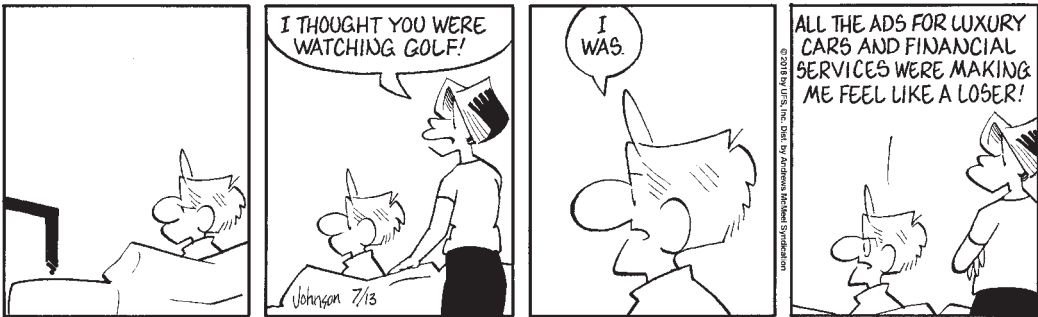
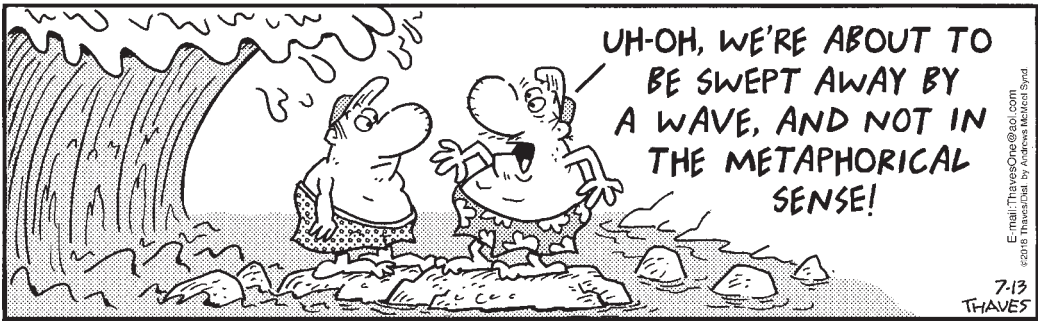


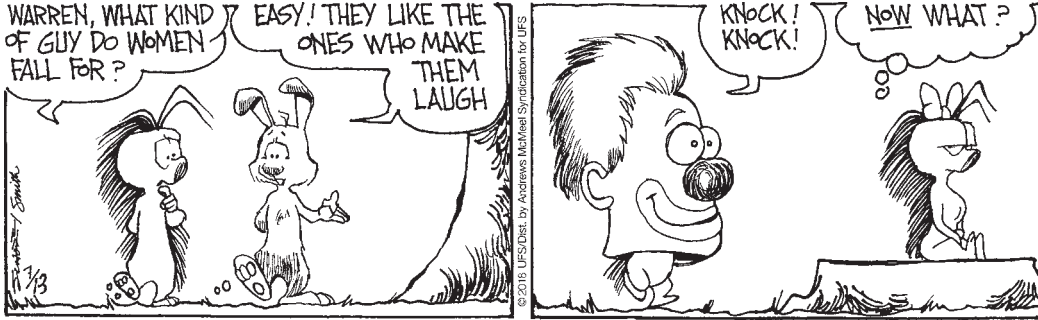
ARLO AND JANIS® by Jimmy Johnson



FRANK & ERNEST® by Bob Thaves



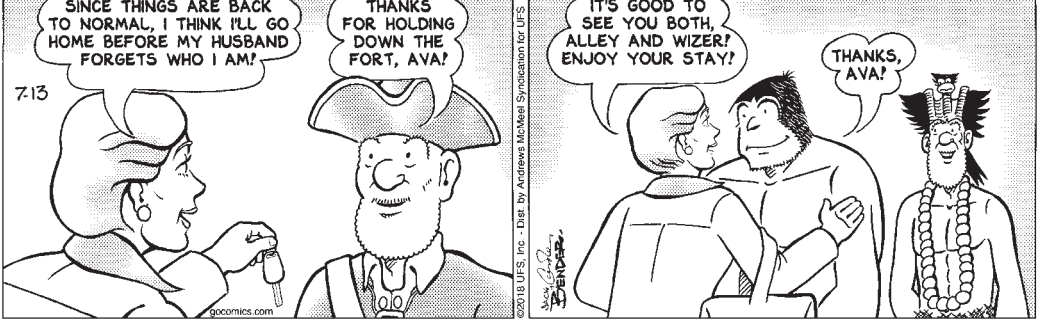
THE GRIZZWELLS® by Bill Schorr



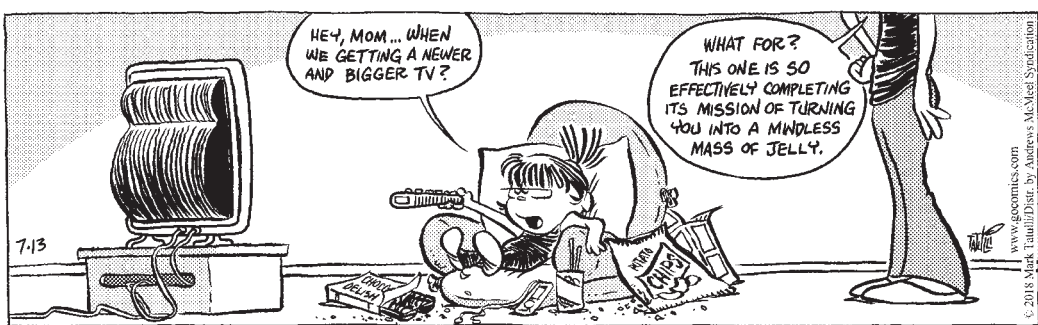
BIG NATE® by Lincoln Peirce



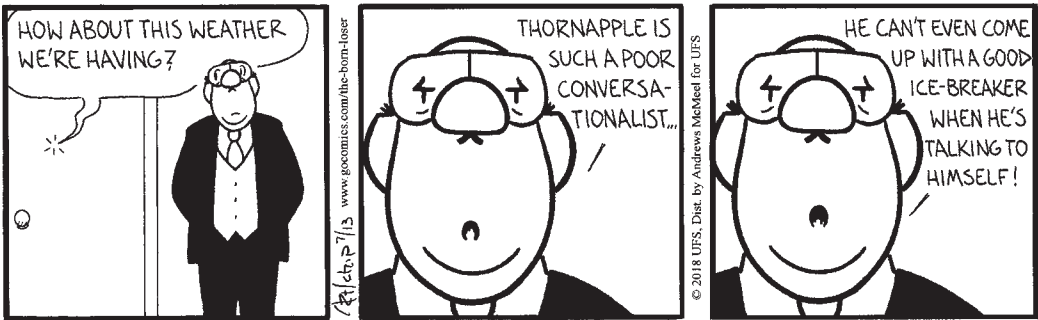
ALLEY OOP by Jack and Carole Bender



HEART OF THE CITY by Mark Tatulli



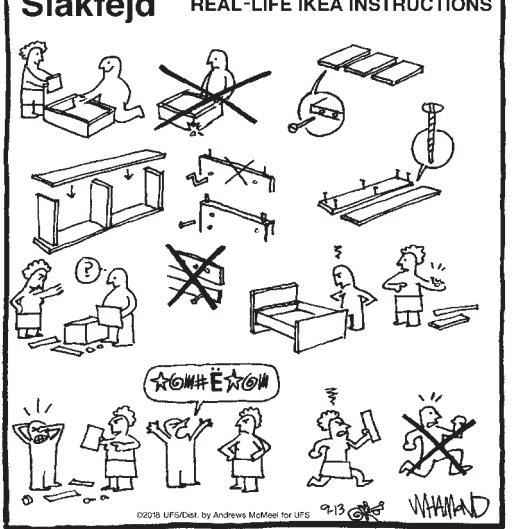
THE BORN LOSER™ by Art & Chip Sansom



HERMAN® by Jim Unger



REALITY CHECK® by Dave Whamond



AT THE MOVIES

The Rock is a towering hero in 'Skyscraper'

NEW YORK (AP) — I like to imagine what King Kong, as a popcorn-chomping moviegoer, might make of “Skyscraper,” the latest summer actioner starring Dwayne Johnson. Would he, watching a goliath ascend the exterior of a high-rise with helicopters and klieg lights swirling, woundedly mumble, “Hey, that’s my gig.”

But in Rawson Marshall Thurber’s thriller, there is Johnson steadily — and without too much trouble, really — swinging up a 100-story-high crane to then leap across a mammoth chasm and land in an open window on the burning 220-story tower where his wife and twin kids are trapped.

It goes without saying that if you’re the sort to scoff at a tale’s implausibility, “Skyscraper” may not be the movie you’re looking for. Experts in fields including physics, thermodynamics and screenwriting should proceed cautiously. But then again, few go to a movie starring the Rock and a tall building for sensible and realistic rescue methods. They go for the dumb fun, the crazy stunts and, above all, the Kong-sized appeal of Johnson, the towering movie star whose on-screen powers easily exceed those of any other action star today, superhero or not.

The Hong Kong-set “Skyscraper” is a kind of West-meets-East “Die Hard,” but without the gritty flair of John McTiernan’s film, nor anything like the villainous heights of Alan Rickman’s Hans Gruber. Johnson’s protagonist, too, is a polished family man, the inverse of Bruce Willis’ unshaven divorcee.

Johnson plays Will Sawyer, a former military man who, after a haunting hostage encounter, has become a security systems consultant. “I put my sword down,” says Sawyer, who has a prosthetic leg from the incident — a welcome touch in a movie world where disabilities are seldom represented.

Along with his former combat surgeon wife and their two kids, Sawyer is in Hong Kong to ready the security for “The Pearl,” a state-of-the-art skyscraper promoted as three times the size of the Empire State Building. With a swirling turbine midway up and a tennis ball-like sphere at the top, it

looks a little like a giant World Cup trophy.

The building is the pride of billionaire developer Zhao Long Ji, who has filled it with extravagant attractions, like a kind of digital hall-of-mirrors that will inevitably serve as the setting for a “Lady From Shanghai”-like shootout. He presides over it from the penthouse, more than 100 floors above anyone else in the unfinished high rise.

The Singaporean star Han is one of the many Asian actors who populate the film, clearly fashioned to appeal as much to Chinese filmgoers as American ones, though their roles are largely peripheral.

Sawyer’s family is installed on floor 96, a precarious spot when, just below them, a band of terrorists led by Kores

Botha sets a floor on fire, blazing a crimson line across the night skyline.

Their aim, like countless bandits before them, is to smoke out Zhao.

It’s an overly elaborate plan considering they mostly desire the flash drive Zhao carries with him. But what bloodthirsty international mercenary isn’t a big fan of “The Towering Inferno”?

That the timing felt right to Thurber and Johnson for a film about a skyscraper under terrorist assault is itself noteworthy. Such a movie would have been unthinkable in the years after Sept. 11, and for some, still is. But this year, for whatever reason, seems to close a chapter in the post-9/11 disaster movie. In April, “Rampage” didn’t hesitate to topple urban towers in clouds of dust.

“Skyscraper” doesn’t have any such thoughts — or, really, any thoughts, period — in mind. It’s counting on your amnesia to the past, on screen and off, and it will readily supply you with two hours of mindless escape. It does the job better than most, thanks largely to its hulking hero. When Johnson makes his crane leap — the movie’s much-promoted central set piece — throngs surrounding the building ooh and aah.

“Skyscraper,” a Universal Pictures release, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association of America for “sequences of gun violence and action, and for brief strong language.” Running time: 102 minutes.



CROSSWORDS

ACROSS

1 — up (clean)
4 Cupola
8 Rhea kin
11 Fish story
13 Heed
14 Up roar
15 Quaker pronoun
16 Sommelier's choice (2 wds.)
18 Jeep-like vehicle
20 Mr. Preminger
21 Greet the moon
22 Billings hrs.
24 Pie pro
27 Teahouse hostess
30 Scored well
31 Ex-GIs
32 Holy terror
34 First space lab
35 Lo-cal
36 Form a scab
37 Clog locales

DOWN

1 Ancient tale
2 Waikiki's island
3 Teen event
4 Bride's property
5 Sapporo sash
6 Game pieces
7 Watch carefully
8 Modify

Answer to Previous Puzzle

A	S	H		B	O	O		T	I	L	T	
R	H	O		M	O	L	D		I	D	E	A
M	I	S	G	U	I	D	E		G	L	A	D
	P	E	A	R	L			T	R	E	K	
			L	A	S		O	R	E			
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C	R	Y		S	C	A	B		S	O	L	E
S	I	P	S		U	R	S	A		R	O	N
	C	O	M	P	L	Y		Z	O	N	E	D
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	V	O	L	E			A	L	E	C	K	
D	I	L	L		M	O	S	E	Y	I	N	G
A	B	L	E		A	R	E	A		T	I	E
N	E	A	R		D	O	S		E	T	E	

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