

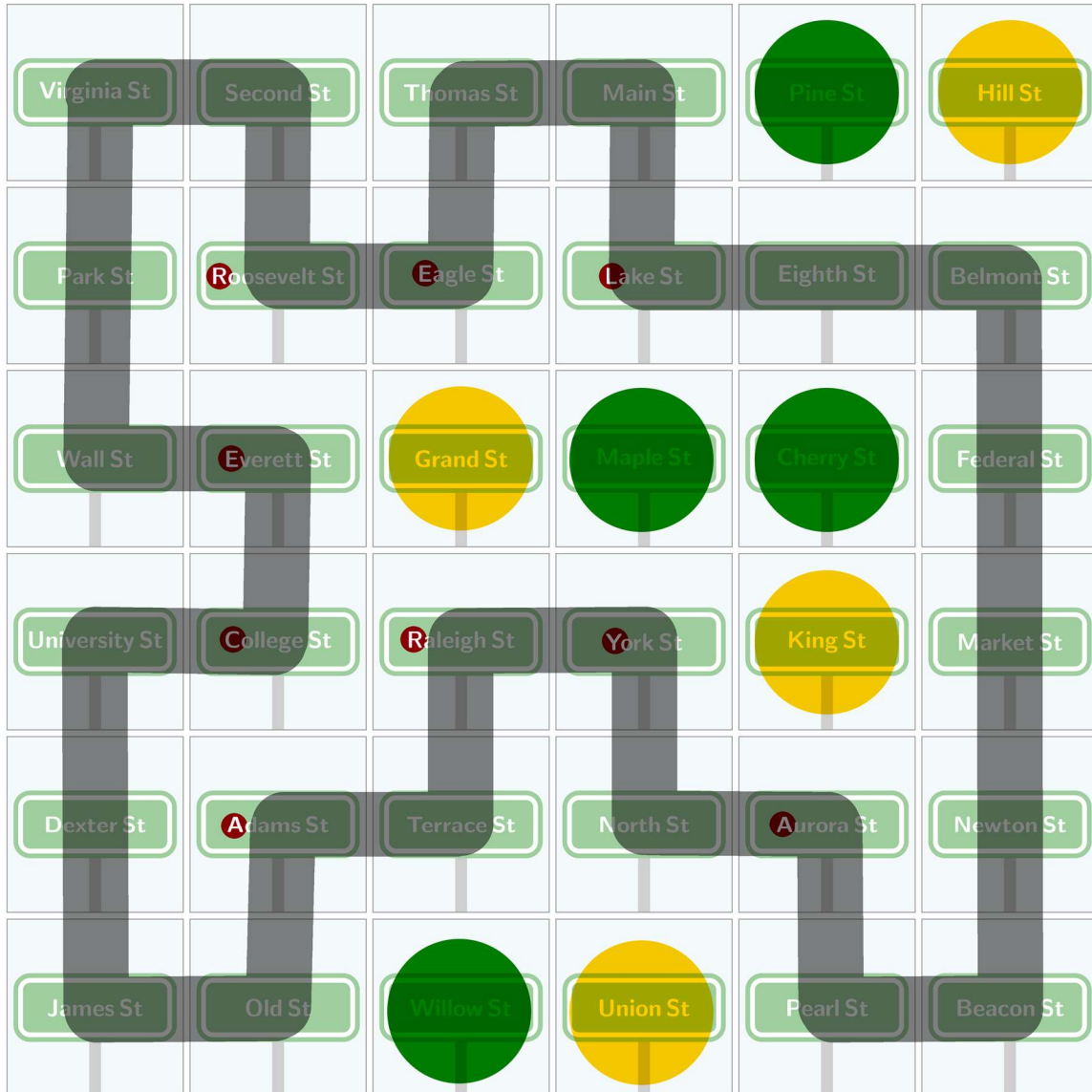
METAMETA: The Riddler

Scott Handelman & Jonah Ostroff (ft. Manic Volcanic)

Answer: **WESTWARD BOUND**

Part I

In a callback to Poison Ivy, look for the street names that are types of trees, and once again complete a Tents and Trees puzzle that allows for a single looped path along all the unused spaces, starting in the upper left. (As confirmation, Second and Eighth should be the second and eighth boxes you visit, respectively.)



Doing as the instructions say and highlighting all the streets where the loop makes a left turn, the first letters of those spell out the answer to this part of the puzzle, RELAY RACE.

Part II

In a callback to Killer Croc, this puzzle is all about clipped words. The pictures on the top all represent words with clipped versions; the bottom strings can be attached to the “clipped away” parts of the top words to form other words.

Image Word	Clipped	Altered Word	String	Image #	Get
DORMITORY	DORM	TERRITORY	TERR	4	R
TEENAGER(S)	TEEN(S)	VILLAGER(S)	VILL	2	I
SISTER	SIS	GOITER	GOI	1	G
EXAMINATION	EXAM	MACHINATION	MACH	4	H
CHAMPION	CHAMP	STALLION	STALL	2	T
CHEMISTRY	CHEM	DENTISTRY	DENT	4	T
HELICOPTER	HELI	HELIOTROPE	OTROPE	3	R
DOCTOR	DOC	EDITOR	EDI	3	I
REVOLUTION	REV	ABSOLUTION	ABS	1	A
ALLIGATOR	GATOR	ALLIANCES	ANCES	2	N
PROFESSOR	PROF	AGGRESSOR	AGGR	2	G
TUXEDO	TUX	TOLEDO	TOL	3	L
BUTTOCKS	BUTT	PEACOCKS	PEAC	2	E

Use the numbers on the images to index into the replacement strings, in the order the pictures are presented in, to read out the answer for this part, RIGHT TRIANGLE.

Part III

In a callback to Firefly & Mr. Freeze, this thermometer sudoku involves some video clips of hot/cold things that have hot/cold counterparts. Solve the sudoku, identify the videos, then use the number at the *other end* of the thermometer to index into the hotter or colder counterpart.

5 ^(a)	3	6	1	2	4
4	1	2	3	5	6
3	5	4	2	6 ^(b)	1
6	2	1 ^(c)	5	4	3
1 ^(e)	6	5	4	3	2
2	4	3	6	1 ^(d)	5

ID	Video Content	Set It Belongs To	Opposite Member	Other End	Index Opp.
(a)	CHILL PENGUIN	<i>Mega Man X</i> enemies	FLAME MAMMOTH	5	E
(b)	MOLTRES	Gen. 1 bird legends	ARTICUNO	1	A
(c)	EVEREST	<i>Paw Patrol</i> puppies	MARSHALL	4	S
(d)	POLAR BEAR	Common bear names	SUN BEAR	5	E
(e)	HOT BLOODED	Foreigner songs	COLD AS ICE	3	L

Reading the indexes of the counterparts gives this part’s answer, EASEL.

Finale

The answers to the three mini-puzzles before this (RELAY RACE, RIGHT TRIANGLE and EASEL) all have a distinct number of legs; (usually) four, (always) two, and (usually) three, respectively. This leads to the Riddle of the Sphinx. (Spoiler alert!) (No, the regular kind.)

Q: What has four legs in the morning, two legs at midday, and three legs in the evening?
 A: Man; he crawls on all fours as a baby, walks as an adult, and uses a cane when old.

The Gotham meta-answers can be preceded with BABY (BABY BUGGY), ADULT (ADULT SWIM) and OLD (OLD SALT) to fill out the three-by-three blanks. These can then be fit into the schedule blanks in the appropriate order. (Note that ADULT SWIM TRANQS starts on noon.)

BABY
ADULT
OLD

BUGGY
SWIM
SALT

HOLLY,
TRANQS,
WEAPONRY

Departures		
7:20 AM		B
7:40 AM	6	A
8:00 AM	9	B
8:20 AM		Y
8:40 AM		B
9:00 AM	11	U
9:20 AM		G
9:40 AM		G
10:00 AM		Y
10:20 AM		H
10:40 AM	10	O
11:00 AM		L
11:20 AM		L
11:40 AM		Y
12:00 PM		A
12:20 PM	8	D
12:40 PM		U
1:00 PM		L
1:20 PM	4	T
1:40 PM		S
2:00 PM	1	W
2:20 PM		I

Departures		
2:40 PM		M
3:00 PM		T
3:20 PM	7	R
3:40 PM		A
4:00 PM		N
4:20 PM		Q
4:40 PM	3	S
5:00 PM		O
5:20 PM		L
5:40 PM	13	D
6:00 PM		S
6:20 PM		A
6:40 PM		L
7:00 PM		T
7:20 PM	5	W
7:40 PM	2	E
8:00 PM		A
8:20 PM		P
8:40 PM		O
9:00 PM	12	N
9:20 PM		R
9:40 PM		Y

Extract the indicated letters in order to yield the final answer, **WESTWARD BOUND**.

Author's Notes

Scott: This whole hunt was basically an excuse to make a really dumb WEST, WARD BOUND joke that 90% of people probably didn't get until they reached the victory page and had it explained to them. Shout out to Tane who pointed out during the hunt that there was a scene in the original series where Batman and Robin meet Don Ho while climbing down a building, so the three actors in that scene would be WEST WARD HO. [chef's kiss]

My contributions to this puzzle were the mechanics behind the Killer Croc and Freeze/Firefly meta redux puzzles. The Freeze/Firefly puzzle gave us a chance to use pairs that we couldn't fit into the main puzzle (HOT BLOODED/COLD AS ICE was actually the pair that gave me the idea for the other meta in the first place) or that wouldn't have worked as well in the main puzzle (POLAR BEAR/SUN BEAR could have been in the original, but both letters would have come from the word BEAR which isn't great).

I don't have much to say about the Killer Croc redux other than it was written at a time when we didn't have a Two-Face puzzle, which seemed like a weird character to not include, and I was almost (but not quite) willing to rewrite this puzzle so that all the clipped words were at the front so that Two-Face would have been the perfect name for it.

Jonah: Early on in the writing process, I noticed that the Riddle of the Sphinx would be a really convenient framing for the metameta, especially since we already thought that three metas was a good length to shoot for. The BABY / ADULT / OLD villain meta mechanic came pretty quickly, as did the idea of cluing this mechanic with variously legged items. We started coming up with potential meta puns right away, and decided we'd figure out the actual meta shell later. This was a bad idea.

The first test, with a team who was working from the meta answers, went just as we hoped: a five-minute aha that functioned as a cute victory lap. The first real test, with a team working in hunt-like conditions (two days before the hunt began), was a disaster. Up until that point, we hadn't noticed the correspondence between the number of time slots and the number of answers that weren't to the villain metas, which turned out to be a huge red herring for a lot of teams. We tried to fix it by adding the nine blanks, but in retrospect that wasn't nearly enough.

There's probably a lesson in here about testing metas early, and about how important it is to simulate what it will be like for actual solvers. I'm still pretty happy with how the mini-puzzles and the "legs" aha worked out, but that last step, oof. Sorry to the teams for whom this led to an unsatisfying and slobby finish.

Manic: My main contribution to this puzzle was compiling the Killer Croc redux image (yes, the depiction of a butt in the bottom corner is my lovely handiwork) and writing some of the pairs. Getting the right letters for the answer was surprisingly difficult. A few that I really liked but we had to sub out: PREP/DECLARE, SPEC/MAGNIFICATION, TECH/CHRONOLOGY, and VENT/COMPILATION.