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The Real Life of Fictional Trademarks

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In his 1990 New Yorker story “Coyote v. Acme,” humorist Ian Frazier scripted the opening statement of trial counsel for the plaintiff Wile E. Coyote in a products liability suit against Acme Company, Coyote's regular supplier “of such specialized products as itching powder, giant kites, Burmese tiger traps, anvils, and two hundred-foot-long rubber bands” for the intended purpose of thwarting his nemesis, Roadrunner. (For those unfamiliar with the Roadrunner cartoons, the products invariably backfired.) While there are no reported decisions in that (fictional) lawsuit, fictional brands like Acme have given rise to real legal disputes. Those disputes just more typically arise under U.S. intellectual property than product liability laws.

Related People



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