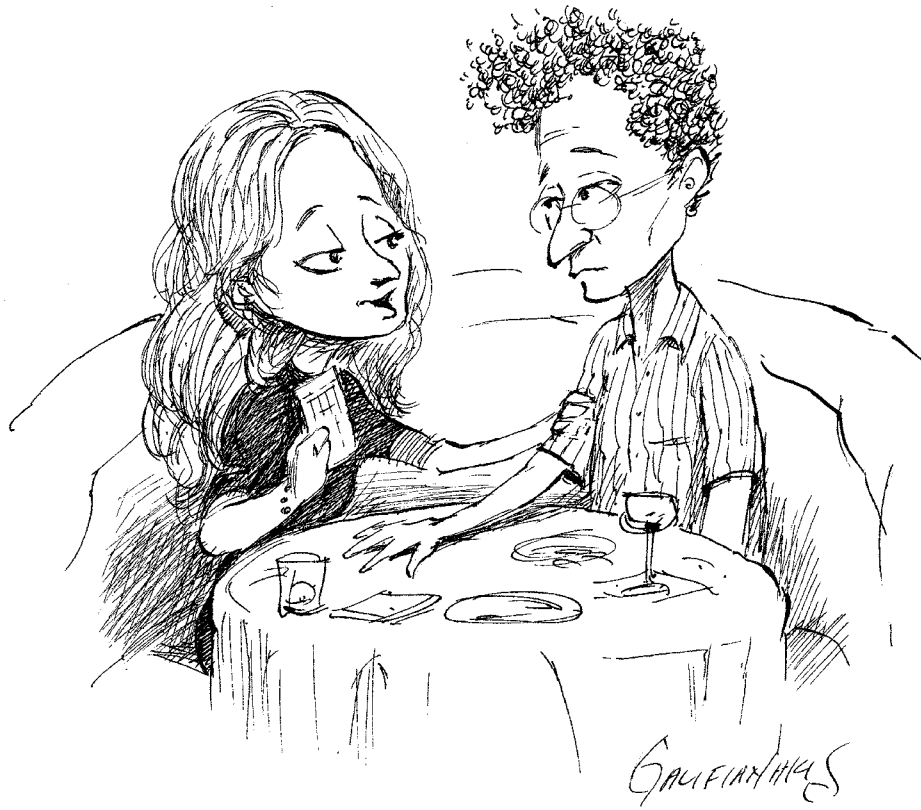
CH:

What do you do when your head tells you that someone is not right for you in the long run, but your heart tells you that you love them and want to be with them right now?

—S.G.

Be with them, enjoy them, make no promises to them, hope your heart catches up with your head regarding them, or vice versa, don't waste their time waiting for that to happen, and, if you're sleeping together, use excellent contraception.

Write to Tell Me About It, Style, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071 or tellme@washpost.com, and join Carolyn's live discussion at noon Fridays at washingtonpost.com/liveonline.



MY TREAT. I DON'T EXPECT THIS TO LAST.

BY NICK GALFIANAKIS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

See **HOW TO SOLVE THAT DECORATING DILEMMA**

Eye On Design. Thursday. Home.

If it's important to you, it's important to us.
The Washington Post

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