

Style Invitational

BY PAT MYERS

Report from Week 933

in which we asked, in “homage” to the 55 Fiction contest given by the California alternative weekly New Times, for 56-word humorous stories. We had a hunch that this one would be difficult. It clearly was. No Inker this week; we’re starting with second place. By the way, we’re counting two words joined by a hyphen as two words; a number written in numerals counts as one word.

2 Winner of the “Welcome to Loserville” sign:

“Frank, your mother is back from the dead and knocking on our front door.”

“Are you sure?”

Gillian invited him to peek through the peephole.

“Well, let’s invite her in.”

“Frank, I see fangs.”

“So?”

“She’s a vampire. If we invite her in, she’ll suck the life out of our family.”

“And this is different how?”
(Lawrence McGuire, Waldorf)

3 “There’s a hole in the bucket, dear Henry!”

“Oh, Liza. We’ll fix it. In the meantime, I’ll tell you a story: Star-crossed sweethearts determine to spend On each other, but — Heaven forbid — Each one sells, for his deeds, What the other’s gift needs. Empty pockets, full hearts. That’s the end.”

“Oh, Henry, what a tale!” (Nan Reiner, Alexandria)

4 The president had a problem: His dark secret would be exposed in Woodward’s book. It was a youthful mistake. In Hawaii. But would it become a metaphor?

Could he cover up the incident? No, Nixon had tried that. Best to confess: “It’s true: In a high school hoops game, I did blow an easy breakaway layup.” (Ron Shafer, Williamsburg, a First Offender)



Giving “duds” a new meaning: Denise Sudell in a dress created from two Loser T-shirts by Barbara Turner.



FROM “MARY HAD A LITTLE LAMP,” TEXT BY JACK LECHNER, 2008, BLOOMSBURY CHILDREN’S BOOKS



FROM “I’M A TRUCK,” TEXT BY DENNIS SHEALY, 2006, GOLDEN BOOKS



FROM “STRUWWELPETER AND OTHER DISTURBING YET CAUTIONARY TALES,” ADAPTED AND ILLUSTRATED BY BOB STAAKE, 2006, FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS



FROM “PETS GO POP,” TEXT AND PICTURES BY BOB STAAKE, 2009, LB KIDS

THIS WEEK’S CONTEST: WEEK 937

Staake it to him

In this week’s contest, Style Invitational illustrator Bob Staake was going to tweak the work of some famous New Yorker cartoonists, much as he did for us back in 1998. But now that Bob is now a New Yorker cover boy himself, not to mention a disturbingly successful, Cape Cod waterfront-residing children’s-book author and illustrator, we decided instead to invite you to make fun of Bob’s own oeuvre. **This week: Write a caption for any of these pages or details from some of Bob’s more than 50 picture books.** (His name’s pronounced “stack,” by the way.)

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place gets a prize custom-made for the Invite: a dress sewn from two classic Loser T-shirts by Loser Barbara Turner. It even has pockets. But you have to be fairly petite — it’s about a size 8. Before lunch. Modeled here by “Loser groupie” Denise Sudell.

Other runners-up win their choice of a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt or yearned-for Loser Mug. Honorable mentions get a lusted-after Loser magnet. First Offenders get a smelly tree-shaped air “freshener” (FirStink for their first ink). E-mail entries to losers@washpost.com or fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Sept. 26; results published Oct. 16 (Oct. 14 online). No more than 25 entries per entrant per week. Include “Week 937” in your e-mail subject line, or it may be ignored as spam. Include your real name, postal address and phone number with your entry. See contest rules and guidelines at washingtontimes.com/styleinvitational. The revised title for next week’s results is by Craig Dykstra; this week’s honorable-mentions name is by Tom Witte.



STYLE CONVERSATIONAL Have a question for the Empress or want to talk to some real Losers? Join us at washingtontimes.com/stylconversational.



FROM “STRUWWELPETER AND OTHER DISTURBING YET CAUTIONARY TALES”

Succink: Honorable mentions

Autobiography of Love: Actor, actor, Paris in May, engineer in a heart-shaped bed, playboy, poet professor, virgin math professor, Chilean politician, draft dodger in Acapulco, engineer again, San Francisco in the '70s, engineer again, Latin lover, physicist, future ex-husband, Latin lover again, bipolar psychologist, neighbor, one I resisted, professor, engineer, engineering professor. Alone. Wise? Content. (Zona Douthit, Pawtucket, R.I., a First Offender)

Irony-Poor Blood

When they discovered I was vegetarian, my cowboy buddies

teased me mercilessly. So one night when it was my turn to watch the herd, I lit out for new parts. Had no idea we were close to vampire country. All by my lonesome, I got picked off. A century later, I like meat, but hate stakes. (Randy Lee, Burke)

“I don’t want people looking at me in my coffin!” she had declared. And sure enough, when the time had come, our rosy-cheeked, pleasant-faced mother, age 93, lay scowling in her coffin, the corners of her mouth turned way down. Our hysterical crying turned into hysterical laughing. You win, Mom — we’ll close the coffin. (Susan Hertzler, Annandale)

“Yeah, Coach. Yeah, I struck out. So?”

“Don’t give me that lip, Casey. You strike out too much. Tomorrow it’s a serious session with the hitting coach. Wait — just got a note here. Hey, you’ve been traded! For a guy named Ruth.”

“What? That’s a girl’s name,” sneered Casey as he swaggered off into the sunset. (Nancy Israel, Bethesda)

God as My Witness, This Is a True Story **“I’ll need to see your ID,”** said the cashier at the liquor store to the young woman ahead of me.

She passed inspection, barely. I put my Scotch on the counter. The cashier looked up at me and silently took my money.

“You didn’t check my age,” I said.

“Sir,” he said, “there’s no upper limit.” (John Long, Mechanicsville, Va., a First Offender)

And last:

“I’ve got a protagonist: me,” he mused. “And a conflict, or at least a challenge to squeeze a story into exactly 56 words. Now I just need a climax and a resolution, and ideally some personal growth.”

So he hit the Word Count button. When he saw the number, he knew he’d live happily ever after. (Dixon Wragg, Santa Rosa, Calif.)

Next week: Meet your match, or I’m likenin’ it