

The Style Invitational »

REPORT FROM WEEK 821

In which asked you to tell the similarity or difference between any two items on a list we supplied: We don't think anyone tried all 105 combinations of the 14 items, but some Losers must have come close. Too commonly offered but certainly to the point: The difference between six Somali pirates and one Somali pirate is five Navy SEALs.



- 2** the winner of Frozen Smiles, the denture-shaped ice cube molds: An elderly Labrador retriever is like 24 straight games of Tetris: Both are plausible reasons there's pee on the floor. (J. McCray, Hyattsville)
- 3** Maraschino cherries on a hamburger and third base at Nationals Park: You want to keep both of them 90 feet from the plate. (Barry Koch, Catlett, Va.)
- 4** Third base at Nationals Park and a Buckingham Palace guard: When the Royals are in town, they walk all over you. (Craig Dykstra, Centreville)

BEYOND COMPARE: HONORABLE MENTIONS

The entire nation of Latvia and the 2012 presidential campaign: Latvia is wary of its proximity to Russia, while the presidential campaign is wary of its proximity to Rush. (Brian Cohen, Potomac)

An elderly Lab and a Buckingham Palace guard: You can blame either for a suspicious foul odor, and neither can defend himself. (G. Smith, New York)

An elderly Labrador retriever and the 2012 presidential campaign: They both may kick off any day now. (Barry Koch)

For both the elderly Labrador retriever and the 2012 presidential campaign, the main problem is stopping B.O. (Elwood Fitzner, Valley City, N.D.)

An elderly Labrador retriever and the redesigned Facebook home page: The Lab's pile of crap is probably an accident. (Russell Beland, Fairfax)

A Buckingham Palace guard and an elderly Labrador retriever: Both change position every four hours or so. (Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)

The entire nation of Latvia is like third base at Nationals Park: Few Nationals players have set foot on either one. (Jennifer Cohen, Bethesda, a First Offender)

An elderly Labrador and someone named Kaytlynn: With each, the cuteness wore off

after the first year. (Kathy Colton, Columbia, a First Offender)

A Somali pirate and an elderly Lab: They're about the same age. (Pam Sweeney, St. Paul, Minn.)

The difference between one Somali pirate and six Somali pirates: approximately nine teeth. (Russell Beland)

Six Somali pirates are like maraschino cherries on a hamburger: They should be picked off, the quicker the better. (William Bradford, Washington)

Someone named Kaytlynn and maraschino cherries on a hamburger: Both are misguided attempts at originality. (Richard Rosen, Mount Vernon, N.Y.)

Maraschino cherries on a hamburger and one Somali pirate: One's short of pits; the other's from a port of, um, ships. (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

The 2012 presidential campaign and Saturn: In the case of Saturn, there's just one giant ball of gas. (Russell Beland; Elden Carnahan, Laurel)

Saturn and a poison ivy vine: You don't want either colliding with Uranus. (Jay Shuck)

The redesigned Facebook page and six Somali pirates: Both are a threat to easy navigation. (Lawrence McGuire, Waldorf)

Maraschino cherries on a

hamburger and 24 straight games of Tetris: One sweetens your buns, the other nubs them. (Lawrence McGuire)

The 2012 presidential campaign and a Saturn: The presidential campaign is sure to start on a cold winter morning in Iowa. (Pam Sweeney)

A Buckingham Palace guard and an elderly Labrador retriever: Only one can correctly be called a beefeater. (Russell Beland, Fairfax)

Someone named Kaytlynn vs. a Somali pirate: One is told, "Seize the sea," and one is asked, "Why the Y's?" (Kathy Hardis Fraeman, Olney)

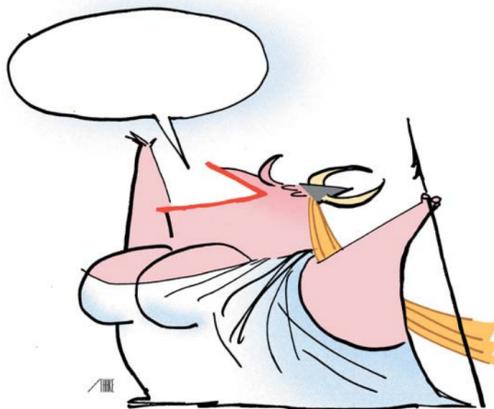
The 2012 presidential campaign is like 24 straight games of Tetris: The outcome depends on how the blockheads fall. (Shelby Sadler, Rockville, whose only other ink was in 1999)

Third base at Nationals Park is like the entire nation of Latvia: Opposing forces easily stomp through on their way home. (Ward Kay, Vienna, who last got Invitational ink in 1994)

Next Week: For Real Folks, or Our Country, Tease of Thee

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

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Week 825: Disinstrumentals

Much of the greatest music ever written consists of the inspired crafting of purely instrumental sound, undiminished by distracting, often shuffling lyrics. Your turn.

This week: Write some words to music that has no words. It can be a pop instrumental, a movie or TV theme (if lyrics were written but they weren't sung on the air, good enough), the Olympic theme, a Sousa march, a well-known bit of classical music, or whatever will be fairly recognizable.

Winner receives the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place gets a special Taste Sensation three-pack: two cans of silkworm pupae and one Kelp Crunch Energy Bar, all picked up at a Korean market by new Loser Mike Czuhajewski. If you accept this prize, you are required to tell us how it tastes.



Other runners-up win a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt or Loser Mug. 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, July 20. Put "Week 825" 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 Aug. 8. 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 submitted independently by Beverley Sharp and Mike Ostapiej; the revised title for next week's contest is by Beverley Sharp.

And here's the supper you'll be singing for.

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CAROLYN HAX

Adapted from a recent online discussion:

Dear Carolyn:
At my ex-boyfriend's insistence, he and his fiancée will be double-dating with me and my boyfriend this weekend. Our relationship went badly and ended worsely, and this is probably a bad idea but we're committed to it now. Any words of advice?
TX

Yes. Don't go. "Insistence" doesn't mean you have to do it, nor does agreeing to it mean you can't change your mind and cancel. It's a dinner date, not a blood oath. I can see why this relationship ended badly; your power distribution with this guy is all off, and it still has you twisting yourself into someone you neither like nor respect. Call it off. Stand up for yourself.

Carolyn:
Sigh. Yes, yes, yes. But easier said than done. Sometimes even "just doing it" is paralyzingly difficult.
TX, Again

Anything we know we should be doing but nevertheless aren't doing is, I think by definition, paralyzingly difficult.

So the choices are limited to accepting that it will never be done—a real self-worth killer—or finding some small purchase on getting it done, and hoping that's enough to break the pattern logically, emotionally or both. Sometimes that little opening to success is technical (e.g., finding the easiest task, making a list, calling and saying, "I changed my mind"...) and sometimes it's emotional (e.g., figuring out why you're so resistant to change, so fearful of being honest, so reluctant to look inward, etc.).

I guess there's a middle ground, too, like ADD, where the obstacle to doing something has both emotional and technical components.

But what I'm trying to do in all these "easier said than done" cases is provide the nudge that breaks the deadlock, even if it's just a nudge toward realizing it's going to take more than giving oneself a nudge.

Hi, Carolyn:
I don't have a terrible problem like some readers, but this does bother me a lot. I feel very "gray." Nothing is exciting, and my job is okay (pays well and is challenging enough to hold interest, but not overly strenuous). I look at my life and think: "Is this all there is? Another 30 years of getting up, going to work, just getting through until the weekend, and then retirement?"
What's wrong with me? I am serious. Is this normal or should I get help (from somewhere)?
Washington

There are so so many purposes waiting for someone to find them, particularly someone with time and means and untapped passion.

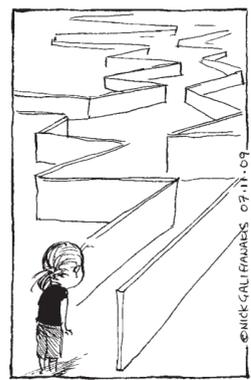
Please look around you, see what is really meaningful to you, or has been meaningful or inspiring to you before but that you've let slip away over time. Art, craft, cause, sport, faith, cuisine, culture, club, game, pet?

Investing yourself in something larger than just self-sustenance can make even the dullerest workday look brighter. It can even start you on a path to more rewarding work, or more rewarding relationships.

If you find you can't think of anything that matters to you like that—if you see no beauty in the mundane—then I would take that as your signal to get help in the form of screening for clinical depression.

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.



BY NICK GALIFIANAKIS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

NBC's Remake of 'Meteor' Leaves a Bad Impression

TV PREVIEW, From Page C1

ing threatened, and murder and rape plainly in the offing.

What has any of this to do with a huge swarm of meteors high-tailing it on a collision course with embattled Planet Earth? Answer: Far too much, and certainly enough to discredit the picture as pleasant, popcorny pulp.

The original film had a surprisingly stellar cast, all of them slumming, probably for quick and cushy paychecks. Sean Connery, Natalie Wood, Trevor Howard, Martin Landau, Karl Malden and Henry Fonda as the president found themselves trapped not so much by a meteor shower as by a trite scenario, ploddingly put together.

NBC's version plods, too, when it isn't involved in bloodletting, torture, murder and other forms of social perversity. The filmmakers take the occasion of a disaster movie to portray Americans largely as a pack of jackals who face a crisis by behaving as abominably as possible—whether hoarding necessities and selling them at wildly inflated prices or instantly turning uncivilized and taking

shots at one another.

Leader of the pack is Michael Rooker as a homicidal maniac who shoots everything in sight and kidnaps a teenage girl, whom he viciously brutalizes. Roughly a counterpart to the creep played by Marjoe Gortner in "Earthquake" (like "Meteor" a tacky Universal production), he's the kind of monster who keeps bouncing back and gets the bulk of the screen time.

Stacy Keach plays his pot-bellied polar opposite, a small-town sheriff who appeals to the locals to please help, rather than slaughter, one another. Billy Campbell is his son; he spends most of his time behind the wheel of one vehicle or another.

Though a token effort is made to show the many, many meteors crashing down in such places as Moscow, Paris and New York, it's Southern California that bears the brunt. The special effects are good by TV standards, but some corners have obviously been cut. We're told a meteor collided with a plane in the sky, but this spectacular sight isn't in the movie. Considering how many times the Earth's major cities have been leveled by



BY ISABELLA VOSMIKOVA — NBC UNIVERSAL
Marla Sokoloff's character might be able to save Earth but not the movie.

special-effects disasters in movies of the past decade or so, it seems chintzy to show meteors approaching, yet not quite striking, the Eiffel Tower, among other prominent targets.

Ground zero, oddly, is the tiny California town of Taft, to which the characters and the narrative keep returning. No matter how many times we go back there, however, the town is always politely identified with the on-screen caption "Taft, California," just in case it's slipped our minds. The entire movie is likely to slip your mind even as you watch it.

The cast isn't as stellar as the one in 1979's "Meteor," but it does include such relatively big names as Jason Alexander (George Costanza no longer pretending to be an architect, now pretending to be a general), Ernie Hudson, the aforementioned Billy Campbell, and Marla Sokoloff as the daughter of a brilliant if eccentric scientist played by Christopher Lloyd, essentially reprising his "Back to the Future" shtick, albeit a toned-down version.

Sokoloff's character is particularly confounding in that she wanders all over Mexico, unable to get a lift back to the States or simply make a phone call—even though she alone possesses the essential information on how to battle the big meteor and its dozens of companions. Nearly raped in a Mexi-

can jail, greeted with snarls and loaded guns wherever she seeks assistance, she manages to commandeer a police car and then stupidly stops at a border crossing just so she can be captured again.

Although most of the people Sokoloff meets nearly froth with meanness, she finally encounters a sweet little old lady who lets her use the phone and thus save the world. First, however, the dear girl expresses justifiable hopelessness: "I think we're all going to die," she moans, to which the Little Old Lady responds, "I've come to terms with who I am and how I've lived my life, and I'm surprisingly happy."

Fine, but who asked for her autobiography? Whatever, it's enough to jolt the heroine out of her funk and set her back on the path to Earth's salvation. "I can't," she says pluckily, "I can't just give up! Not if there's still a chance!" Shouts the Little Old Lady: "Then you go, girl!"

It's the only really good laugh in the picture.

Meteor (two hours) premieres tomorrow night at 9 on NBC. Part 2 airs next Sunday at 9 p.m.

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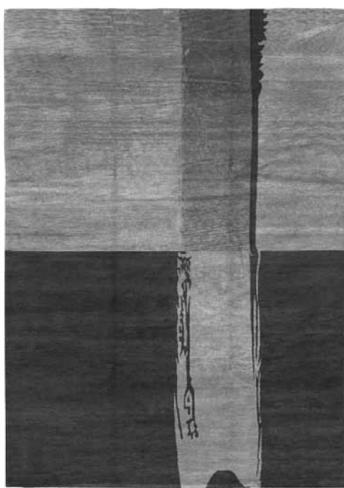
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