

Sister tired of being mocked

Dear Annie: I am the youngest sister of 10 siblings. Over the years, five siblings have died. You'd think we would try to be closer after such awful losses. So when does the bullying stop?

I have tried to be an upstanding sister and aunt, but no matter how much I contribute my money, time and empathy, they think it's OK to belittle me and encourage their kids and friends to do the same. I never talk trash about my sisters. Actually, I speak very highly of them in front of and behind their backs. They do not return the favor.

I've put up with the "little sister syndrome" for decades and am quite tired of it. It's worse when they get their friends to gang up on me. At last year's Christmas party, my sister's best friend said I was the "screw up" of the family in front of everyone and not one person stood up for me. My sister's mother-in-law snickered at some other nasty comment someone made about me.

I have decided to limit my contact with my siblings and avoid them altogether on holidays, since I become everyone's target. They don't think their actions are wrong or hurtful. I'm done with being the nice sister just to be thrown under the bus and run over repeatedly. They say

Annie's Mailbox

Creators
Syndicate Inc.

Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar



I'm "too sensitive," but if someone treated them this way, they would fall to pieces. I thought time and maturity would soften this behavior, but it's just gotten worse. Any suggestions? — *Sister in Situation*

Dear Sister: It's too bad your siblings haven't managed to grow up, but not everyone does. This is the family dynamic they are accustomed to, and not even the deaths of five of you have altered it. Ten children is a lot, and in some families, kids feel the parents are neglecting them in favor of a younger sibling. This could be how things began, but it no longer matters. You get to decide how to handle them now.

Try talking to each sibling individually. Say that you love and value them, but you are tired of being mocked and hurt. Ask them to be more aware of the way they treat you, so that your remaining

years together can be happy and loving. Give them the opportunity to change. But if they are unwilling to work on this, it makes sense for you to see less of them.

Dear Annie: I think your response to "Confused and Torn" was perfect. She said her boyfriend thought she should put her 15-year-old Pomeranian, "Clover," to sleep because the dog was in constant pain and not likely to improve. I've had to put several pets to sleep because of old age and it's always a horrific decision to make. However, Clover's owner is doing a great disservice to the dog by insisting on keeping her alive when she's in so much agony.

I would like to make a suggestion that may make the decision a little easier. She should have Clover cremated and indicate in her will that she would like Clover's ashes to be put in the coffin with her. In that way, the little dog will be with her forever. I will do this with my one remaining cat when the time comes and just the thought of it makes the burden a little lighter to bear.

— *Indiana*
Dear Indiana: Thank you for writing. We hope "Confused and Torn" will consider your advice for Clover's sake.

Tomorrow's horoscope

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). The Yugoslavian proverb suggests that if you want to know what a man is, place him in authority. Indeed, you'll learn something more about yourself as you fulfill the leadership role that's thrust upon you.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). City lights are only dazzling because of the darkness that surrounds them. If you find yourself in bleak circumstances, consider it lucky — it's the perfect backdrop to highlight your inner shine.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Don't assume your opinion is similar to the rest. You're looking at the same thing everyone else is looking at and yet you're seeing something completely different. Speak up. They need to hear you.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Sure, you need to make living and/or make your way in the world, just like everyone else. Still, you have a bigger vision in mind. You have a burning need to enrich the world with your presence. You will succeed in this today.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Why do people think that it's bad luck to state your good luck aloud. Truly, there is no reason to knock on wood. Count your blessings and watch them multiply as you do.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Weak and ineffective decision-making happens when the person who makes the decision is not the one who bears the consequence of that decision. You can affect great change by applying this truth.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Courteous and obliging — that's your nature. It is because of your application of good manners and social graces (and not in spite of it) that you are

able to lay down boundaries that others will respect.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Once you know what you want to do, you have the audacity to commit your whole self to it. Until then, you're wise to dip a finger or a toe in. They will want more from you, but you don't owe anyone any promises.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You root for the success of your loved ones. There may be tinges of jealousy there, too, though you've nothing to worry about. In pushing someone up the hill, you'll get closer to the top.

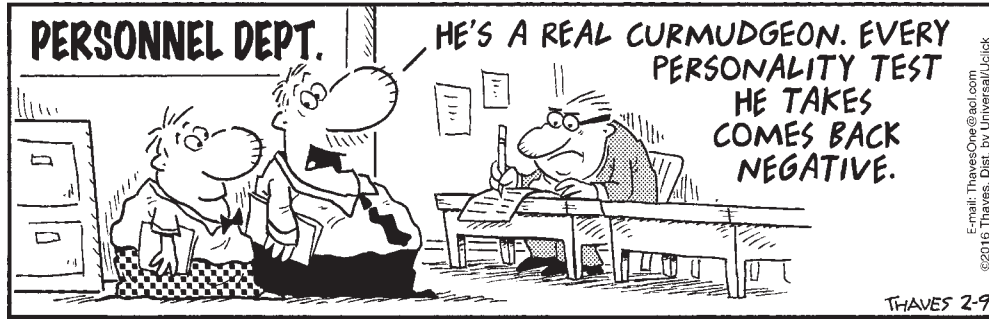
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). You do not give your trust easily, and yet you realize that to some degree everyone can be trusted. But trusted to do what? That is the question. Trust is really a matter of prediction.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). You know that life is not about acquiring things or collecting achievements, and yet those goals do keep you in the path most likely for "life" to happen upon you.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You deliver praise lavishly and without expectation of reciprocation. This is not only generous, but also smart. Later, when you have a wish or comment that may be considered a bit sensitive or critical, you will be well-received.

WEDNESDAY'S BIRTHDAY (February 10). Yours is the long way, but that is also the way you gain the most confidence, the greatest amount of skills and the highest likelihood of making good on the same gold mine for years to come. You've an instinct for the winning move! March proves this and July proves it again. Travel in September. Leo and Scorpio adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 40, 2, 11, 22 and 19.

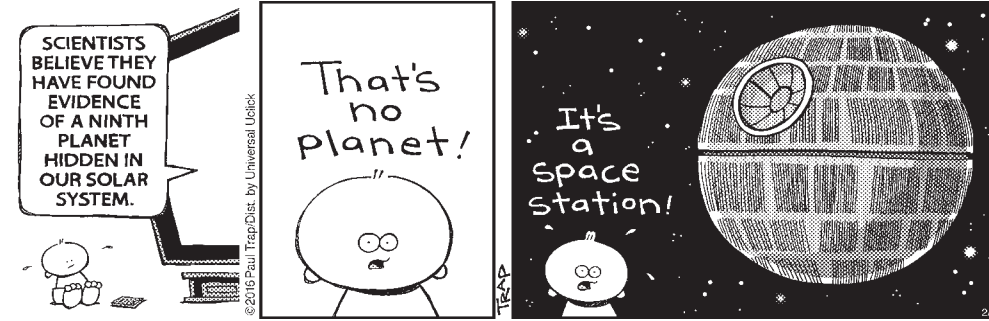
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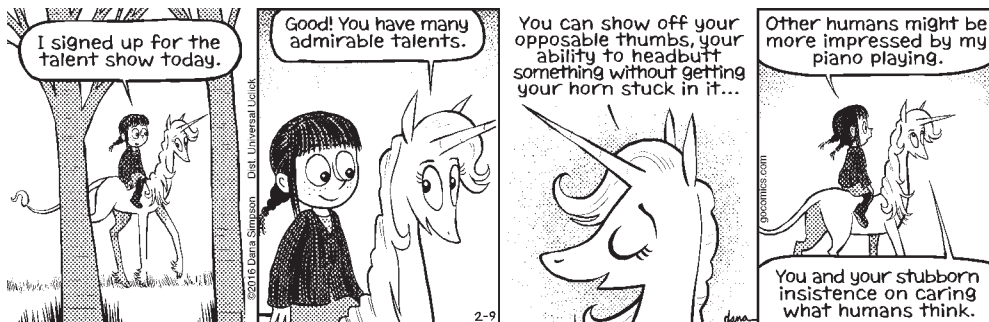
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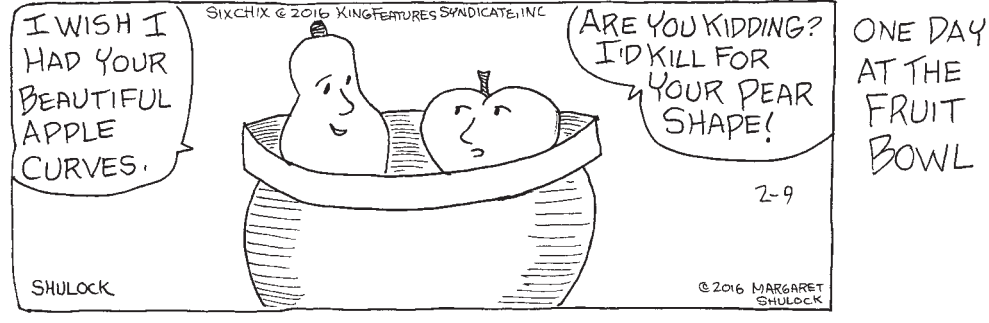
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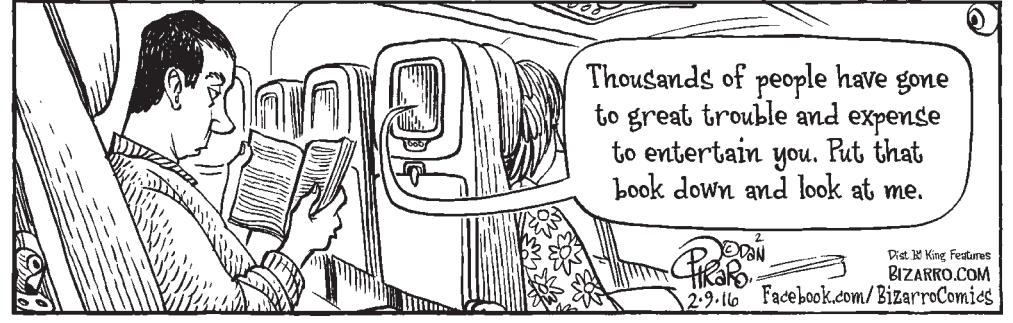
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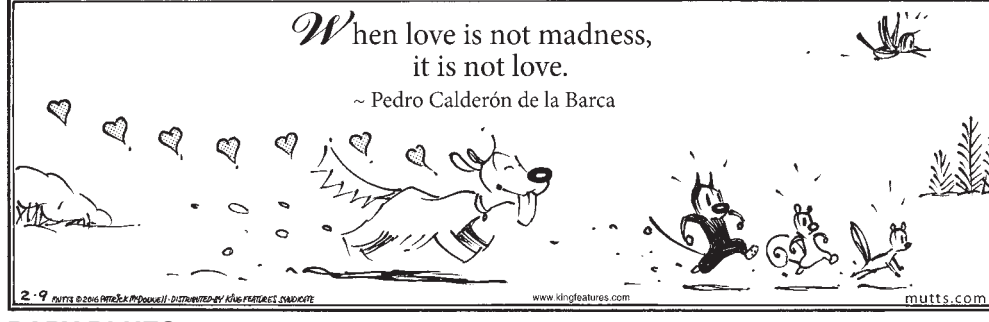
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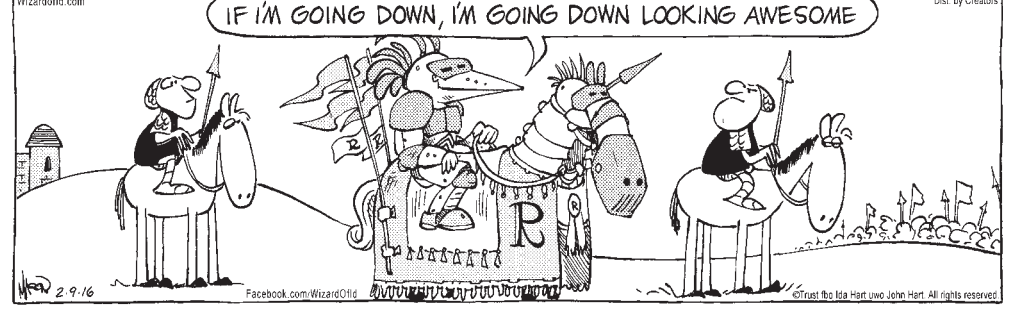
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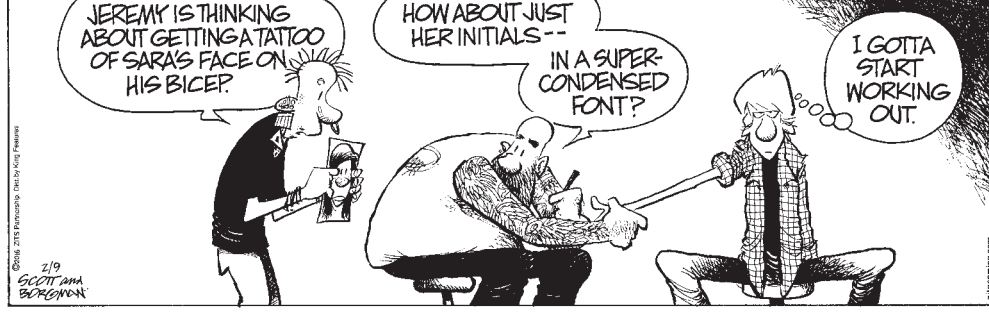
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