

Fiance choosing alcohol

Dear Annie: My fiance, "Derek," and I have been together for four years and recently purchased a home. Here's the problem: Derek's father passed away a year ago, and since then, Derek has been drinking a lot. I'd like to get married and start a family, but I am finding it really difficult to want a life with him.

I have not spoken to anyone about this. I've been trying to work it out with Derek on my own. He'll say that he has to "do better," but within a week, things take a turn for the worse. He can't seem to control the drinking once he starts. I have suggested it might be time to see someone, but he doesn't recognize that there is a serious problem.

Now, Derek has started to blame me for his drinking. He says he resents me because I don't want him to drink. After the last argument, I told him that I was going to move back in with my parents. He stopped for a week and then started up again.

Derek doesn't seem to care about my feelings and clearly isn't willing to "do better," as he keeps promising. I think he tells me what I want to hear, and I have not taken the right steps to show him

Annie's Mailbox

Creators Syndicate Inc.

Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar



that I won't put up with it. I don't want to waste four more years dealing with this. What do you recommend? — *Ready to Give Up*

Dear Ready: You can suggest to Derek that he get grief counseling, since he doesn't seem to be coping well with his father's death. You also can look into Al-Anon (al-anon.org) for yourself. But please don't expect Derek to change for you. Until he demonstrates that he has, in fact, curtailed his drinking for the long term, nothing you say or do will help. You can only do what is best for your own situation. If you believe that moving out will be better for you, don't make idle threats. Do it. Then decide whether you are better off with or without Derek — the way he is.

Dear Annie: I read the letter from "The Ones Left Behind,"

who said that she and her husband raised her three kids with no help from their birth father. Now that the kids are grown, the father is back in the picture and the kids are hungry for his attention. She feels they are leaving her in the dust.

I gave my ex-wife a divorce with no complications. I always paid child support on time. She moved. I paid the plane fare to get my son in the summer. Then she claimed she couldn't get him to the airport and I had to drive down to pick him up. I got a lawyer involved and that made it worse.

I didn't want to tell my son what kind of mother she really was, so I figured I would stay away and maybe he would someday look me up. It's been 25 years. — *Brokenhearted*

Dear Brokenhearted: We are sorry that you've lost this relationship. But parents without custody must work hard to remain in their children's lives, no matter how difficult the ex makes things. The kids don't know why you have withdrawn. They only know that you no longer seem interested in them, and a vindictive ex will make sure such negative beliefs are reinforced.

Tomorrow's horoscope

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Money and security are important to you. Don't let anyone make you feel like you're uptight just because you need to know the details connected to your financial security. It doesn't make you uptight; it makes you smart.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). You'll make practical choices, honor tradition and show up where you're expected. At some point you'll wonder what's in it for you — a natural response to these circumstances. You'll find out the answer to that soon enough.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Common interests and social activities are at the center of a relationship right now, but there has to be more than that at the center for this to work well. Dig deeper and note what else is there.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). You are devoted to your loved ones and domestic life, but you have many tastes and interests outside of the realm of what your friends and family can understand.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). You know right away what is for you and what is not. However, you won't say no right away, because you care about people's feelings. Later, you'll be glad you make the effort to let them down gently.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Hard-selling isn't your thing. You prefer to present your case then step back and let people draw their own conclusions. Today's situation is different. There's more at stake, and it will be worth it to push and make it happen.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). You'll do more to push a group's agenda than you would ever do to forward your own private interests. Think about this. Don't you deserve as ferocious a fight as you're giving on behalf

of others?
SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). People will remember what you told them first and also the last thing you said. As for the middle, well, blame it on the diminishing attention span of the new world; then find another way to get that important message across.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You've a need for close personal relationships, but this need is not as driving or overwhelmingly big for you as it is for some. You can relate with compassion to the intense souls of your life while still maintaining perspective.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Although you approach the problem from a different place, you will come to the same solution as another great mind across the way. This is not happening by accident. Take it as a hint and let it bring you together.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). This day comes complete with the gifts of a rare quality of warmth, affection and attraction. Enjoy and, while you're at it, save a little piece of this so you can recall it better later.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Diplomacy is often the best way to go, but in today's instance this is not the case. You'll be better off to take a stand for what you really believe; otherwise you'll wind up in a tight spot later.

TUESDAY'S BIRTHDAY (Feb. 16). By this time next year you'll be richer! You'll put your off-the-chart energy levels to excellent use in the next 10 weeks and get set for a major move mid-April. May is romantic, though love will visit you in many other forms, as well, as you head into a summer of rather unusual and exciting circumstances. Virgo and Sagittarius adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 29, 1, 22, 23 and 30

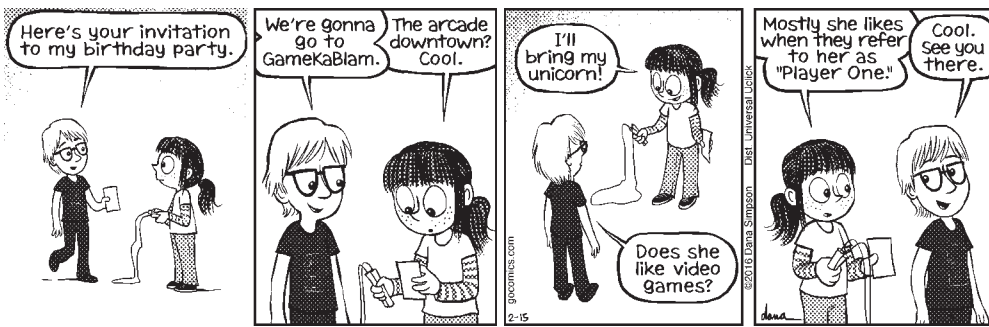
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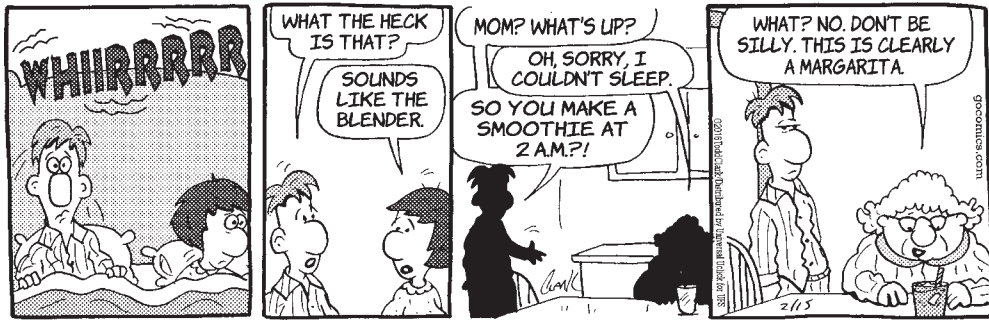
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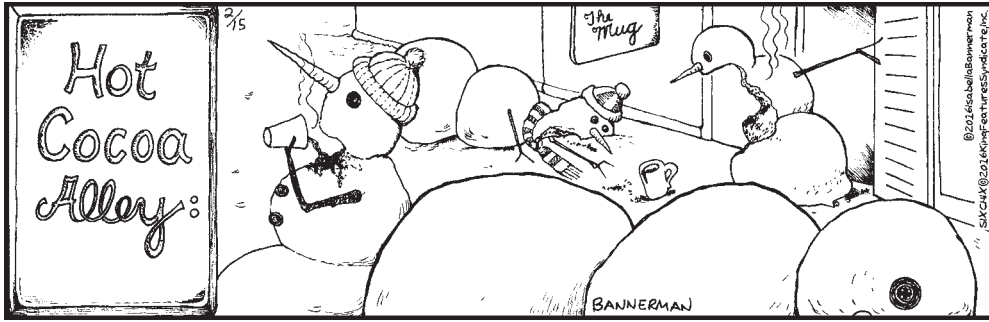
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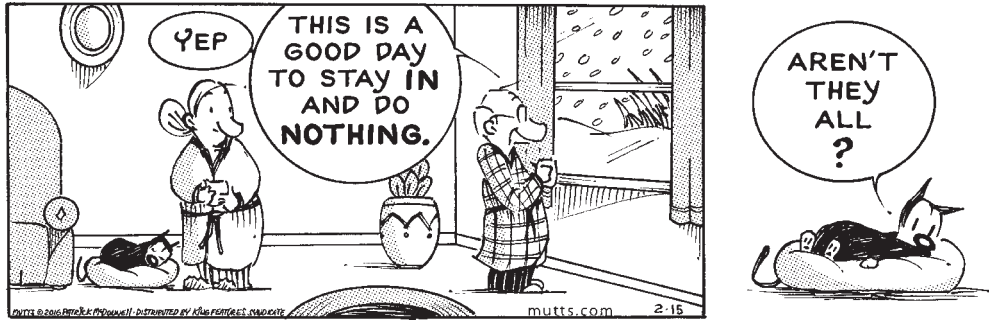
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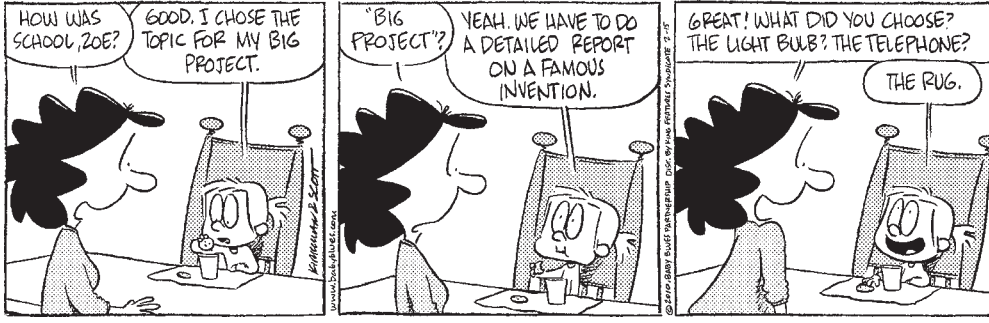
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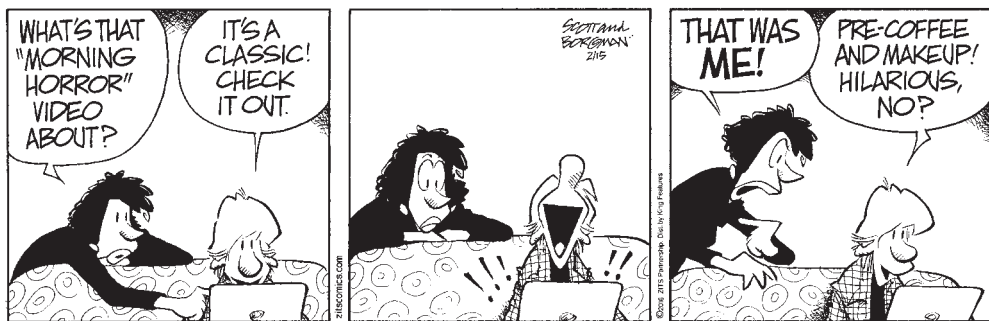
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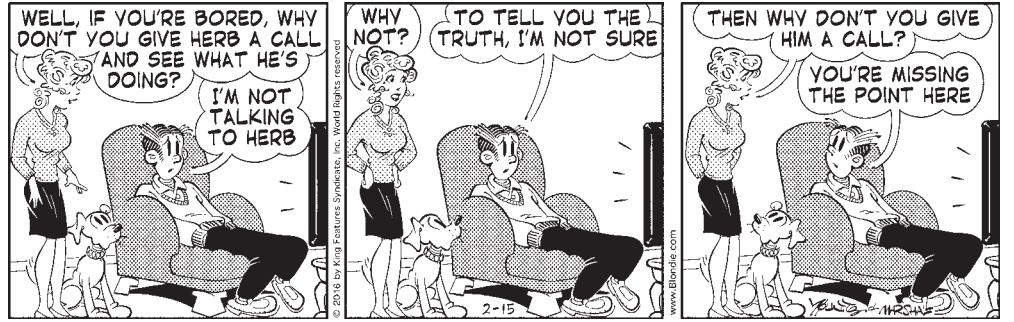
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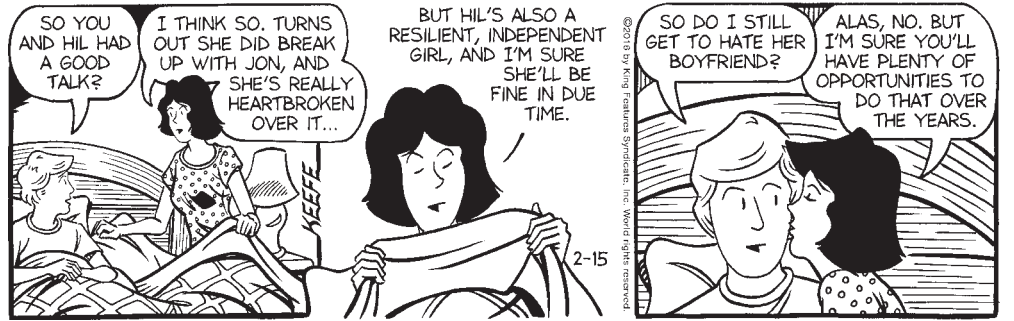
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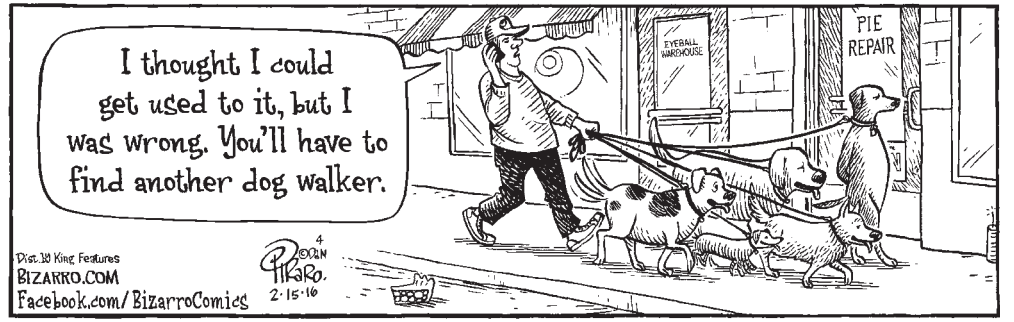
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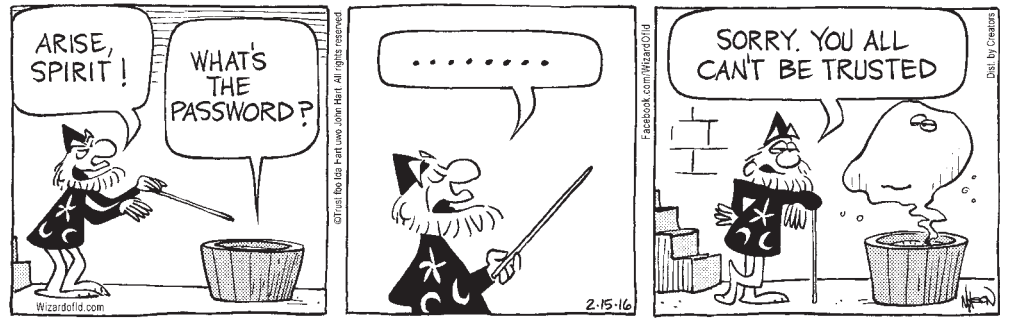
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