

**CAROLYN HAX**

Adapted from a recent online discussion.

**Dear Carolyn:**

Someone who used to be a good friend of mine told me she doesn't want us to talk anymore, but did not explain what I did to prompt this decision. She also asked me not to tell anyone else about this. It's been more than a year, so I consider the friendship over. Do I have to honor her request to remain silent? This gets tricky because a lot of people ask me about her, and I don't know what to say. I feel guilty if I tell them that I don't know why she is no longer talking to me. When is it okay to not honor someone's request to "keep this between you and me"?

Seattle

They: "How's X?"

You: "I don't know, I haven't spoken to her."

They: "Why?"

You: "I'm afraid you'll have to ask her."

Says it all, really.

However, I am going to use your situation as a PSA and advise everyone, when confronted with a, "Don't tell anyone/Don't tell so-and-so" request, to have this response handy: "I'm afraid I can't make that promise." You'll spare yourself a perennial annoyance.

**Dear Carolyn:**

I'm struggling with how to remain friends with someone after they didn't return romantic feelings for me, because now I hear all about this person's exploits.

Do I really need to? I'm not sure why I'm being told any of this, but we did always have a close friendship before. I feel awkward about standing up for something now when it never bothered me before.

Or I'm just being immature. I don't know. I guess the grown-up thing to do is smile, nod and cheer this person on. Can I drop this friendship even if means being immature?

Lake Forest, Ill.

Who decides what's immature? Is there a manual that says, "Other people can act abysmally, but the Mature Person will suffer their thoughtlessness and insensitivity without complaint"?

Your question reads as if these unreturned romantic feelings were stated plainly and rejected. If that's correct, then please tell your "friend" that you realize this has always been the way of your friendship, but that you now find the tales of sexploits to be insensitive in light of recent events.

His/her response to it will tell you whether you can take the quotation marks off the title of "friend," or whether you can end the friendship without its being a mark on your record of courage and maturity.

If instead your unrequited love is also an unexpressed love, then that changes what you say to: "I find it hard to hear about you with others, because I have feelings for you myself." Tough either way, but necessary, too, at this point.

**Dear Carolyn:**

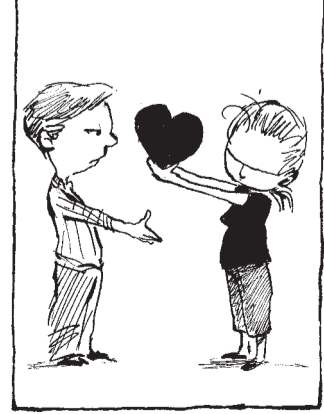
Recently started dating a really sweet girl. How do I make sure she knows I'm interested, but that I need a bit more space?

D.C.

Just say it. Whether she's able to hear it will say a lot about where this new thing is going.

Read the whole transcript or join the discussion live at noon Fridays on [www.washingtonpost.com/discussions](http://www.washingtonpost.com/discussions).

Write to Tell Me About It, Style, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071, or [tellme@washpost.com](mailto:tellme@washpost.com).



BY NICK GALIFIANAKIS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

**The Style Invitational »**

**REPORT FROM WEEK 834**

in which we asked you to combine any two words from a single Washington Post story into a hyphenated compound word, and define it (we also accepted entries in which one of the elements was already a compound): **Smart-alecky Over-Loser Russell Beland**, realizing that the *Empress* had not specified which days' papers could be used, submitted entries from Posts of June 4, 1957 (his birthdate), and Oct. 10, 1972 (a big Watergate story).



**THE WINNER OF THE INKER**  
Up-Jones: Outdo the neighbors.  
(Sylvia Betts, Vancouver, B.C.)

- 2** the winner of the Greek "Do Not Throw Paper in Toilet" sign: **Mantra-reform: Om improvement.** (Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)
- 3** Air-football: Redskins fans' futile gestures as they try to will the ball past the first-down marker. (Dave Prevar, Annapolis)
- 4** Congressional-affordable: **Unaffordable.** (Russell Beland, Fairfax)

**SUB-MERGES: HONORABLE MENTIONS**

**Knowledge-harbor: The brain.** "There don't seem to be many boats docked in Sarah's knowledge-harbor." (Mae Scanlan, Washington)

**Guantanamo-baptism: Cheney's euphemism for waterboarding.** (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

**Home-down: A foreclosure block party.** (Judy Blanchard, Novi, Mich.)

**A-holy: Despicably sanctimonious.** (Chris Doyle)

**Hormone-filled-hurricane: The guy dating your daughter.** (Peter Metrinko, Gainesville)

**Bowels-amok: A newly discovered early film by John Waters.** (Peter Metrinko)

**Garage-bustle: Earlier, more polite form of "hard-butt."** (Jeff Contompassi, Ashburn)

**Nixon-ranks: Near the bottom portion of any distribution.** "Among NFL quarterbacks, he's in the Nixon-ranks." (Russell Beland)

**Guillotine-cure: To fire someone rather than train him properly.** (Barbara Turner, Takoma Park)

**Economy-briefed: Wearing irregular underpants.** (Beverly Sharp, Washington)

**More-dead: Condition of vampires who have stakes through their**

**hearts.** (Russell Beland)

**Dumas-zero: Loser who can't even spell.** (Jeff Contompassi)

**Pop-age: The years preceding one's switch to the smooth-jazz station.** (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)

**Out-white: What Jeff Foxworthy and Larry the Cable Guy are trying to do to each other.** (Erik Wennstrom, Bloomington, Ind.)

**Hand-burger: The result of an accident at the packing plant.** (Tom Witte)

**Imitation-sleazy: "I'm not a member of Congress, but I play one on TV."** (Christopher Lamora, Arlington)

**Plodding-package: Diagnosis requiring Viagra.** (Christopher Lamora)

**Squint-castration: A babe's withering look that tells a guy in a bar, "Don't even think about it."** (Dave Prevar)

**Yoga-bingo: Twister.** (Larry Yungk, Arlington)

**Anniversary-apology: The annual ritual marking a man's annual forgetting of the occasion that is supposed to reaffirm how important it is to him.** (Elizabeth O'Neill and Ryan Van Alstyne,

Manassas, First Offenders)

**Has-bean: An ex-vegan.** (Chris Doyle)

**Evaporated-cow: Where evaporated milk comes from.** (Mae Scanlan)

**Bear-head: The woods.** (Chris Doyle)

**Sheet-blogging: The modern, real-time equivalent of kiss-and-tell memoirs.** (Christopher Lamora)

**Zeroes-faking: Pretending to be rich.** (Kevin Dopart)

**Matzoh-bowels: The Eleventh Plague.** (Chris Doyle)

**Yahoo-spout: "Ask a question" at a town hall meeting on health insurance.** (G. Smith, New York)

**Fishing-sober: Still able to sit upright.** (Elwood Fitzner, Valley City, N.D.)

**Wigs-disease: Hairpiece simplex.** (Chris Doyle)

**Knobby-appliances: Electronics from back in the 20th century.** (Larry Yungk)

**And Last: Loser-postal: Dangerously ink-deprived.** (Beverly Sharp)

**Next Week: Tour de Fours VI, or The Whole ERTH Catalog**

**THIS WEEK'S CONTEST**



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

**Week 838: Picture This**

Almost-Forever Style Invitational Cartoonist Bob Staake almost cannot stop making art. He does covers for the *New Yorker*. He is the author and/or illustrator of 47 books, including four children's picture books that have not yet been released. You can even see him making his art (via Photoshop) on YouTube. In fact, the only way we've been able to stop Bob from making art is to have him draw cartoons such as the ones here. **This week: Provide a caption for any of these pictures.**



**The Empress's hair and the prize hair: One could be yours.**

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives a bag of springy-curly black fake hair for use on dolls, discourtesy of Luser Pie Snelson. This hair looks eerily like the *Empress's* own hair except that it is devoid of gray.

**Other runners-up** win their choice of a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt — now in the Loser colors of "maroon" and gold — or yeamed-for Loser Mug. Honorable Mentions get one of the lusted-after Style Invitational Magnets. One prize per entrant per week. Send your entries by e-mail to [losers@washpost.com](mailto:losers@washpost.com) or by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Oct. 19. Put "Week 838" 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 Nov. 7. 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 title for next week's results is by Dave Zarrow; this week's honorable-mentions name is by Chris Doyle.

**ONLINE DISCUSSION** Have a question for the *Empress* or want to talk to some real Losers? Join the Style Conversational at [washingtonpost.com/styleconversational](http://washingtonpost.com/styleconversational).

**THEATER**

**One-Acts Populated With Shavian Pistols**

By NELSON PRESSLEY  
Special to The Washington Post

There is a solution for handling dissenters that authorities rarely utter out loud, but it's spoken repeatedly and with great comic gusto in George Bernard Shaw's satirical "Press Cuttings." It's the early 20th century, suffragettes are teeming in London's streets, and General Mitchener of the British War Office knows what to do: "Shoot them down!"

It's the general's go-to answer, of course, and John Lescault — playing Mitchener as a kind of English forerunner to loony Buck Turgidson in "Dr. Strangelove" — finds an impressive variety of ways to deliver the line. This bit of one-act "tomfoolery," as Shaw called some of his short high-spirited pieces, boasts considerably more elaborate language than that, and so does the other politically impudent one-act in this twinbill, "Augustus Does His Bit."

The Washington Stage Guild has paired these together as "Strange Bedfellows," and the witty, energetic result shows that the company

still knows what to do with urbane, idea-rich scripts. Working at Catholic University's Callan Theater (the troupe has been itinerant for a number of years now), designer Marcus Darnley slaps a large painted Union Jack on the floor of the stage and a droll portrait of Shaw over a fireplace mantel; it looks like the puckish playwright is peering at us through the frame.

The rest is in the actors' hands — or rather, on their tongues, for either you can speak a speech that's full of policy parodies and precisely timed verbal grenades, or you can't. Director Bill Largess has rounded up a cast that's happy to carry on in the old-fashioned way, and the assured performers make virtues of haughty bluster and cool comeuppance.

Lescault sets an amusingly explosive tone; his Mitchener has the confidence and carriage of the ruling class, which naturally means that when order is threatened, steam practically comes out of his ears. "Press Cuttings" is set in an imaginary future in which martial law has been imposed on London, with the protesters of the women's



C. STANLEY PHOTOGRAPHY

Helen Hedman, left, John Lescault and Laura Giannarelli bring out the big guns in the Shaw one-act "Press Cuttings."

movement being the government's chief rowdy targets. Naturally, figures from this wing of the debate crash into Mitchener's War Office sanctum, with Laura Giannarelli playing a gloriously imposing firebrand named Mrs. Banger and Helen Hedman showing a lovely light touch as a dainty lady with a pistol so heavy it swings her around the room as she points it.

A good deal of the dialogue is inside baseball, as Shaw aimed his peashooter at the figures of the day, so "Press Cuttings" may be mainly for Shaw enthusiasts. "Augustus Does His Bit" seems more ever-

green, with the Augustus of the title being a government nincompoop manning his office in time of battle.

The actors in this one look like they could have stepped out of the funny papers. As Lord Augustus Highcastle, Vincent Clark has the dark suit and waxy black mustache of a pompous bureaucrat, while Alan Wade, playing a catch-all clerk, has the bedhead and red nose of a drunk. It's sort of a one-note joke, but then neither of these occasionally hectoring plays has the satisfying depth or dramatic shape of top-notch Shaw.

Still, the situation is ripe for gov-

ernmental bungling — the evening's theme, after all — and a smooth society lady (Lynn Steinmetz) becomes a convenient emble for the evening: a thumb Shaw amusingly sticks in the eye of the body politic.

"Strange Bedfellows: 'Press Cuttings' and 'Augustus Does His Bit,'" by George Bernard Shaw. Directed by Bill Largess. Costumes, William Pucilowsky; lighting, Marianne Meadows; sound, Clay Teunis. Through Oct. 18 at Catholic University's Callan Theater, 3801 Harewood Rd. NE. Call 240-582-0050 or visit [www.stageguild.org](http://www.stageguild.org).

**Thinking Big, Forum Theatre Mounts a Creditable 'Angels in America'**

THEATER, From Page C1

Street Playhouse in Northeast Washington to Round House Theatre's malleable second stage, an arena that proves a good platform for Forum's aims. Still, "Angels" is not the "Ring Cycle": Most of the scenes in "Millennium Approaches" are two-character conversations in offices and hospital rooms and on park benches, with occasional detours into the fantasies and hallucinations of characters stressed by disease and emotional upheaval.

So it's a more manageable project than you might think, and given the TLC with which the troupe embraces the play, an impressive undertaking. While the company's gentle approach yields excellent work from a fine cadre of actors — in particular, the sterling Karl Miller, playing the desperately ill, touched-by-an-angel Prior Walter — it must also be noted that the dramatic electricity doesn't surge here with quite the captivating sizzle of the past.

It just might be that the lightning that struck the astonishing original Broadway production — staged at a time when the lack of adequate AIDS response was a front-and-center political issue — can't entirely be reignited. This is in no way to diminish Kushner's achievement: "Watershed" tends to be an over-used term in the reviewing business, but with "Angels," the mingling of wit and invention and political passion makes for a unique theatrical tapestry, the sort of event truly earning the status of must-be-seen.

A sustained round of applause, then, for Forum's appetite as well as for the supple execution. What stays with you on this occasion is not so much the ferocity of the playwright's outrage at what he views as Reagan-era callousness: The portrait is of a country giving in to its prejudices rather than ministering to the needs of its citizens, of the homophobia and cynical materialism at work at a time of national emergency. Rather, it's the idea of person-

al crises captured on an urgently human scale, illuminated most profoundly in the subplot of the stricken Prior and his undependable partner, Louis (Alexander Strain), a man with a lot of brainpower but little staying power.

In a six-degrees-of-Kevin-Bacon sort of way, "Angels" links their lives to a disparate assortment of major and minor characters in mid-1980s New York City. Most notably, they include Joe Pitt (Daniel Eichner), a closeted law clerk, and his wife Harper (Casie Platt), who is spiraling ever deeper into despair as Joe, via Louis, begins to explore his true nature. Through Prior and Louis, we encounter Belize (Ro Boddie), a wisdom-spewing AIDS nurse and ex-drag queen who figures even more prominently in the upcoming Part 2, "Perestroika," when the patient he's assigned to is Joe's ranting mentor, a Kushneresque conjuring of the real-life lawyer Roy Cohn (Jim Jorgensen).

Skidmore and his cast put a high

value on the humor in "Angels," which is a boon to Kushner's most wittily self-aware characters: Boddie's spicy, opinionated Belize, Strain's cerebral Louis, Jennifer Mendenhall's earthy Ethel Rosenberg, who arrives triumphantly from the afterlife to spite Cohn, her erstwhile tormentor, now dying in agony of AIDS. A few performances do not resonate quite as vibrantly: Eichner's Joe, for example, could stand to shed some stolidity. Jorgensen, faced with one of the evening's toughest — and potentially richest — roles, lacks the inherently coarse dimension that can make the baiting, snarling Cohn such devilish theatrical fodder.

Platt, on the other hand, confers a childlike delicacy on the fragile Harper, a help in the close-to-precious scenes she has with Harper's imaginary friend, the aptly named Mr. Lies, played by Boddie. And by virtue of his textured portrayal of Prior, who's alternately funny here, and needy, and biting, and disarm-

ing, Miller firmly takes hold of the reins of the play, and provides the evening a core of emotional authenticity.

As he lies in bed, waiting in dread for whatever apparition hovers behind the billowing wall of fabric, half a startling epic has come and gone. The second half, "Perestroika," starts performances Oct. 26, and if it ends the journey with anything like the stark authority of this "Millennium," Forum will have cemented even further its reputation as a small company that points at large targets, and hits them.

**Angels in America: Millennium Approaches.** Directed by Jeremy Skidmore. Set, Tony Cisek; costumes, Heather Lockard and Ivania Stack; sound and music, Matt Nielson; HIV/AIDS consultant, Rose McConnell. With Nanna Ingvarsson. About 3 hours 20 minutes. Through Nov. 22 at Round House Theatre, 8641 Colesville Rd., Silver Spring. Visit [www.forumtheatre.org](http://www.forumtheatre.org) or [www.roundhousetheatre.org](http://www.roundhousetheatre.org).