CS



Boyfriend reacts to breakup with threats

Adapted from a recent online discussion:

Dear Carolyn:

I have tried to break up with my boyfriend three times in the last two weeks. I told him that I need to move on, don't see myself with him for the rest of my life, and love him more like a friend. There is also a 13-plus-year age gap; he's in his mid-20s.

I chickened out and couldn't keep pulling the trigger when he begged me not to do it the first time. Since then he has brought it back up twice - saying he can't keep walking on eggshells but when I say, "Okay, then, we need to break up," he pulls out dark phrases like "How would you feel if I was just 'gone'?"

I am taking this as a suicide threat, although I really don't think he'd follow through.

The upshot is that he wants some sort of concrete reason, and keeps asking me, "What is wrong with me?" and I have no answer other than I just don't love him anymore, at least not like a romantic partner.

The final, horrible complication: We work together, same department, same office, and he will quit if we break up. HELP.

Break-up brouhaha, California

Let him quit. You are being manipulated, expertly, and you need to get out of this relationship ASAP. If you fear he will hurt himself — or you — then enlist the help of a psychotherapist to disentangle yourself as safely as possible.

He is using your guilt to pressure you to behave the way he wants you to. That's not an "oopsie," that's who he is. If you stay with him, the pressure won't end; he'll just find new things he wants, and new ways to pressure you into delivering.

The pressure will continue — and possibly intensify — after you break up, too, so you'll need to take careful steps to distance yourself. "The Gift of Fear" by Gavin de Becker is your must-read manual to prepare you for that phase.

The one option you need to regard as unthinkable is to stay with this person. Really.

You don't need to give anyone "concrete" reasons for breaking up — "I don't see myself with you for the rest of my life" is as concrete an explanation as you owe anyone and you are not responsible for his life or his job. "Boundaries" is overused shrink-speak and a lot of people dismiss it as such, but what it refers to is exactly what you need to see: He is blaming you (in advance) for things that are squarely in his personal jurisdiction.

Even beyond soliciting help with the actual breakup, I think you have strong reasons to get into therapy. That's because you didn't intuitively reject your boyfriend's threats, or otherwise question their appropriateness. If you don't know where the healthy boundaries are between two people, then your difficulties won't end with accomplishing this breakup. You'll be susceptible not only to guilt over ending this relationship, but also to another relationship with similar problems.

So, please, find a teacher, learn where the lines are, and learn the difference between intimacy and crossing all of those lines.

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



NICK GALIFIANAKIS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

THE STYLE INVITATIONAL

REPORT FROM WEEK 885

in which we asked you to reinterpret the meaning of a Washington Post headline by writing a "bank head" under it: Among the heads too frequently submitted – they were just too easy: "New bore reaches 33 trapped miners" ("Limbaugh takes over rescue shift from Gore"); "FDA rules won't require salmon labels" ("Coral, pale rose deemed close enough").



Landmark 'oil for spinach' accord

winner of the dispenser full of actual red tape: He surprises even himself National peekaboo champion reveals grueling training program (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

Baltimore honors late rocker Frank Zappa with bust Heirs question 'honor' of posthumous pot arrest

These Redskins are as entertaining as they are unpredictable

Excerpts published from just-discovered Custer diary (Craig Dvkstra, Centreville)

UNDERCAPITALIZED BANKS: HONORABLE MENTIONS

(Bruce Alter, Fairfax Station)

In back-to-school speech, Obama implores students to 'dream big' Gingrich: President tells kids to sleep in class

signed (Elden Carnahan, Laurel)

(Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)

Essence of the D.C. sound Siren and car-alarm festival starts today

(Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase) **Government targets inmate's**

Vows crackdown on cakes from Mom (Ira Allen, Bethesda)

\$250 fine for distracted drivers

In fact, most say they'd be they'd be happy getting half that much (Russell Beland, Fairfax)

You call this camping? New soldiers in Afghanistan learn that recruiters might have misled them a bit

(Lawrence McGuire, Waldorf) **Imposing talent**

What it takes to compete in the **Brother-in-Law America pageant** (Kevin Dopart)

County exec facing new sex charges

Thought he was 'all paid up' with hooker (Rich Abdill, College Park, a First Offender)

Musician behind 'Hot Hot' Second violinist voted 'best buns' by Philharmonic (Rick Havnes, Potomac)

Brown leads Orange in chairman race

'What a relief to get beyond that whole white/black thing,' mayor notes (Elden Carnahan)

More alcohol-related hospital trips

New liquor concession in FR spurs increase in visitors (Jim Exnicios, Manassas)

Is George Mitchell in the Middle **East. or Northern Ireland?** We don't have so many foreign correspondents anymore, so please let us know

(Ken Gallant, Conway, Ark.)

With autumn, a rush of arresting lesser-knowns Most A-list celebs already in jail (Gary Crockett; Barry Koch, Catlett, Va.)

British archaeologists find remnants of a house dating back to the Stone Age Mailbox marked 'FI ntst n-' intrigues scientists

(Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn) A week without Facebook? Pennsylvania college tries it out 'Things seemed pretty much the same,' reports Amish Institute (Michael Simon, Potomac, a First

Offender) **Spaceflight program is now NASA's albatross** Shuttle replacement features large wingspan, low fuel costs

(David Smith, Santa Cruz, Calif.)

Exhumation confirms that Marine was buried in correct **Arlington plot** 'Sooner or later, someone had to be,' says cemetery official (Russell Beland)

GOP plans to replace health-care overhaul if it controls Congress, but with what is unclear

'Death' cited as one option (John O'Byrne, Dublin)

Jets bounce back Boeing's new Silly Putty fuselage deemed a success in crash tests (Craig Dykstra)

Independence edges Freedom

Benign Dictatorshin Runs Distant Third (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

Miss Manners: Keep it loose for tea parties

Spandex frowned upon at Beck/Palin rally (Pam Sweeney, St. Paul. Minn.)

Head-scratching follows head-spinning on 'Oprah' New sweeps-month stunts fall flat (Steve Honley, Washington)

Pumpkin launched more than a mile - Tajikistan space

program advances (Barbara Turner, Takoma Park)

beloved pet after hamster wheel accident (Craig Dykstra) **And last: The offensive**

· Search continues for

output is no passing fancy The Style Invitational celebrates its 18th year (Beverley Sharp, Washington)

See more bank heads at washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational.

Maybe it doesn't taste

prize.

like chicken: The second

Next week: Look both ways, or Laff Offal, or Trope Report



Pupelo: The Mississippi village where Elvis's Hound Dog came from.

or no reason at all except that we haven't used an O or a P in the previous six runnings of this annual contest: Coin and define a humorous word that includes - with no other letters between them, but in any order - the letters P, O, L and E, as in the example above by Renaissance Man Bob Staake Himself. It has to be a new word (or hyphenated compound), not a new definition for a well-known existing word.

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place wins this handsome squeaky dog toy in the shape of a typical bikini-wearing poultry carcass that seems to have two unfortunate polyps in the breast meat. Perhaps the best thing about it is the name of the product, Baking Beauties. Donated by Craig Dykstra, whose beagle Daisy sensibly would have nothing to do with it.

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, Oct. 18. Put "Week 889" 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 Nov. 6. 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 titles for next week's results are by Chris Doyle and Craig Dykstra, respectively. The honorable-mentions subhead is by Gary Crockett; the headline for the Web-only supplement ("Bank reserves") is by Kevin Dopart.

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

At Ford's, a blessedly adult, shimmering 'Sabrina Fair'

THEATER REVIEW FROM C1

What's really arresting, though, is the acting. The cast utterly buys in no irony, no condescension and blessedly adult, which makes for an unexpectedly laid-back, shimmering performance. Helen Hedman and Kimberly Schraf radiate savoir faire as, respectively, Maude Larrabee (mother of Linus and David) and Maude's longtime friend Julia, a fashionable magazine editor who gets a lot of the play's wise lines. As Linus, Todd Gearhart even channels the gruff cadences of William Holden (David in the Hep-

Gearhart, dusky-voiced and handsome, almost overdoes the tough-guy bit, but his serious edge situates this romantic comedy right at the border of melodrama (the pleasant kind, not the drippy brand). Linus is efficient to a fault; "He hasn't made a wrong move since he was three," David observes in the kind of dry barb that's characteristic of Taylor's leisurely, ap-

Heyward does

what Hepburn

complexity with

pealing script. But Linus is also philo-

sophical, and so is Sabrina; it is clear-

ly their feelings about the basics of living that made Ford's want to explore

"I shall keep my place as soon as I know it," Sabrina brightly informs her worried father, and there, of course, is a heroine to love. As that place becomes increasingly hard to define,

though, Sabrina later wonders, "If I'm a girl without a home, am I also a girl

without a country?" So the gambit has

only sparkles in the role, but pertly

reasons her way through the charac-

ter's dilemmas. In her own way, Hey-

ward does what Hepburn did: face

complexity with a light style. Hey-

ward's Sabrina may be fun-loving and

brimming with Continental confi-

dence, but she's also alert to every nu-

ance as commentary flies around her;

you feel Sabrina's double awareness of

being an outsider even as she nearly

All that may make Heyward first

has both Cinderella feet in.

Susan Heyward, as Sabrina, not

payoffs in the text after all.

a light style.

did: face

an extra angle.

among equals in a cast that's uncommonly blessed with intelligence and grace. John Dow is just the right amount of addled as the Larrabee patriarch, Donna Migliaccio is discreetly amusing as the sharp-eared housekeeper, and as Sabrina's father, Craig Wallace holds the show in his capable hands for a lovely spell near the end. Everyone knows where the laughs and the portentous moments are, and throughout, the tone — which really has no margin for error - is spot on.

style@washpost.com

SABRINA FAIR

by Samuel A. Taylor. Directed by Stephen Rayne Lighting, Pat Collins; sound design, John Gromada. With Michael Morrow Hammack, Bolton Marsh, Casie Platt, Julia Proctor, Tonva Beckman Ross and Derek Kahn Thompson. About 2 hours 15 minutes. Through Oct. 24 at Ford's Theatre, 511 10th St. NW. Call 202-397-7328 or visit www.fords.org.



FAIR PLAY: From left, Todd Gearhart, Tom Story, Susan Heyward, Helen Hedman.

DOONESBURY FLASHBACKS BY GARRY TRUDEAU HEY, GRAM!









CUL DE SAC BY RICHARD THOMPSON



pangolins roamed across this land, and the earth shook with the thunder of their passing! Then, panicked and confused by all the racket, the vastherds bolted outta here in search of somewhere a little more quiet.

Yes! Long ago, vast herds of

