

The Style Invitational

By the Empress

Style Invitational Humor Contest: Week 806

Saturday, February 28, 2009

"Mommy, quick, what should I order?"

"For every romantic possibility, no matter how robust, there exists at least one equal and opposite sentence, phrase, or word capable of extinguishing it."

This "Theory of Disqualifying Statements" was coined back in 1996 by theory-coiner Malcolm Gladwell in the brand-new online magazine Slate, in an "electronic diary" that we'd now call a blog. Gladwell discovered the principle when a woman he was flirting with announced that all her boring relatives had gone to Harvard, but not she; oh no, she was the black sheep, a maverick -- she went to . . . Brown. Pffft to the potential romance. Disqualifying statement.



(Bob Staake for The Washington Post)

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Advertisement Jay Levitt of Cambridge, Mass., who brought this theory to our attention, rightly suggests that a list of Disqualifying Statements would be a welcome antidote to any remaining toxic fumes of Valentine's Day sentimentality. He suggested: "my second parole officer," "the quintessence of the 'Star Trek' milieu" and "some of my World of Warcraft characters." **This week:** Give us a phrase or sentence that would nip a potential relationship in the bud (or elsewhere).

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place gets the remote-control-motif necktie donated by Loser Peter Metrinko, whose visage formerly graced this page peeking through the leg hole of a pair of white briefs. (Peter has 255 Invitational ink blots and zero shame.) This cravat is an item of genuine value; indeed, its packaging clearly lists its genuine value at exactly \$1.00.

Other runners-up win a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. 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 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 9. Put "Week 806" 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 March 28. 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 was sent by both Rick Haynes and Beverley Sharp; the revised title for next week's results is by Jeffrey Contompasis.

An Extra Contest: In these uneasy times, sometimes you just have to cross your fingers and go for it: And we're about to order up a bunch of new Loser Magnets for the Invite's Honorable Mentions. Pictured in the slide show, above right, are the current ones, designed as always by Bob Staake; we need two new slogans.

Send ideas to losers@washpost.com with "magnet slogan" in the subject line. Winners will get Bob's signed pencil sketch of the magnet's design. And a magnet.

Report From Week 802

in which we asked for new ideas for cable TV channels:

4. **The Nudist Channel: Nothing's ever on.** (Lawrence McGuire, Waldorf)
3. **The Hagiography Channel: President Obama's inauguration, President Obama's campaign speeches, and occasional specials on other leaders who saved the world (and influenced President Obama) such as FDR and Lincoln. Coming next season: President Obama walking the dog.** (Jeff Hazle, Woodbridge, a First Offender)
2. **the winner of the Tabloid Tycoon old computer game: Guns 'N Moses: The all-Heston channel.** (Russell Beland, Fairfax)

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And the Winner of the Inker

The Loining Channel. "Adult education." (*John O'Byrne, Dublin*)

Channel Serfs: Honorable Mentions

ADHDTV (a.k.a. Short-Attention-SPAN): In rotation every two seconds, all 18,000 cable channels on your system. So throw away the remote, fellas. (*Marcy Alvo, Annandale; Vicki Zatarain, Washington*)

The Meta-Network: Round-the-clock talking heads discussing how dreadful television is these days. (*Anne Paris, Arlington*)

The Knee-Jerk Right-Wing Nut Job Network: It's a lot like Fox but without all that balance. (*Russell Beland*)

TickerNet: All scrolling news without the annoying background videos and talking heads. (*Kevin Dopart, Washington*)

Advertisement **Big Prostate TV:** Your favorite shows, but with convenient two-minute programming breaks every 20 minutes. (*Russ Taylor, Vienna*)

The Moebius Channel: A one-sided documentary that never ends. (*Jay Shuck, Minneapolis*)

Wikipedia News Network: Viewer-submitted news featuring the daily program "Here's What I Think Happened," the weekly travelogue "Life in These 53 States" and the 12-part documentary "City on the Edge of Tomorrow Is the Best 'Star Trek' Episode Ever." Regular contributors include a bunch of guys in sweat pants and Hannity & Colmes. (*Maureen Driscoll, Toluca Lake, Calif., a First Offender*)

The Henry VIII Channel: Four talking heads, two non-talking heads. (*Jay Shuck*)

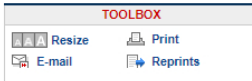
Rabbit Ears Nostalgia: Watch former analog broadcasts as they were meant to be, with realistic blur, various lines and interference from space heaters. (*Dave Prevar, Annapolis*)

CVS, the Conjugal Visit Surveillance channel: These inmates were promised conjugal visits, but who said anything about privacy? (*Tom Witte, Montgomery Village*)

Headlice News: Twenty-four-hour advice on avoiding and treating cooties. (*Marty McCullen, Gettysburg, Pa.*)



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The PBS Continuous Pledge Drive Channel: The same 12 "specials" over and over and over again. So pretty much like regular PBS. (*Andrew Hoenig, Rockville*)

Live Radar: 24/7 webcams of Gary Burghoff's house. (*Stephen Dudzik, Olney*)

Urban Legend Television: It's a channel you can get only with a special black box built by a friend of a friend, some dude who lives in a bomb shelter in Calvert County. (*Lawrence McGuire*)

The Left-Handed Albino Neologists of Hibernia Born on Feb. 3 in the Year of the Ox Channel: Niche programming at its fullest. (*Lawrence McGuire*)

ESP-N: We know just what you want to watch. (*Ellen Raphaeli, Falls Church*)

Advertisement Optimists News Channel: "The nation's employment rate remained above 90 percent last quarter as, locally, the vast majority of homes did not burn down." (*Russell Beland*)

The Illinois Channel: Kickback and enjoy! (*Beverley Sharp, Washington*)

The Unused-Fireplace Channel: For the 364 days when "Yule Log" isn't on. (*Wayne Rodgers, Satellite Beach, Fla.*)

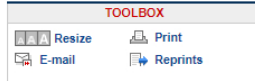
Al-Jazeera Hebrew: Building on the success of Al-Jazeera English, the network offers a translated version of its news service. Balanced content will present both viewpoints: pro-Arab and anti-Israeli. (*Jeffrey Contompasis, Ashburn*)

The Total Infomercial Network: Where every program airs without commercial interruption. (*Thomas S. Urban, Reston, a First Offender*)

Next Week: *The Pepys Show*, or *Tainted Diary Products*



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