

Grade keeps student from play

Dear Annie: I am a middle school student, and I signed up for drama at the beginning of the semester. I've been working really hard at it.

The problem is, I failed one of my classes (out of seven). Because of that, I am not allowed to participate in drama. I have a speaking role with 17 lines and I don't think they can replace me in such a short time.

This really upsets me, especially because in the high school I'll be attending, you only need to pass four classes to participate in drama. What's worse is that they didn't give me or my parents any warning about how close I was to failing. I did know that I wasn't doing well in that class, and I was trying to bring up my grade. But I have anxiety issues and get panic attacks when I try to talk to teachers or people of authority (even my mom).

My parents emailed the school with a complaint, but I was wondering what you think I should do. — Was Ready for Showtime in New Hampshire

Dear New Hampshire: We wish we could help you, but schools routinely penalize students by prohibiting them from doing special activities if they fail a required

Annie's Mailbox

Creators
Syndicate Inc.

Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar



class. (It happens to football players and other athletes, too.) Such consequences are how schools hold students accountable.

You can try talking to the drama teacher to see if he or she would intervene on your behalf, and you also can talk to the teacher who gave you the failing grade, explaining that you were working hard to improve and didn't realize this would happen. If you have anxiety about talking to authority figures, try imagining that you are in a play and this is what your character does. It's good practice. You also can ask your parents to speak to these teachers directly, instead of leaving messages.

But if this is the policy of the school, there isn't much you can do. Consider it a learning experience, and keep it in mind for high school, when you can try out for

drama and be motivated to put your grades first. We know you'll do better.

Dear Annie: I am writing in response to the letter signed, "Is This Normal," whose girlfriend bounces her 10-year-old son on her lap for 30 minutes.

Your response was not strong enough. This is child abuse. This mother should immediately be reported to the Department for Children and Family Services in their local community. The entire family can then receive the help they need, and this child can be protected. The report can be anonymous and can be done by calling the Department directly or by notifying the local police.

Please tell "Normal" to take the steps to protect this child from further abuse, and also to protect his young sister from having to watch her brother be abused on a daily basis. — Social Worker

Dear Social Worker: Many readers suggested that this mother is a child molester. Perhaps so. But we think she is simply misguided and has gotten into a bad situation that she doesn't recognize or know how to fix. Whatever the case, we agree that the situation must be dealt with immediately.

Tomorrow's horoscope

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). You know yourself pretty well, and yet you are also open to the possibility that you haven't yet become who you really are. Under these youthful skies you don't mind trying on different personas to find the perfect fit.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). "This is the short and the long of it," wrote Shakespeare. Today's short version of the story will tell just as much, if not more, than the longer version. In all things, get to the point.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Those who are excited to be in a particular environment will help you understand what's good about it. For this and other reasons, the company you keep will matter much to your experience of the day.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). You've meditative powers, activated by your appreciation of beauty. It will be as though your mind is its own kind of deep space — an expanse of awareness you'll touch for brief, utterly renewing moments.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Embody what you value. Turn it into a verb — an action you can take to become the very thing you'd like to see more of in the world. Right now that has to do with creativity, novelty and whimsy.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). When the cure won't stick, perhaps it's not really a cure at all — or even a Band-Aid, as most of those are at least sticky enough to cover up the wound a while. Back to the drawing board to find what's really needed for your healing.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). There won't be any great space between what you say you'll do and what you'll actually do. You will quite simply declare and deliver, gaining the trust and awe of those you help along the way.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Someone has to provide the entertainment and color! You're inclined toward it, so go for it, even if it means appearing foolish. You'll be doing your entire scene a favor (even though a lot of them won't realize it as it's happening).

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You were in a different mind-set when you started this journey. This is the time to check in: Are you still on board with this? "If we don't change direction soon, we'll end up where we're going." — Irwin Corey

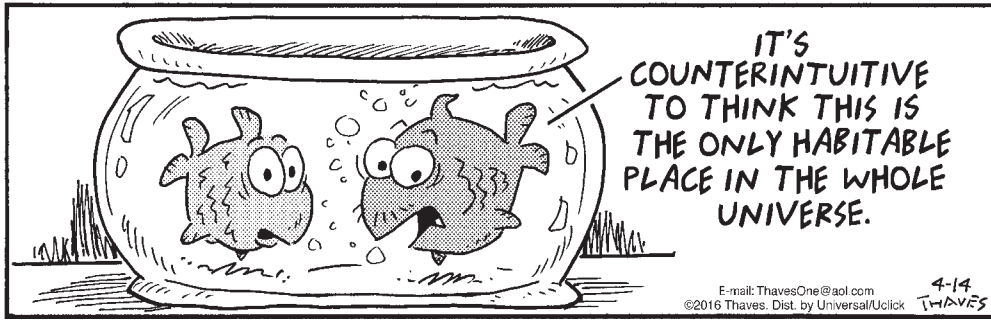
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). You value respect from others but do not require it. In fact, you may decide to go without this for the sake of moving forward. The ones you're having trouble with will catch up later. There's grace in your decision.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Focus on what you can do instead of what you can't do. Your natural gift for humor is something you can act on right away, to good effect. In fact, making another person laugh will be some of your most important work.

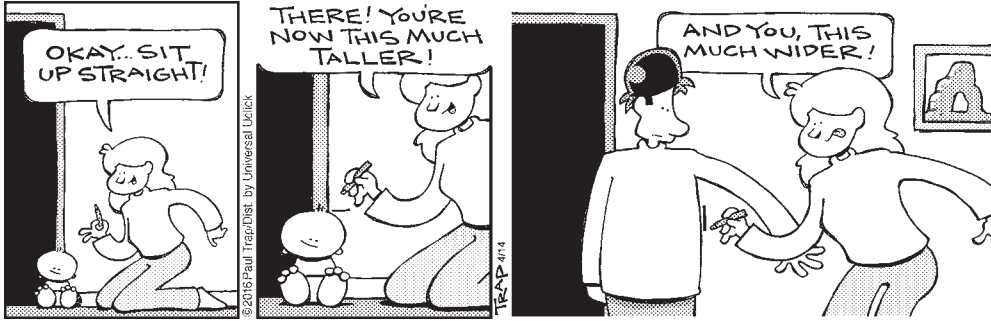
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Through the ages, people have built the most sacred of temples in once-obiterated places. You've done this in your life and it will be from that monument of sacred beauty that you help another.

FRIDAY'S BIRTHDAY (April 15). You're doing away with the learned helplessness of the past. You're so in touch with your internal locus of control this year that you effectively prepare and act in most situations to make your life better. The next five weeks will solve a financial snafu. June brings a happy new "Hello." Capricorn and Pisces adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 2, 19, 45, 16 and 32.

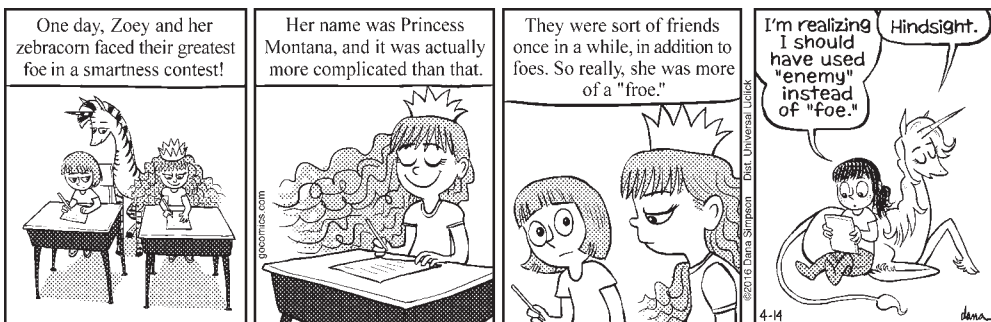
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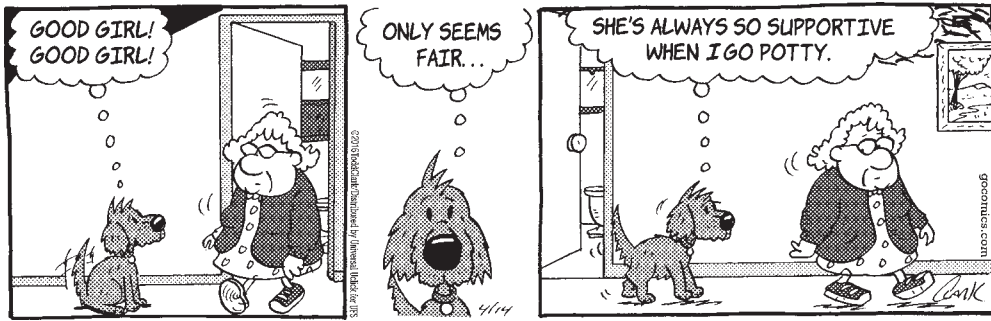
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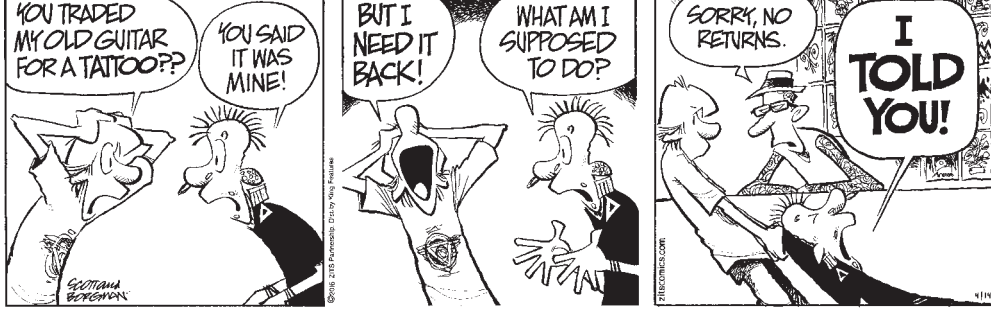
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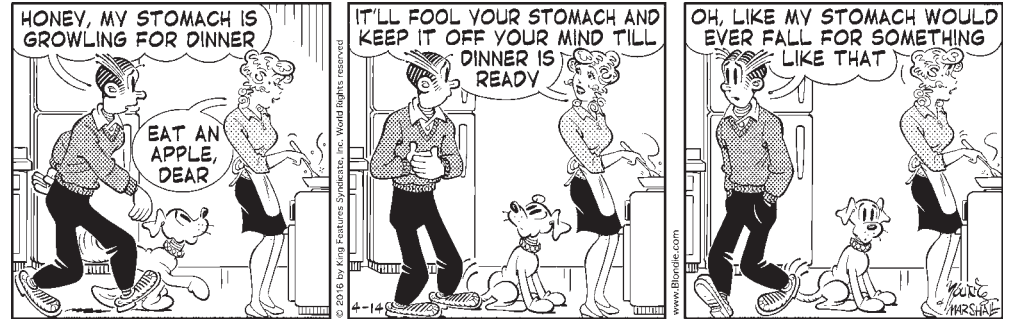
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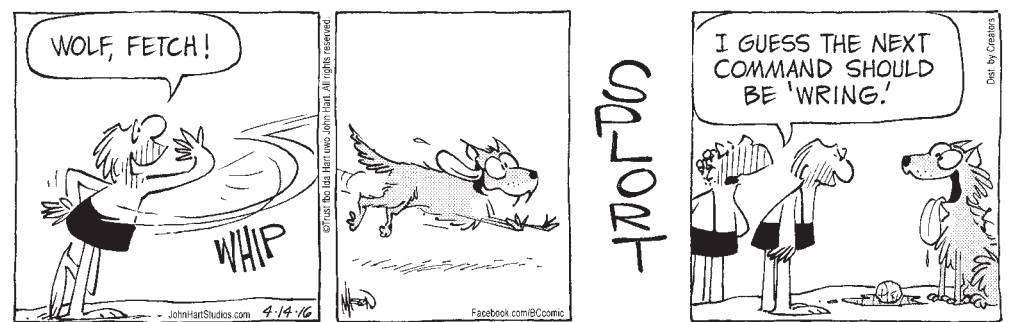
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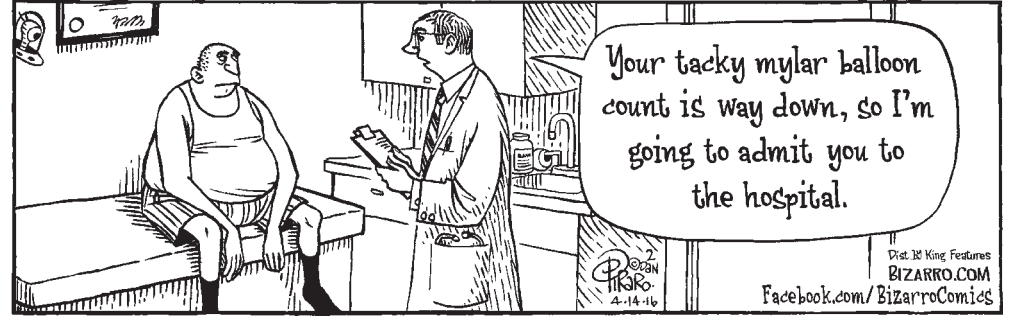
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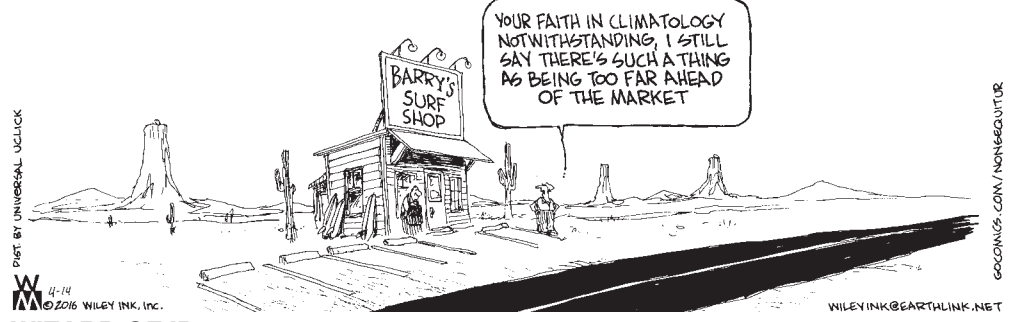
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