

Lunchtime detours leave sour taste in friend's mouth

Adapted from a recent online discussion:

Dear Carolyn:

This feels like an absurdly specific question, but it's a kind of question about courtesy that I have sometimes. I'm in college: sometimes, after class, a friend and I have lunch together. Her boyfriend lives near the cafeteria, so my friend tells me to go ahead while she uses the boyfriend's bathroom and fetches him to have lunch with us. The problem is that, often, I've been completely done with my meal by the time they show up. She always apologizes for keeping me waiting, but then it happens again. (I gather that the delays are caused either by spontaneous make-outs or by her coaxing him out of a bad mood to come to lunch.) I find this more annoying than I feel I should.

My friend is normally the most considerate, courteous person I know; she would be mortified if I told her how cranky I get waiting for her. The thing is, even if I were to bring it up. I have no idea how I'd even phrase it. I don't want to embarrass her by bringing it up spontaneously when the boyfriend is there, but it seems weird to be all planning and calculating to tell her later, "You know how sometimes it takes you a while to get X from his room? I find that irritating.' Part of me thinks I should forgive her this one thing, but the other part is repeatedly sitting alone at lunch, wondering when my friend will join me. I cannot believe how much brain real-estate this is taking up, but I just don't know how to handle it.

Yikes. Next time she tells you to go ahead without her, say, "Why don't vou just call him? Otherwise I end up eating alone while I wait." You can also just leave when you finish your lunch.

That's for you. For your friend, if she happens to read this:

1. Stop "coaxing" your boyfriend out of a "bad mood." When you take it upon yourself to manage someone's emotions like that might as well be diapering a baby. (Alas, babies eventually grow out of diapers, where big babies often don't outgrow their enablers.)

2. Stop ditching your friend to go make out! Cheez. Either excuse yourself from the lunch date, or skip the boyfriend out of respect for your friend — who needs to grow a spine, but who also, in the meantime, isn't going to tell you how rude and annoying she finds your little he-tours.

Dear Carolyn:

Please help me figure out what to say to my sister, who got a tattoo yesterday. I have two myself, so I have no problem with tattoos. However, hers is HUGE. Big-black-lettering-onher-back huge. I think it's awful but she loves it and keeps asking, "Isn't it great? Don'tcha love it?" My only response thus far is, "Wow, it's bigger than I imagined.'

"You love it, right?" [She presumably says yes.] "Then that's awesome." Or, "It's a real statement." Or, "I love how happy you are." Find a happy truth, then repeat as

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

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NICK GALIFIANAKIS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

THE STYLE INVITATIONAL



Tom Tancredo's outrageous speech at the tea party convention:

Tancredo's recent tea-bag rant Was so downright embarrassin' That other fonts of right-wing cant Are Palin in comparison. (David Smith, Santa Cruz, Calif.)

REPORT FROM WEEK 855

CS

in which we asked you to write a poem summarizing, or at least musing upon, an article or ad that appeared in The Post Feb. 6-15: That was the week of the Super Bowl, the "tea party" convention and, of course, snow

the winner of the \$100 trillion bill (Zimbabwean): John Mayer's Playboy interview

in which he said his sex organ was a "white supremacist":

Higgledy piggledy, Singer John Mayer - his Interview made him sound Crude, oversexed.

Even more shocking than

Genito-racism: Readers of Playboy do Look at the text. (Kathy Hardis Fraeman, Olnev) The snowstorm:

Dropped on ever

Dropped on every Washington street, a Load of Mother Nature's excreta. (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

'Sarah Palin's palm cheat-sheet steals her

In language not subtle or guarded, Democratic ideas she discarded, Tea Folk think she's da bomb, But the notes on her palm Make Ms. Palin seem sort of Republican. (Dave Zarrow, Reston)

MUSES FIT TO PRINT: HONORABLE MENTIONS

• 'A reporter faces the naked truth about full-body airport scanners'

There's a sneaky new scanner that's bad to the bone; It detects hidden bombs in your underwear zone. But the ACLU's bid for privacy won: You can just have a "pat-down" (Oh, won't that be fun?) (Beverley Sharp, Washington)

'Saints win Super Bowl for first time'

With its Super Bowl triumph, New Orleans at last Bids goodbye to Katrina's ill winds of the past. But it's odd that two keys to the Saints' final push Are a passer named Brees and a runner named Bush. (Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)

Tim Carter's advice on home repairs

A septic tank's no place to stick your head; The methane gas, alas, could leave you dead. So, non-professionals, don't ever try To clean one: It's a case of doo or die. (Beverley Sharp)

'Another day, another Prius recall report'

Prius supporters will credit Toyota For fixing those iffy-braked units they've sold. Eco-extremists will readily note a Reduced use of gas when they're telephone-poled. (Jeff Foster, San Francisco, a First Offender)

Ad for Toviaz, an overactive-bladder medication

If you know you gotta go Even after you just went, Our pill will amaze, and for 30 days It won't cost you one red cent. The side effects are in the text: **Constination and some blushing:** But you won't dribble, so don't quibble, And you'll save on all that flushing. (Rick Haynes, Potomac)

Reliable Source item

Alec Baldwin's such a ierk. With his nasty little quirk: Once again he's picked a bone With his daughter on the phone. It made news, in bold italic: He's a pretty dumb smart Alec. (Mae Scanlan, Washington)

HAVE SOME

KEYSP: A fob

custom-crafted

in Thailand, is

this week's

second prize.

of metal and

YUGO

beads,

'Tai Shan lands corporate sponsorship from Chinese automaker

Cuddly wuddily, Tai Shan the panda bear Flew off to China and Pulled off a coup; **Corporate sponsors will Capitalistically** Pay him six figures - a Lot of bamboo

(Beverley Sharp)

... and more snow

Hizzardy blizzardy, Weather apocalypse Crippled this town with a One-two-three punch. I've heard enough from my **Meteorologist.**

Gone to St. Martin; I'll Drink rum for lunch.

(Craig Dykstra, on vacation in the West Indies)

See more honorable mentions at washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational.

Next Week: Titled Puerility, or Dork

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



YOU CAN talk with your hands BUT YOU CAN'T tyjpe w8th y4ohufr el;bo9ws. (Joe Shepherd, Gaithersburg)

Week 859: Can't goods

_, why can't they ____ they will _ If vou _, but you can't _

ining the Invite archives from 1996: Cast a joke in one of the forms listed above, as in the example, the winner from Week 188. We are looking for original humor; we do not want to see driveways and parkways, or heat and stupidity. Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place wins what's bound to be one

of the most coveted in the contest's history: Loser Larry Yungk had this key chain custom-made by a metalwork

craftsman at the Lumphini Night Bazaar in Bangkok. It cost him about \$3 plus plane fare. Other runners-up win their choice of a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt or yearned-for Loser

Mug. Honorable Mentions get one of the lusted-after Style Invitational Loser Magnets. First Offenders get a smelly tree-shaped air "freshener" (Fir Stink for their First Ink). 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 Monday, March 15. Put "Week 859" 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 to be published April 3. 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 results and this week's honorable-mentions subhead are both by Chris Doyle.



Online discussion Have a question for the Empress or want to talk to some real Losers? Join the Style Conversational at washingtonpost.com/styleconversational.

Few designers have the knack for artful time travel

austere benches and a white, eerily illuminated checkerboard runway. The ambience was old-fashioned elegance merged with retro cool and futuristic brayura. And that was also the mix that Ghesquiere put on his runway. How, pray tell, does such a concoction look?

Ghesquiere made confident references to the house's signature silhouettes of rounded backs and ease throughout the torso. He blended those shapes with textured fabrics in shades of melon (both honeydew and cantaloupe), teal and lemon that call to mind the swinging '60s and the pop art movement. His choice of fabrics was unusual in that they had the look of nylon, industrial plastic, foam and other modest materials. His multicolored prints referenced the work of, and quotations from, photographer Cindy Sherman and video artist Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster. Ghesquiere played to his strength, which is his ability to see fashion's future without losing touch with its past. He, more than any other designer working today, is able to find inspiration in history books and then apply those ideas in a forward-looking, sportsweardriven way.

The designers who present their collections here, in what is fashion's international capital, generally are not the type to harp on the past. Indeed, the '60sinspired collection that Marco Zanini put on the runway at Rochas was an anomaly in its near period drama styling — teased hair, block heels, mini-dresses and flared trousers. It made one wonder if Zanini, whose past work has been distinguished by a modern and light touch, had raided a vintage store both for inspiration and the frocks themselves.

Purple reign at Balmain

Christophe Decarnin at Balmain looted a different era — at least for inspiration. He has been the ringleader in fashion's return to '80s excess. There is no exdefending orhyper-ostentatious sensibility other than to declare it an appeal to purely visceral and base desires.

His Thursday afternoon show opened with Prince's "Let's Go Crazy" and what followed was an homage to the Purple One and his glam rock style. There were tight jeans and frock coats in purple and gold brocade. One coat was so thickly embroidered with gold sequins that it looked as though it was gold-plated and should come with its own security detail. There were purple and gold sequined mini-dresses cut so short they'd make a hooker blush. And pants were tight enough to make visible panty lines the least of a woman's concerns.

Make no mistake. The Balmain collection was dazzling. It tapped into the fantasies of any woman who has ever envisioned herself a rock star, part of a rock







TIME WARP: From left, Marco Zanini's collection for Rochas was a return to the 1960s, with teased hair and mini-dresses; at Balmain, Christophe Decarnin was all about '80s and excess, with daringly high hemlines on boldly colored dresses; and Balenciaga's Nicolas Ghesquiere drew inspiration from the '60s pop art movement.

band or merely a well-dressed groupie. But these are costumes, not clothes. They are for women who live their lives as if every day is a performance and not an attempt at authenticity.

It is an aesthetic that looks backwards, narcissistically inward and dismissively at the gluttonous behavior that precipitated the global economic meltdown. They are me, me clothes at a time when the new mantra seems to be: Just because you can, doesn't mean you

Ghesquiere looks forward without going - too far - into sci-fi outlandishnessor pure self-indulgence. He makes futuristic fashion desirable and festive. He redefines "pretty" for a different generation, allowing that it does not have to be equated with soft, sweet frippery. It can have sharp edges and curious juxtapositions of color. It can be strong and even a bit intimidating. But none of those elements detracts from how compelling his take on "pretty" can be. He makes clothes

that one wants to wear because they look good, but in a way that one never thought

Rick Owens's storm

Ghesquiere is the polar opposite of designer Rick Owens, for whom the beauty of a woman has never been a primary concern. His work is an emotional thunderstorm both intimidating and cleansing. If it is possible to be put off by a designer whose work shows too much sleek optimism, then Owens can be equally exasperating for being such a rumpled downer. Does misery really love com-

Owens uses a muted palette of black, aubergine, navy and mushroom - more portobello than shiitake. His airy down coats are more wraps and throws than anything resembling two sleeves, a body and a few buttons up the front.

He uses triangular shapes to whipstitch together jackets and long vests. The shapes are unbalanced so that they make one think of shards of broken glass, rather than a perfectly balanced study in geometry. His skirts are short with a pleated flap in the front, and his hooded jackets lack shoulder seams so that they shroud the models like some prehistoric pod.

Owens's work is poetic, but it is a melancholy, agitated verse. And if Ghesquiere believes there's salvation in a bright and shiny future, one senses that Owens longs for a tender and soulful past. Owens isn't nostalgic for some 1950s world, but something more tribal, uncomplicated and humane. His longing is understandable, not depressing, in these high-tech, frenzied times. It's the futility of his desire, however, that makes one want to weep

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MORE PHOTOS Robin Givhan takes a look at collections from Rick Owens, Balenciaga and Balmain at washingtonpost.com/style.

DOONESBURY BY GARRY TRUDEAU







