

Style Invitational »

REPORT FROM WEEK 813

in which we asked for jokes in the basic form of "I was shocked, shocked that [non-shocking thing]": This contest proved a wee bit problematic (i.e., sucky), despite many valiant Loserly efforts. The Empress caused confusion in the first place: The original source she cited, from "Casablanca," was a line brimming with wink-wink cynical sarcasm, while the illustrated example for the contest was of the naive-ignorance blonde-joke genre. The Losers diligently sent in both types; the cynical entries, unfortunately, often tended toward what we call the screedy: so passionate and bitter that the poor li'l humor just didn't have a chance.

THE WINNER OF THE INKER

I'm shocked, shocked to learn that teenagers think smoking makes them look cool — rather than making them look like sophisticated adults who happen to be affluent and attractive. — Joe Camel, Winston-Salem, N.C. (Jeff Hazle, Woodbridge)

- the winner of the two cans of Pocari Sweat energy drink: I'm shocked, shocked to learn that, despite the signs that say "full body massage," the women working there mostly concentrate on one small, er, I mean, particular part of the body. (Russell Beland, Fairfax)
- I was shocked, shocked to discover, while conducting an independent investigation into unsavory activities in our town, that my neighbor is a hypocrite who goes to strip clubs, particularly the one where Brandi does that special dance at 11:30 almost every Wednesday. (Roy Ashley, Washington)
- I was shocked, shocked when my wife's fantasy of a threesome involved three different people than mine did. (Charles Koelbel, Houston)

SOUS-PRIZES: HONORABLE MENTIONS

I started using Twitter and I was shocked, SHOCKED, to learn that it has a limit of 140 characters! Goodness, how does one ever finish a tho (John Bunyan, Cincinnati)

I'm shocked that women can talk to men without visualizing us naked. (Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)

I turned on Fox News hoping to see a hottie or two, and yecch — you should call it Hog and Weasel news! (Chad Pridden, Marshall, Va.)

I was shocked, shocked to learn that California's mania for all things natural doesn't tend to include hair or breasts. (Beverly Sharp, Washington)

I was shocked when I found out I didn't have to practice, practice, practice to get to Carnegie Hall. I just took a cab up Seventh Avenue. (Larry Yungk, Arlington)

I was shocked, shocked how many people there are in other countries who don't understand English, even when it's shouted. (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

I was shocked, shocked to find that the first person I met in Petersburg, Va., was female. (George Smith, Frederick)

I was shokt 2 lrn th mprss ddnt wanna rn a txtng cntst Bcz sh ddnt thnk NE1 wd wanna rd it (Ellen Raphaeli, Falls Church)

I was shocked to discover that partisan politics could survive the last election! — James Carville (Russell Beland)

I was shocked to learn that that there are Farsi editions of Bette Midler albums! — Mahmoud A., Tehran (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

I was shocked to learn that "Toy Story 2" was not based on a true story, like the first one. (Russell Beland)

I was shocked to realize that Obama still hasn't been able to find a place in the administration for John Edwards. (Russell Beland)

I was shocked that the Nationals game didn't sell out, even with the Tony Williams bobblehead promotion. (Kevin Dopart)

I'm flabbergasted that the morning-after pill didn't cure my hangover. (Chris Doyle)

After seeing all the videos on the Internet, I was really disappointed in my trip to Hilton Head. (Mark Eckenwiler, Washington)

I was shocked when I went to see "Casablanca" for the fourth time and still never heard Humphrey Bogart say, "Play it again, Sam." (John O'Byrne, Dublin)

I was shocked, shocked by what the police did after I told them where they could stick their damn Taser! (Steven Amter, Washington, a First Offender)

I'm shocked, shocked that I wasn't. — B. Franklin (Kevin Dopart)

I'm shocked, shocked not to find gambling in this establishment! — M. O'Malley, Annapolis (Sam Engel, Columbia, a First Offender)

I was shocked, shocked to discover, while hacking into the e-mail accounts of a few other Style Invitational contestants, that some of these people will do anything to get ink. (Roy Ashley)

Next Week: There Will Be Bloodline, or Foal Me Twice ONLINE DISCUSSION Have a question for the Empress or want to talk to some real Losers? Join the discussion group the Style Conversational, at washingtonpost.com/styleconversational.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Week 817: Flopflip

Alefem: St. Pauli Girl.

Le Ma: A more polite use of a term for "mother" to define a nasty man.

Kingban: No job for you, Mr. Ex-Hotshot Financier.

Oboboyoboy, a neologism contest we've never done before! This idea is from the unstoppable Loser Kevin Dopart, and it's wonderfully simple: **This week: Reverse the first half and second half of a word or name and define the result, as in the examples above. Count the letters, not the syllables, you can tag the middle one onto your choice of halves.** We don't want to make it an out-and-out rule, but the Empress has a hunch that the definitions in most of the inking entries will relate in some way to the original words. You can hyphenate the word or break it into two words. **Send no more than 25 entries:** If it turns out to be a great contest, we'll run it again.

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives, thanks to Zack Beland and his father, Biggest Loser Ever Russell, a nifty book called "Paper Airplanes With Dollar Bills," with instructions on making same. If you're going to throw your money away, why not have it do a smart loop-de-loop first? Currency not included: We are nondenominational here at the Invitational Palace.

This week's prize: Plane is so not included.

Other runners-up win a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt or Loser Mug. Honorable Mentions get one of the lusted-after Style Invitational Magnets. First Offenders get a smelly tree-shaped air "freshener" (Fir Stink for their First Inker). One prize per entrant per week. Send your entries by e-mail to losers@washpost.com or by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Tuesday, May 26. Put "Week 817" 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 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 June 13. No purchase required for entry. Employees of The Washington Post, and their immediate relatives, are not eligible for prizes. Pseudonymous entries will be disqualified. This week's Honorable Mentions name is by Mark Eckenwiler; the revised title for next week's results was submitted by both Ed Gordon and Russell Beland.

CAROLYN HAX

Adapted from a recent on-line discussion.

Dear Carolyn: This is a complicated situation, but I have a simple question. Been with BF for over four years. We're in our 30s. He keeps saying he's ready for marriage but needs time. I'm ready for an ultimatum. Maybe.

Question: How have ultimatums worked for others? I think some guys need a push while others just aren't marriage material (with you or with anyone).

Considering an Ultimatum

Do you want to marry someone who needs a push to marry you? Or, to cast it in a less loaded way, do you want to marry someone who dithers over decisions?

Here's why ultimatums are so toxic. Let's say he's not dithering, but instead he's thoughtful and has a few unanswered questions that he is in the process of answering. Applying pressure is not going to help that situation, and if anything will give him a reason to be glad he was cautious, because now he can rule you out with confidence.

Now let's say he is dithering. Your pressure might be enough to get you to marry him, but it won't change either reason that he might have been dithering: that he's not that wowed by you, or that he's not capable of being decisive.

If you're ready to be married to either of those permanent conditions, then go ahead and apply some pressure. But if you'd rather be with someone who lives purposefully and loves you completely, then either find out (through good, healthy, productive communication) what he's waiting for, to see whether it's something you agree with and respect, or accept that this relationship has run its course.

Dear Carolyn: My father had a mistress toward the latter part of his life. My mother knew but didn't know what to do about it. My father is dying and my mom worries the mistress will turn out for his funeral and make a scene (like crying uncontrollably). What could we children do?

London

Assure your mom that you'll all keep an eye out for the mistress, and if she does show, one of you will box her out. You can even assign a family friend or a funeral director to do the honors so you won't get taken away from the funeral yourselves. Your mom has enough to worry about, so assume this one worry for her.

Re: Mistress: What do you mean by "box her out"? This mistress is, presumably, close to the father. It's obviously not an ideal situation, but the mistress should be allowed to grieve, too.

Anonymous 1

I strenuously disagree. When she chose to love someone else's husband, she chose a situation where her grief would be on her time. She has no place at the funeral.

Had the wife shown even tacit approval or acceptance, I might say otherwise, but Mom's fretting says that wasn't the case. Mistress is out.

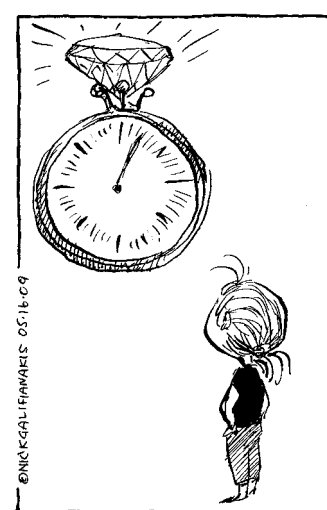
Re: Mistress: A kind and classy thing to do, that would also set a boundary, would be to send mistress a memento with a note saying, "Since you'll be unable to attend the funeral, we thought you'd like X as a memory." This should be done by a friend of Dad who also knows mistress.

Anonymous 2

I like it, thanks.

Read the whole transcript or join the discussion live at noon Fridays on www.washingtonpost.com/discussions.

Write to Tell Me About It, Style, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071, or tellme@washpost.com.



BY NICK GALIFIANAKIS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

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BY RICHARD A. LIPSKI — THE WASHINGTON POST

Johnson mixed his works with a slate of country classics at the Birchmere.

Quiet Jamey Johnson Lets The Music Do the Talking

By JULI THANKI
Special to The Washington Post

With his mountain man beard and Charles Manson stare, country singer Jamey Johnson looks like the kind of guy who is mandated by law to stay at least 100 yards away from Carrie Underwood. Come to think of it, Johnson's music maintains an equivalent metaphorical distance from the slick pop sounds of Underwood and her ilk. Yes, the Alabama native is responsible for penning "Honky Tonk Badonkadonk," one of the worst songs in recent memory, but he's more than made up for it with the album "That Lonesome Song," a collection of straight-up, tear-in-beer country music that has recently gone gold.

Though his star is on the rise — in addition to his major label deal, gold record and Academy of Country Music Award, he's recently opened for Willie Nelson and performed with Keith Urban — Johnson and his band seemed at home in front of the comparatively small crowd standing in the Birchmere's bandstand Thursday night. Apparently not a big talker, Johnson immediately ripped into his newest single, "High Cost of Living." Barely taking a breath or a drink between songs, Johnson sang his lungs out for the next two hours. He chose only the best material from his two studio albums, alternating original tales of woe with covers of everyone from Lefty Frizzell ("That's the Way Love Goes") to Merle Haggard ("Are the Good Times Really Over"). The attention Johnson gave to his classic country influences makes him equal parts performer and preservationist, a singer who can maintain tradition without being

stale. His two best-known songs, "In Color" and "Give It Away (a No. 1 for George Strait), garnered the most vocal audience reaction, but it was surprising to see such positive feedback from the college-age portion of the audience toward songs such as his own "Between Jennings and Jones" or George Jones's "Who's Gonna Fill Their Shoes?" Maybe good country music isn't dead after all.

Opening for Johnson was longtime pal Jerrod Niemann, a young-Haggard sound-alike in a Ramones T-shirt who started his 30-minute set with the lyrics "My grandpa got his teeth knocked out." Turns out this alleged line was merely a joke, but it set the stage for the rest of his act. Niemann's claim to fame is co-writing the Chris Ledoux tribute "Good Ride Cowboy," with Garth Brooks. Though Niemann is a talented songwriter, as several tracks on his new record, "Judge Jerrod & the Hung Jury," can confirm, on Thursday he was a frat-boy jukebox, covering David Allan Coe, Bob Marley and Sublime in between literally singing the praises of Keystone Light. Come on now; if the crowd wanted reggae and songs about lousy beer, they'd be at a Kenny Chesney show.

Niemann came back out to join Johnson during the main event, and with the exception of a sophomoric toast, remained thankfully in the background. Johnson's band, which remained in fine form throughout the set, unleashed a sternum-rattling version of Coe's "The Ride" to end the evening. A song about a ghostly encounter with Hank Williams, country music's patron saint, it was a fitting end to a night that was all about tradition.