

# The Style Invitational

## THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

### Week 638: The Little Bummer Boy



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

It's three full days past Thanksgiving, which means that you've already heard Kenny G play "White Christmas" 123 times in every commercial establishment except Max's Kosher Deli (unless Max, too, was spinning a set of songs written by Jews and played by Jews). It also means it's time for the movie and TV studios to drag out even more treacly "holiday fare" on film. **This week's contest: Come up with an idea (and title, if you like) for an original Christmas movie or TV special that provides an antidote to all the sap, and give us a brief synopsis.** Nothing blasphemous about the Baby Jesus, please. And we'll be happy to run the token entry about your alternative December holidays as well. There's a good chance we'll get many similar ideas, so we'll be looking for especially good phrasing. This contest was suggested to the Empress by erstwhile Loser Kevin Cuddihy of Fairfax in an incessant attempt to get his new Christmas trivia book mentioned in print. Okaaay, Kevin, it's called "Christmas's Most Wanted" and he wrote it with Phillip Metcalfe. Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. First runner-up receives an Advent calendar promoting last year's stinking bomb movie "Christmas With the Kranks." And we'll toss in Kevin's book.

**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](mailto:losers@washpost.com) or, if you really have to, by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Dec. 5. Put "Week 638" 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 — ta-dal! — Dec. 25, the first night of Hanukkah this year. 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 Brendan Beary of Great Mills.

## REPORT FROM WEEK 634

*In which we asked you to pair an actual Post headline with a "bank head" or opening sentence that reinterprets the headline. Many readers augmented*

**After Shooting, Arundel Will Check Security**  
*with something like*  
**Officers to Fire First, Then Perform Body Searches.**

**4 Conn. Archdiocese Will Pay \$22 Million to Abuse Victims**  
*Church Insists Incentives Will Be Worth It to Maintain Tradition* (Martin Mould, Springfield)

**3 Woman Arrested in Alleged Teen Drinking**  
*Halloween Tip Leads Police to Gruesome Brew* (Dave Zarrow, Herndon)

**2 The winner of the Pickle Putter pickle-shaped putter: From Prodigy to Promising Virtuoso**  
*Even with 947 volumes, the most massive encyclopedia project ever hasn't reached the Q's.* (Russell Beland, Springfield)

**1 AND THE WINNER OF THE INKER Ta-Ta to the Windsors**  
*Janet Jackson Performs at White House Dinner for Camilla, Charles* (G. Smith, Reston)

## HONORABLE MENTIONS

**Bigwig Democrat Gets Bush as Speaker**  
*Ancient Plant Previously Had Spoken Only to Moses* (Russell Beland)

**Kilgore Parlays Tenacity, Luck**  
*Candidate 'Speaking That Durn French Again,' Va. Voters Complain* (Bob Dvorak, Saugerties, N.Y.)

**Forty-Two Deaths a Day Keep Designated Driver at the Wheel**  
*State Reports Success With Trucker Hired to Control Population* (Michelle Stupak, Ellicott City; Howard Walderman, Columbia)

**Ravens Just Miss**  
*Attempt to Rap on Chamber Door; Instead Crash Into Window* (Jonathan Guberman, Princeton, N.J.)

**Castilla Dealt for a Pitcher**  
*Nationals Hoping to Trade Rest of Infield for an Order of Nachos* (Elwood Fitzner, Valley City, N.D.)

**Flu Plan Counts on Public Cooperation**  
*Half of Public Must Agree Not to Get Flu* (Eric Murphy, Ann Arbor, Mich.)

**Mess With Our Heads**  
*Efficiency Study Suggests Serving Ship's Meals in Latrines* (Michael Bobrik, Arlington)

**A Quiet Woman's Resonant Farewell**  
*Mourners Surprised by 'Whoopie Coffin'* (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

**Coyote Trapper's Methods Ruled Lawful by Judge**  
*10,000-lb. Weight, Falling Grand Piano, TNT Deemed Okay* (Peter Metrinko, Chantilly)

**H-Backs Propel Offense**  
*Quasimodo Scores Three Touchdowns in Fighting Irish Victory* (Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Mich.)

**New Dating Service Caters to Those ISO Rural Romance**  
*PETA to Stage Protest Rally* (Bob Dalton, Arlington)

**GW Picked First**  
*Jeb Blames Brother for Nasty Nose Habit* (Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)

**Court Rules Fighting Is an Integral Part of Hockey**  
*Catty Remarks in Figure Skating Also Upheld* (Elwood Fitzner)

**Just Soap and Water**  
*CIA 6-Month 'Encouragement' Diet Outperforms Atkins* (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

**Blonds Are Entering the Sumo Ring**  
*Fearful Contestant Asks: 'Is There Any Way Out?'* (Bob Dalton)

**Now You Can Stop Living With Varicose Veins**  
*Lawyer Offers Low-Cost Divorces* (Peter Metrinko)

**Delta Asks for Permission to Void Pilots' Contract**  
*Board Met Pilots' Earlier Demand to Stick Contract Up Their Butts; Now Admit Discomfort* (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

**An Overflowing Tribute to an Icon**  
*Dedication of Thomas Crapper Memorial Goes Horribly Awry* (Jonathan Guberman)

**Alito Respectful of Precedent, Associates Say**  
*'At Least One Person Around Here Respects Me,' Bush Declares on Reading Report* (John O'Byrne, Dublin)

**Population Expert John Aird Dies**  
*Silver Spring Census Reduced by 1* (Bob Grossman, Columbia)

**Democrats Demand Rove's Firing**  
*Just Sticking Him in Cannon Not Enough, Reid Says* (Dan Seidman, Watertown, Mass.)

**White House Ethics, Honesty Questioned**  
*Researchers Reveal Most Common Headline in U.S. History* (Russell Beland; Dave Prevar, Annapolis)

**MMR Vaccine Does Not Appear Linked to Serious Disease**  
*Pediatricians Unite to Ask: 'So Why Are We Giving All These Shots?'* (Steve Fahey, Kensington)

**Gates Foundation Pledges More Toward Malaria Research**  
*Microsoft Tries New Tactic to Cut Down Competitors* (Ken Gallant, Little Rock)

**A Very Good Car, but Alas It Has No Soul**  
*Buyer Disappointed After Buying Popemobile* (Kyle Hendrickson, Frederick)

**Thomas Stone Raises \$4,000**  
*Supreme Court Justice & His Urologist Make Unique Contribution to Charity Auction* (Brendan Beary)

**Bush Plans 11th-Hour Rally in Va. for Kilgore**  
*GOP Pleaded That President Agreed to Stay Up Past Bedtime* (Chuck Smith)

**Newman Snags Pole**  
*Acclaimed Actor Hospitalized After Urinal Mishap* (Jeff Brechlin)

**Jaguars Have Chance to Pounce on Battered Rams**  
*Veterinarians Decry Zoo's Switch to Deep-Fried Diet for Big Cats* (Mark Briscoe, Alexandria)

**Supreme Court Calendar**  
*Unrobed Justice Souter Makes Splash as 'Mr. October'* (Roy Ashley, Washington; Brendan Beary)

**Unknowns Pose a Challenge for Preparedness Plan**  
*Study Suggests It May Be Easier to Plan for Certainties* (Russell Beland)

**\$75,000 in Bull Semen Is Stolen From Frederick Farm**  
*3 Police Officers Injured Recovering Fingerprints* (Rob Poole, Ellicott City)

**Trial Could Pit Libby's Interests Against Bush's**  
*Fruit Cocktail Giant Wants to Expand Into Baked-Bean Market* (Bill Spencer, Exeter, N.H.; Russell Beland)

**Yes, I'm a Hunter — Here's Why**  
*Boy in Typing Class Snarls, 'Given the Choices, Yes, I'm a Hunter'* (Ann Worthington, Annapolis)

**Version of Michelangelo's 'Pieta' Called Blasphemous**  
*'Just Wait Until They See the Captions,' Says Staake* (Kevin Dopart)

*Next Week: I've Told You a Hundred Times, or Give Us Your Tired, Your Poor*

## MISS MANNERS

Judith Martin

### The Soft Cell

Oh, stop shouting "Get a horse!" Nothing against horses, Miss Manners has- tens to add. They are a fine mode of transportation, many of them a lot less high-strung and temperamental than automobiles she has known.

It is just that her patience is at an end for the argument that etiquette will advance if technology is halted. For many years now, cellular telephones have been attacked with that premise, despite its lack of success when used against the automobile.

The theory that if you confiscate the toys of rude people, they will be forced to behave themselves may work in grade school — or may not, actually. But there is no getting around the difficulty that public behavior will only improve when people learn to behave themselves and to play nicely with their toys.

The automobile is an instrument of major trouble, but it seems to be here to stay. Sometimes we do have to take away driving licenses, but mostly we try to get people to drive carefully and politely.

Now the argument is coming up in regard to the use of cellular telephones in airplanes. Since that instrument first appeared, there have been cries to have it banned from one place after another. These are still coming from people who have a lot of backtracking to do when their own telephones pipe up from the depths of their pockets because they forgot to turn them off.

The new fear is that rude airline passengers will drive other passengers crazy. And so they will. They already are, by taking up more than their share of room, banging their seats around, talking loudly and hogging the bathroom.

We don't want them yakking at top volume; we want them quietly occupied. Much of the annoyance of travel comes because people are at loose ends. They may be annoying people, but they are worse when they are unoccupied.

Giving them crayons is not going to work, but they need some occupation or they will start telling complete strangers the stories of their lives. Why they can't sit there quietly and read Trollope novels or doodle mathematical formulae, Miss Manners does not know. But to a great extent, both work and play are now done electronically. Laptops and listening devices are already on

board.

True, these lack the capacity to disturb that telephones enjoy. But conversations conducted in a normal tone of voice — which is enough to be heard on the other end, although few seem to have discovered this — should be no more offensive than conversations between passengers — except to frustrated eavesdroppers. On flights that continue after the dinner hour, the polite tone for any conversation is supposed to be low enough to allow others to sleep.

Until passengers realize that these generally understood conventions also apply to cellular telephones — a concept that is remarkably slow in coming under other circumstances — Miss Manners is afraid that airlines will have to be the enforcers of etiquette. No one sympathizes more than she with flight attendants who have to reprimand passengers who create disturbances, but they have the duty and power to do so.

**Dear Miss Manners:**  
**Is it appropriate to wear a formal traditional wedding gown for the bride's second wedding?**

Try and stop her. The white dress has now become the uniform of all brides, young and old, at however many weddings they have.

The strange part is that bridal white, launched by the youthful Queen Victoria, came from white being considered the color of youthful innocence. Today's brides are doing everything they can to subvert that meaning and make their dresses suggestive. Many use Queen Victoria's other fashion trend — black, for 40 years of mourning for her husband — for their bridesmaids.

Miss Manners lacks the heart to go around spoiling their fun. But the previously married bride who has taste dresses beautifully for the occasion without donning that costume.

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

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## ASK AMY

Dear Amy:

I have been seeing this great woman for more than 14 months. She has two daughters, ages 17 and 13. During weekends that her ex-husband has custody, we are able to spend time together and sleep either at her house or my house. On the weekends when she has the girls, we are wondering how to approach the issue of talking to the girls about sleeping at my house or at her house. How can we handle this situation with her girls?

*Rich, From Long Island*

If you are wondering about transporting these girls to spend weekends at your house, on behalf of the girls, I'm going to say absolutely not. These kids already split their weekends; don't ask them to come to your home so that you and their mother can sleep together.

If the girls aren't around when you are cohabiting, then it is your private business, and as long as they know they can always reach their mom, it should stay private.

You don't say what sort of relationship you have with the girls or how much time you spend with them now, but I'd suggest many, many months of dinners, helping them with their homework and being very much a part of their lives before you spend the night in their home when they are there. These girls are at tender ages; how you treat their mother and how she manages this serious relationship will influence not only how they view the two of you but how they will expect to be treated by boys when the time comes.

Even if they like you very much, don't expect them to be thrilled about this relationship. Remember that your happiness and satisfaction holds very little meaning for them. They've got enough on their plates.

For a lighthearted and wise look at this subject, you and their mother should read, "Mom, There's a Man in the Kitchen and He's Wearing Your Robe: The Single Mother's Guide to Dating Well Without Parenting Poorly," by Ellie Slott Fisher (2005, DeCapo Press).

Dear Amy:

I am 18 and my 19-year-old boyfriend, "Mark," and I have been dating for eight months.

When we were first getting to know each other, we talked about many things, including our sexual pasts.

He found out that I had two previous sexual relationships, and he told me that he had two previous partners, one of whom was a one-night stand. He didn't

know the girl's name.

I asked him about this a few times afterward because it bothered me that he could have an anonymous one-night stand.

Recently, we had a conversation where we wanted to be completely honest about everything, so I asked him about his whole situation. Well, it turns out that he lied to me about both of these "partners," fearing that I would have thought that he was "inexperienced," when I am definitely not the kind of person to judge or even care about that.

When he told me the truth, I had mixed emotions. I was happy that I was his first, but I felt so betrayed that he continued to lie to me for so long.

When I asked him why he never told me the truth, he said, "Because I had dug myself into such a big hole, I couldn't get out of it, and I didn't know how to break it to you."

It is very hard for me to trust because my heart has been broken so many times in the past.

Mark tells me it will never happen again. I care about him so much and want to trust him.

What should I do?

*Broken Trust*

People lie about sex. They do.

That's why it's imperative to know someone intimately before knowing him intimately, if you know what I mean.

Your guy didn't lie about having sex — he lied about having virginity, and in a way that was so clunky and unimaginative that I think you should be laughing about it.

I'm not sure how at the ripe old age of 18 your heart could have been broken so many times that you can dramatically claim to never trust again, but if that's the case, then you need to slow down, girl.

If a guy says, "I dug myself into such a big hole, I couldn't get out of it and I didn't know how to break it to you," then it's time to say, "Hallelujah. I've found a guy who trusts me enough to be vulnerable and honest about what a doofus he is."

*Write to Amy Dickinson at [askamy@tribune.com](mailto:askamy@tribune.com) or Ask Amy, Chicago Tribune, TT500, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60611.*

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## TODAY'S HOROSCOPE | Holiday Mathis

**Aries (March 21-April 19)**  
Patience may be a virtue, but it is not one that is valued in our society of instant gratification. The wait is worth it. So plant a seed and then go do something else. Don't push for results.

**Taurus (April 20-May 20)**  
It was probably a Taurus woman who said: "Chocolate, men, coffee — some things are better rich." But it really is unfortunate when your extravagant spending habits affect your relationships — better to pay your own way.

**Gemini (May 21-June 21)**  
People around you need to be

heard. It's almost more important that you listen to someone's story than it is that you solve his or her problem. Use those bright, alert eyes of yours to honor others with your attention.

**Cancer (June 22-July 22)**  
The prize goes to the one who doesn't give up — and today, that's you. You may complain and you may even despair, but you will not let go of the issue until you have a happy resolution.

**Leo (July 23-Aug. 22)**  
In regard to your recent relationship "incident," you'll soon feel as good as new. But wounds

heal by degrees. So trust that things are getting better, even if you don't feel it all the way yet.

**Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)**  
People who tend to use others are easy to spot, but hard to say "no" to. The surest way to get a fair-weather friend off your back is to ask for a favor. Your perpetrator will say "no problem" and then run for the hills.

**Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 23)**  
Needing to be right is dangerous at worst and boring at best. But you are certainly above all that. You not only admit your mistakes, but you also profit from them!

Hopefully loved ones appreciate your open mind.

**Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21)**  
It's no wonder children love you and romantic contenders flock to you. You turn drudgery into something interesting with a bolt of genius from your fertile imagination.

**Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)**  
Make sure that you are enjoying your experiences while they happen instead of mentally leaping into the future. A new relationship has wings, but keep it on the ground for now — one step at a time.

**Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)**  
Pace your efforts. Everything happens better at a relaxed rhythm. You'll need a cushion to protect yourself from unexpected drains on your energy. Healthy habits fortify your reserves.

**Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)**  
Usually you're amenable to compromise, but do the hard thing — maintain your position. You'll get your way, which is actually better for everyone. Progress that has been hampered will now flow again.

**Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20)**  
Last night left a question

unanswered. The mystery won't be solved any time soon, so try to feel tantalized rather than tortured about it. Social issues arise. Try to accept the best from friends and ignore the rest.

**TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (Nov. 27):**  
Welcome to your audacious year. Your chutzpah causes some mistakes and also brings reasons for glorious celebrations! The work you do in December suits you well — your stellar personality shines. Earmark January's windfall for lifestyle upgrades with things you'll appreciate on a daily basis! Love signs are Pisces and Libra.  
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