

Uncle oversteps boundaries

Dear Annie: I am a 33-year-old married man. My wife and I both have children from previous marriages. My daughter sees us every other weekend, but my wife's 10-year-old daughter lives with us. I have been supporting her since she was 3, and I love her like she was my own. My wife's ex has no interest in seeing her.

My wife has a brother who is my age. He's never been married or had kids. Recently, while my wife was out of town, her brother and I had a falling out. He was angry with our 10-year-old for not listening to him, and told her off in a manner I found crude and disrespectful. At first, I didn't say anything, because my mother-in-law was present and she told him to cut it out. But he didn't listen to her and continued belittling and embarrassing the girl.

I told him that if he wanted others to respect what he says, he needs to show respect himself. I also said that he was being immature and making mountains out of molehills. We argued for 20 minutes, and as he walked out the door, he told me that I wasn't her real father and that my wife had given him permission to dis-

Annie's Mailbox

Creators Syndicate Inc.

Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar



cipline her whenever she didn't listen to him. I have yet to speak to my wife to see if this is true.

I will be the first to admit that when it comes to discipline, I am easygoing. But does an aunt or uncle have any authority to discipline nieces and nephews? And does my not being her father give my brother-in-law precedence over me? I know my brother-in-law loves his niece, but I can't stand the way he treats her. And I'm tired of having the fact that I'm not her biological father thrown in my face all the time. What do I do? — *Confused Dad*

Dear Dad: First, talk to your wife and clear this up. An uncle has no authority to discipline unless he has the parents' permission, and this immature brother-in-law should not have such permission. And an uncle would

never take precedence over a stepparent unless the stepparent was abusive or neglectful, and some other relative had to step in. That doesn't sound like the case here. The fact that your mother-in-law also found his behavior objectionable makes him sound like a bully. You and your wife should go over these issues and make sure you support one another.

Dear Annie: I saw the letter from "Didn't Like It, Either," about children who don't want to hug or kiss relatives.

Years ago, when my granddaughter was younger, she was embarrassed by my hugs and kisses when I dropped her at school. So we started doing "Pinky Hugs and Thumb Kisses." We hooked our pinky fingers together (hugs) and then pressed our thumbs together (kisses). It worked fine.

She is all grown up now, and we still laugh and do it when we say goodbye. Just thought you might want to pass it on. — *J.*

Dear J.: This is adorable. And it can help those children who love their relatives and want to show affection, but find physical contact too difficult or awkward.

Tomorrow's horoscope

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). You're not the type to enter a game you know you can win. What's the fun in that? You choose the game that's a challenge. You want to learn the lessons that are offered there, and you will.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). The social arena may feel a bit stiff, and that's where you come in. You have a way of helping people feel comfortable enough to let down their guards and share.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Doing what's good for your body, mind and spirit isn't as easy as eating a few vegetables. Healthy relationships are at the center of this equation. Put health first and life flows in beautiful order from there.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). You'll encounter talkers and you'll encounter doers. (You're a little of both.) These two types need each other, by the way. The talkers will be publicity for what the doers accomplish.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). You've a knowledge of human nature that is wise beyond your years and beyond the experiences you've had in this lifetime. Use it to choose the perfect mix of company.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). When the fun is not obviously provided you take it upon yourself to bring your own. Your knack for coming up with intriguing ways of framing experiences is unparalleled.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). You are not dependent on the good opinions of others, and yet they will help you get a few of the things you want, like more work, better prospects and exciting opportunities. You'll walk that precarious line between caring

and not caring.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Personal opinions are not the same as wisdom. There are so many who want to guide you now, each with his or her private reasons. The best guide is within you.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). A comic who gets paid per laugh learns rather quickly how to read the room. Most people aren't as in tune as that. You are. Reading the room is your specialty now, even if said "room" consists of only one person.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). A good argument requires one to listen carefully to the preceding statement and refute it methodically. You like a good argument. You do not, however, appreciate an unreasonable one — it's best to walk away from those.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). The focus will be on improving your financial state, likely through disciplined investing. If it's not going to pay you back in some way, you won't buy it.

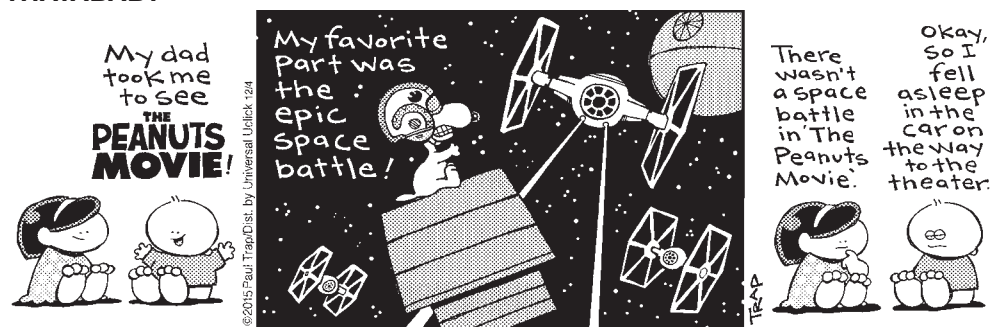
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). There's an advantage in every situation. You absolutely must look for it! It's OK to accept circumstances that are less than what you wanted as long as you look for (and then play) the advantage.

SATURDAY'S BIRTHDAY (Dec. 5). It's a year of intellectual expansion. Learning one thing well teaches you to learn in general, which opens the door to whatever expertise you'd like to gain. Your self-esteem will grow with every skill you are able to acquire. There are many who will root for you. Your wanderlust will get the better of you in June. Aries and Scorpio adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 4, 19, 34, 38 and 22.

FRANK AND ERNEST



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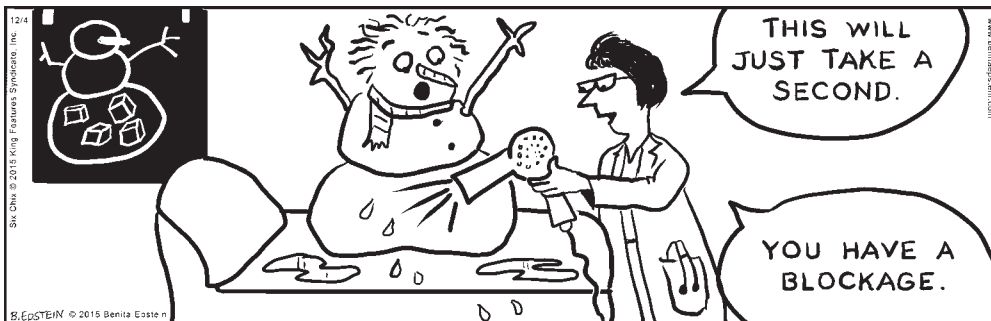
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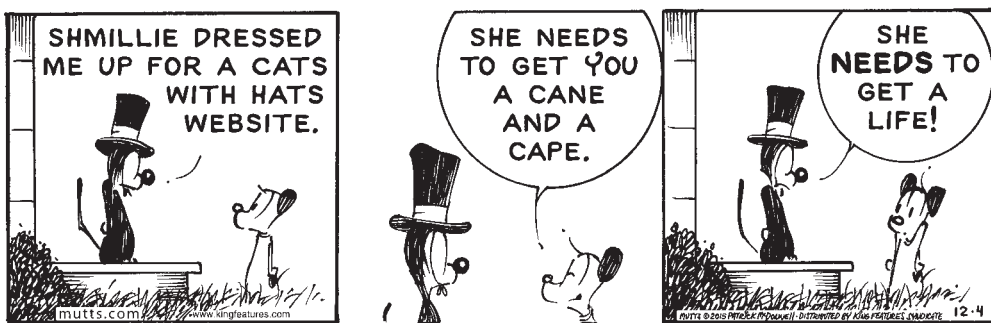
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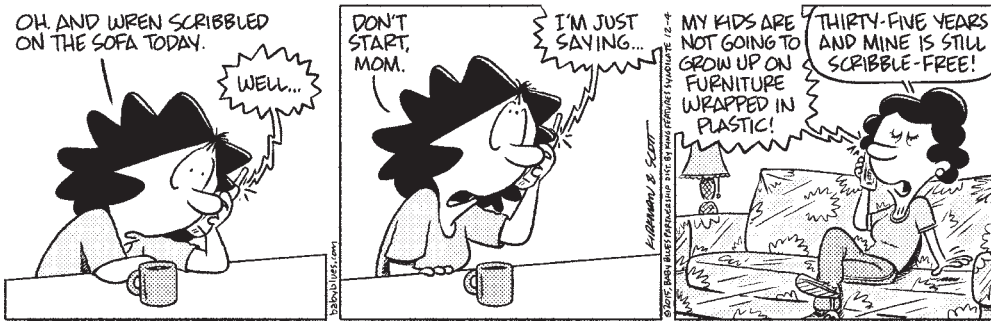
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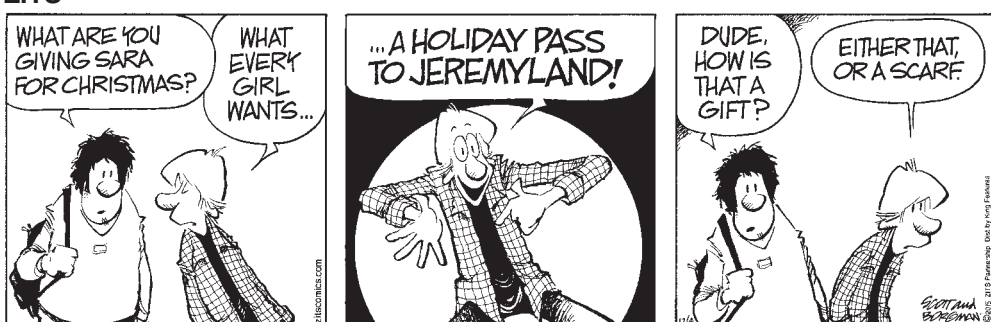
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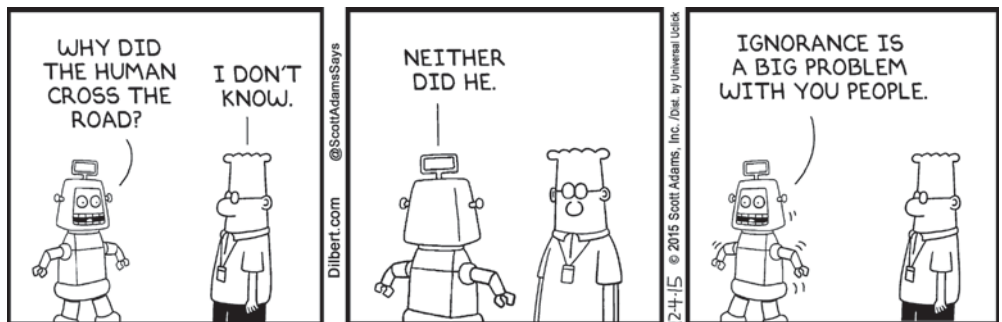
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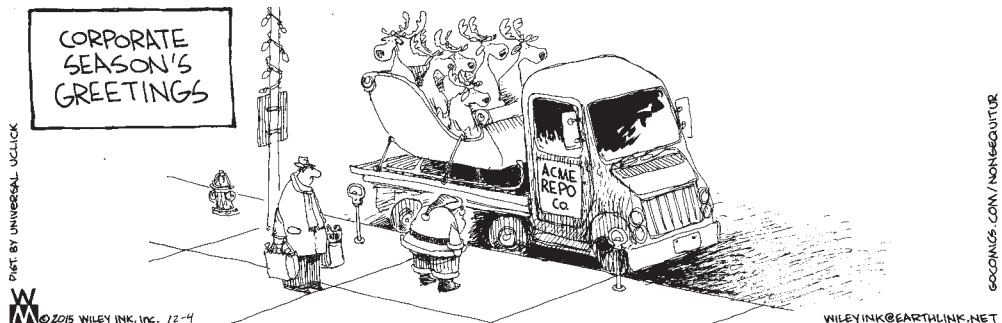
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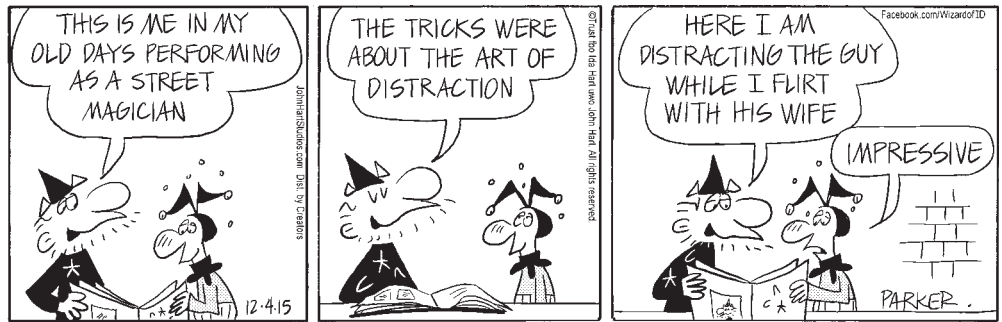
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