

The Style Invitational

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

Week 637: Full Steam Ahead



Pant by Numbers
By Mayor Anthony Williams

"Take me," Stephanie moaned to Horace as she closed her ledger, in which she had just recorded a surplus in excess of \$740,000 for the previous fiscal year. Horace looked at her hungrily. This sultry accountant stirred a longing in him he could not deny, even if under oath at a judicial inquiry into municipal management practices.

The Style section's always spunky Reliable Source column recently had a great time gleefully compiling — and rating — hot scenes from the novels that seemingly half the wonk population of Washington (Barbara Boxer! Scooter Libby!) feels compelled to write, and clearly shouldn't. It inspired Loser Peter Metrinko of Chantilly to suggest more of the same. **This week's contest: Write a steamy passage of a novel that's ostensibly by some well-known person who isn't a novelist.** Maximum length 75 words; significantly shorter entries are also welcome.

Winner receives the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. First runner-up receives, through the misguided charity of Loser Brenda Ware Jones of Jackson, Miss., a hollow ceramic baking potato or possibly yam, to which is glued a gold-painted ceramic pipe as might be held by a leprechaun. We cannot begin to guess the intended use for this fine piece, but it is clearly worth an enormous amount of work to win it — and face it, it's probably more than you'll make for your fiction from anyone else.

Other runners-up win a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable mentions get one of the lusted-after Style Invitational Magnets. One prize per entrant per week. Send your entries by e-mail to losers@washpost.com or, if you really have to, by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Nov. 28. Put "Week 637" in the subject line of your e-mail, or it risks being ignored as spam. Include your name, postal address and phone number with your entry. Contests are judged on humor and originality. All entries become the property of The Washington Post. Entries may be edited for taste or content. Results will be published Dec. 18. 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 Douglas Frank of Crosby, Tex.

REPORT FROM WEEK 633

In which we asked you to share some real or fictitious "secrets" a la the required-to-be-true ones on PostSecret.com: Half the entrants, it seems, 'jessed up to having used the pseudonym "Russell Beland" or "Brendan Beary" or "Chuck Smith" hundreds of times over the past years. Ah, no wonder these guys get so much ink.

4 When I'm mad at my wife, late at night I "adjust" the bathroom scale by one turn counterclockwise. (Paul Kocak, Syracuse, N.Y.)

3 I don't really think George Bush is the most brilliant person I ever met. If he were, why would he have nominated me? — H.M., Washington (Dot Yufer, Newton, W.Va.)

2 The winner of "Fonging for the Soul," which involves making music by making weird sounds with oven racks:



(Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.)

1 AND THE WINNER OF THE INKER: During boring meetings, I pretend everyone present is naked. And good looking. And female. And a kangaroo. (Art Grinath, Takoma Park)

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Sometimes I pick my nose and let my dog eat it. Man, is he gross. (Dave Zarrow, Herndon)

I once looked something up on the Internet at work that was not job-related. (Art Grinath)

I don't really like sex — I just do it because everyone else is doing it. (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)

I can eat only the Rice Krispies that snap or pop. The ones that crackle bring back too many bad memories. (Rob Poole, Ellicott City)

I wish there were more verses to "I'm Henry the Eighth, I Am." (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

I'm the guy who designed some of the Toyotas so that you can't use the cup holder and the ashtray at the same time. My bad. (Douglas Frank, Crosby, Tex.)

I own a vegetable stand but I sell tomatoes anyway. (Kyle Hendrickson, Frederick)

When my neighbors neglect their grass, I secretly spell out dirty words on their lawns in fertilizer. (Russell Beland, Springfield)

For whatever reason, I can pee only when sitting down. It's embarrassing and sometimes inconvenient, but it's nothing compared with the fact that I can poop only when standing up. (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

I recycle my things by stitching them together to make granny underpants. (Sue Lin Chong, Baltimore)

I like to dig out my earwax and create figurines of former classmates who picked on me. Then I pick them. (Debi Marsh, Montgomery Village)

I re-gifted the rosary our priest gave me in memory of my parents. (Judith Cottrill, New York)



I phound Pharmed Phred phlinging pheces to phertilize his phields. And then I phound him phrolicking with his phlocks. (Deborah Guy, Columbus, Ohio)



(Jeff Brechlin)

Hurricane Katrina was my fault. (Seth Brown, North Adams, Mass.)

Sometimes I wear a cheap wig just so people will be sympathetic because they think I have cancer. (Russell Beland)

I like to switch the regular eggs with the organic eggs at the supermarket. It makes me feel like an anarchist. (Beth Baniszewski, Somerville, Mass.)

I want to cram a piece of kryptonite up my father's butt. — Kal-el Coppola Cage, New York (Stephen Dudzik, Olney)

I just skim the Reader's Digest stories. (Russell Beland)

I sniffed a cork from a bottle of wine in a D.C. restaurant and later drove home. (Roy Ashley, Washington)

Sometimes I do read the paper. — G.W.B., Washington (Eric Murphy, Ann Arbor, Mich.)

I have never torn a tag off a mattress. (John Crowley, Annandale)

I sometimes harbor doubts that the hokey-pokey is really what it's all about. (Marty McCullen, Gettysburg, Pa.)

I told my son to invade Iraq because I wanted him to fail. — Name Withheld by Request (Joseph Romm, Washington)

I sell The Post's Express tabloid to tourists for 10 cents a pop. (Stephen Dudzik)

I secretly don't watch "Desperate Housewives." (Russell Beland)

While I was glad to see her, there really was a gun in my pants. (Ted Weitzman, Olney)

I read my husband my Style Invitational entries as foreplay. (Michelle Stupak, Ellicott City)

Next Week: Mess With Our Heads, or Double Headers

MISS MANNERS

Judith Martin

Thanks for Cleaning Up

Back when people gave their own dinner parties rather than recruit guests to cook and clean, Thanksgiving was a traditional exception. Since legend has it that the Pilgrims and the American Indians both contributed to the feast, cooperation is often the order of the day.

Miss Manners is not claiming that this exactly works. She is forever being asked to referee squabbles about excessive or peculiar demands and unsatisfactory or unsavory results. But it should at least work on Thanksgiving, when the menu is largely set and the guests on intimate terms. But Thanksgiving food evokes emotions that are paradoxically incompatible with the spirit of the occasion, and the familiarity has an unfortunate way of loosening everyone's hold on etiquette.

At ordinary dinner parties, hosts should accept only minimal help from guests who volunteer, and not expect to return to pre-cooking cleanliness while the guests are still present to be entertained. But at Thanksgiving, there is a feeling that cleanup should be cooperative. And everyone has an idea about who should do it:

- The gentlemen think the ladies should, because they have always done it.
- The ladies think the gentlemen should, because it is high time they took a turn.
- The younger generation believes the older generation should, because the latter has always done so.
- The older generation believes the younger generation should, because it is time for the younger ones to take this over.
- Those who contributed to the cooking believe it is only fair for those who did not to clean up.

- Those who did not cook believe it is only sensible for those who did to finish the job and clean up.
- Those in whose house the dinner takes place believe it is only fair for others to pitch in for the cleanup.
- Guests believe it is the domain of the hosts to clean up.
- Those who want to watch the football game believe that doing so is more important than cleaning up.
- Those who don't want to watch the football game believe that doing so is less important than cleaning up.

This is not to say that everyone is foisting the job on everyone else, because there are notable exceptions. There is always the elderly hostess who insists on doing everything herself and goes huffing and puffing around while everyone else listens awkwardly to the clank of the pots so as not to miss the possible thud of an exhausted body. And there is always the energetic guest who insists on cleaning up as he sees fit, violating all the hosts' rules about when to remove plates, how to deal with the garbage and where to put things back.

Miss Manners hates to interfere in all this robust family life but would like to suggest an equally inequitable but possibly less emotionally hazardous system:

Everyone volunteers. The host chooses a few, apparently at random, but probably those who seem awake and are least likely to get in the way and most likely to provide amiable kitchen conversation. And if this doesn't work smoothly, the hosts let someone else volunteer to give Thanksgiving dinner next year.

Dear Miss Manners:

My sister-in-law always serves white potatoes for Thanksgiving. She knows that my husband and I don't eat white potatoes, and we don't eat stuffing because it contains white bread.

When I offered to make whipped organic sweet potatoes at her house, she acted all offended and said she didn't have room for another cook in her kitchen (this is just an excuse).

We think it is incredibly insensitive to serve a dish she knows we don't eat, and then not let us contribute something in its place. My husband thinks we should just cancel and not go. Please say something to end this family dispute!

How about "No, thank you"? But that's for you to say — and in regard to the potatoes, not the family occasion.

If your sister-in-law's entire Thanksgiving menu is white potatoes with bread stuffing, Miss Manners might agree that she was being spiteful. Otherwise, there ought to be something, if not plenty, for you to eat, which is hospitable enough, even on Thanksgiving. If you must pick a family feud, Miss Manners hopes you will find a better excuse — and a better day.

Feeling incorrect? E-mail your etiquette questions to Miss Manners (who is distraught that she cannot reply personally) at MissManners@unitedmedia.com or mail to United Media, 200 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016.

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BRIDGE | Frank Stewart

Both sides vulnerable

NORTH

♠ 5
♥ 8 6 4 3
♦ A K Q 10 7 4 3
♣ 5

SOUTH (D)

♠ A 9 3
♥ A J 5 2
♦ 8 2
♣ A J 6 2

EAST

♠ Q J 7 4
♥ 10
♦ J 6 5
♣ Q 10 8 7 4

I was in the club lounge when a ruckus erupted in the penny Chicago game. A kibitzer came in, shaking his head.

"That Grapefruit reminds me of the nun who belonged to an order with a vow of silence," he said, sighing. "She had permission to speak two words every 10 years. Her first two were 'hard bed,' and the Mother Superior was sympathetic. Ten years later, the nun said 'cold food,' and Mother sighed and promised to improve the cuisine. Ten years passed, and the nun spoke again: 'I quit.'

"I don't wonder," growled the Mother Superior. "All you've done since you've been here is gripe."

Grapefruit, our acid-tongued member, was today's North and was anything but silent after South took the ace of spades and led a low trump. South planned to cash the ace later and then run the diamonds, losing two

trumps but nothing else.

East won and led another spade. When South ruffed in dummy and led a second trump, East showed out, and the hand collapsed.

South took the ace, ruffed his last spade in dummy and started the diamonds, but West ruffed the second diamond. South went down three, and Grapefruit snarled that if South were an elevator operator, he couldn't remember his route.

Since South had no side-suit losers, he could afford to lose three trumps.

At Trick Two, South must cash the ace but then abandon trumps forever. He starts the diamonds, and West gets only his three trumps.

It'd be nice if Grapefruit took a vow of silence, but we're not optimistic.

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- Organizations will be evaluated on:
- ◆ Fiscal management
 - ◆ Information and communication
 - ◆ Organizational development
 - ◆ Board development/governance
 - ◆ People development
 - ◆ Planning and evaluation
 - ◆ Resource development
 - ◆ Risk management
 - ◆ Use of technology
 - ◆ Diversity

Eligibility

The competition is free and open to: Center for Nonprofit Advancement members and all 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations in one of the following jurisdictions:

- ◆ District of Columbia
- ◆ Maryland: Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Frederick, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's and St. Mary's counties
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THE DEADLINE FOR ENTRIES IS DECEMBER 15, 2005.

For an application or more information, visit www.nonprofitadvancement.org or contact the Center for Nonprofit Advancement, (202) 457-0540.

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