

Worried about empty nest

Dear Annie: I am a 49-year-old father of twins, a boy and girl. They are 18 and will be headed for college soon, and I am starting to get pretty worried about the nest's being empty once they depart.

I love my wife. Our marriage has been rocky at times, but we've stayed together. There's been no infidelity or anything major. We've just had normal couple issues about quality time spent together and household annoyances, such as not emptying the dishwasher and leaving stubble around the sink in the bathroom.

For the past 18 years, the kids have been our focus. In a few months, that focus moves out.

I am worried about myself. These days, when I come home from work, I check in with the kids. I help with homework. I go to their basketball games. After they leave, I will have nothing to do.

I am worried about my wife, too. Her life is these kids. She cooks for them. She drives for them (which is shocking, considering they both have their driver's licenses). They are her world, and that will be gone after they leave.

Yes, I am looking forward to spending more time with my wife, but there are only so many episodes of "House of Cards" we can watch. Is there any-

Dear Annie



By Annie Lane

Creators Syndicate Inc.

thing I can do to prepare for this departure? — *Deserted Dad*

Dear Deserted: Change can be a wonderful thing. It can also be terrifying, disorienting and sad. The key is to embrace it.

Your kids will no longer depend on you the way they once did, but this means you can now have a relationship with them more akin to friendship. The more mature they become the more they'll appreciate you and their mom. And they'll still need plenty of help as they navigate the world of adulthood.

You and your wife can use this stage to behave like newlyweds again. Go out on more dates. Relearn what it's like to have free time. Most importantly, talk about the transition you're both going through, as you are in a perfect position to understand and support each other. The nest isn't totally empty as long as you've got each other. (Net-

flix doesn't hurt.)

Dear Annie: I am a 14-year-old girl. I have known "Mia" since the third grade, when we instantly became the best of friends. Unfortunately, things have not been great with us lately because Mia spends so much time on social media. She has been constantly "chatting" with different people, who are complete strangers, over the internet. She has even met up with some of these people in person. I am worried that she may be putting herself in danger. What is so sad is that she has a messed-up family, and nobody is supervising her when it comes to social media.

I am nervous that she will send naked pictures of herself or get lured into prostitution or something else terrible because she does not have good judgment and is not making smart choices. What should I do? Please help. — *Concerned Friend*

Dear Concerned: Your worries are 100 percent justified. It's not just that Mia may put herself in further danger, she already *is* putting herself in danger by talking to strangers online and even meeting up with them in person unsupervised. You need to enlist the help of your mom and dad. They can talk to Mia's parents or other adults in her life who will look out for her best interests, such as a guidance counselor.

Tomorrow's horoscope

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). If the task you're on is less than fascinating, try giving it even more of your attention. The details — the glorious, captivating details — will enthrall you if you give them a chance.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). The ones who work hard and play hard understand your pattern of extremes. You may find yourself trying to explain it, but unless they share your passionate intensity, this is a wasted effort. Seek the company of kindred spirits.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Just because you believe it doesn't make it true. In fact, one of your dearly held beliefs is not only false; it's getting in the way of you being able to achieve your goal. You've an inkling what this is about. Are you ready to take it on?

CANCER (June 22-July 22). The way you look and the way you feel don't always match up perfectly, but there's a correlation. It won't matter if you work from the inside out or the outside in: You can bring yourself up to a new level from either angle.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). You don't always claim credit for the marvelous outcomes you create. Often you give others more credit than they deserve in order to raise morale. This will be one of those times.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Asking for, listening to and acting on feedback will lead to you improving in ways you couldn't have seen on your own. In a related story, you'll soon have a major advantage over your competition.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). You know enough to continue a project on your own, and yet you ask for more opinions and information. That's the smart way. The more you learn, the better your work will be.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). You'll be very aware of what you are feeling and you'll process less comfortable emotions quickly and effectively then move toward the positive spectrum you want to get to.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You gave the controls over to someone who didn't handle it well. It seemed like the right thing to do at the time, but times have changed. There will be an opportunity to discreetly and graciously take back the power.

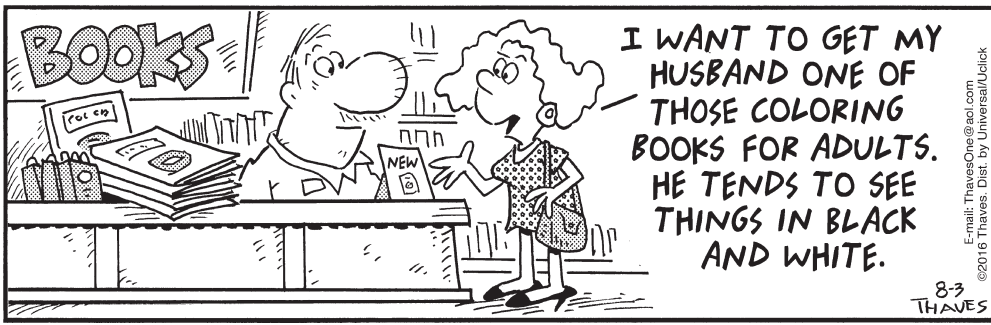
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). You love a good story, and today delivers. There's more here than you'll understand at first listen. Revisit later. The tale will continue to develop for the next few days.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). You expect yourself to be organized. It's not always the case. Since it feels to you like any amount of time you spend looking for things is a waste, the time you spend creating a better system will be worthwhile.

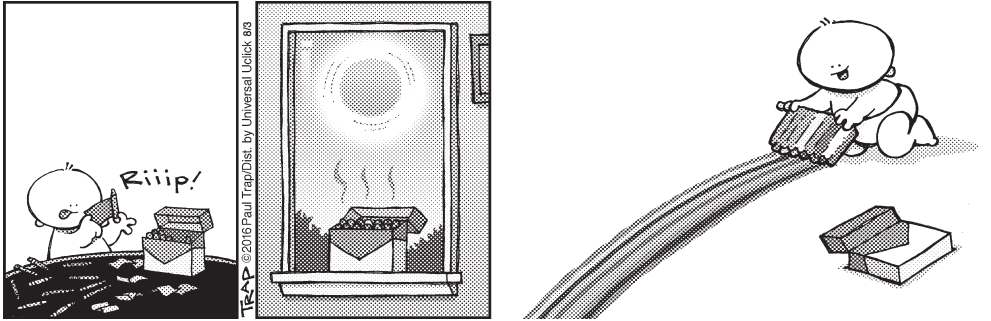
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You feel a strong empathy with one who is going through an intense experience. Empathy is a powerful expression of love. The more you apply it, the more it widens your perception and opens your heart.

THURSDAY'S BIRTHDAY (Aug. 4). You'll derive happiness from branching out to the novel and untried in your personal life over the next 10 weeks. Someone new will be attracted to your courage. You'll have a tendency in 2017 to be idealistic in relationships, and yet people will rise to your high standards, which will sometimes be thrilling. Gemini and Pisces adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 30, 1, 11, 2, 33

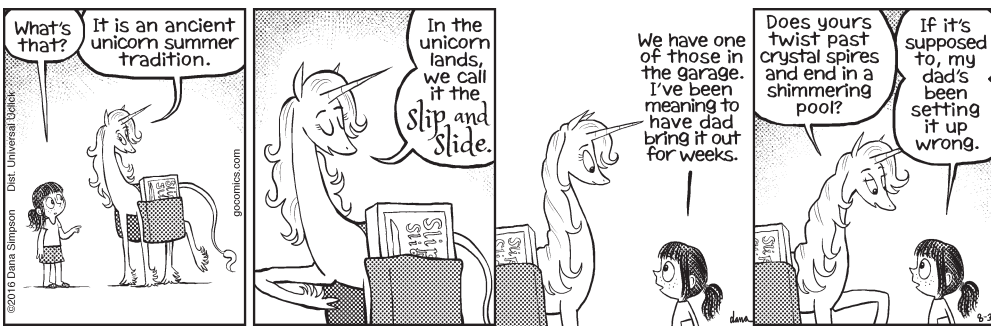
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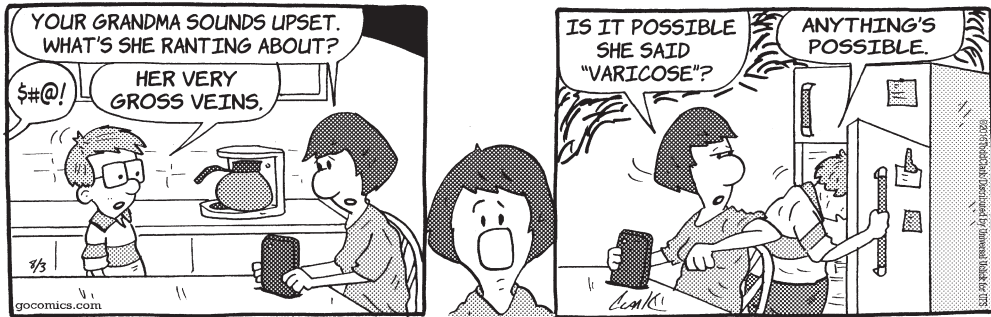
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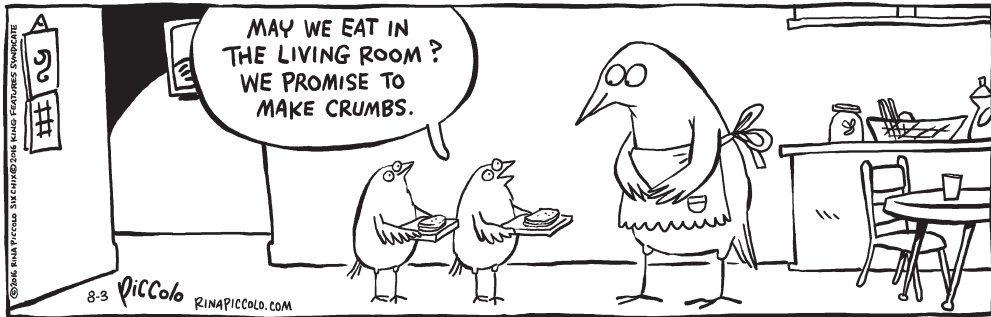
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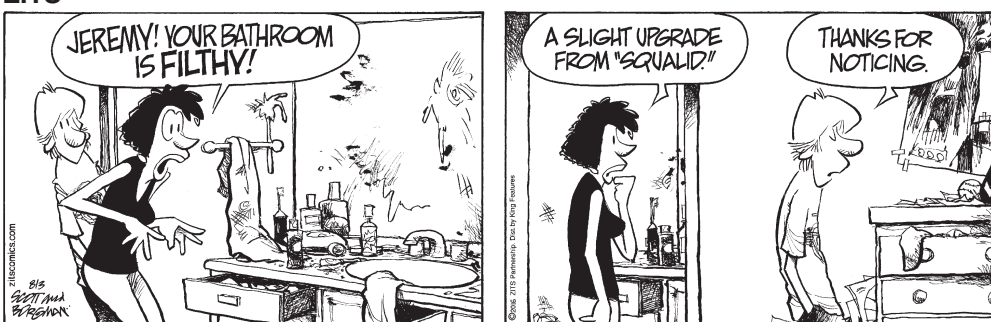
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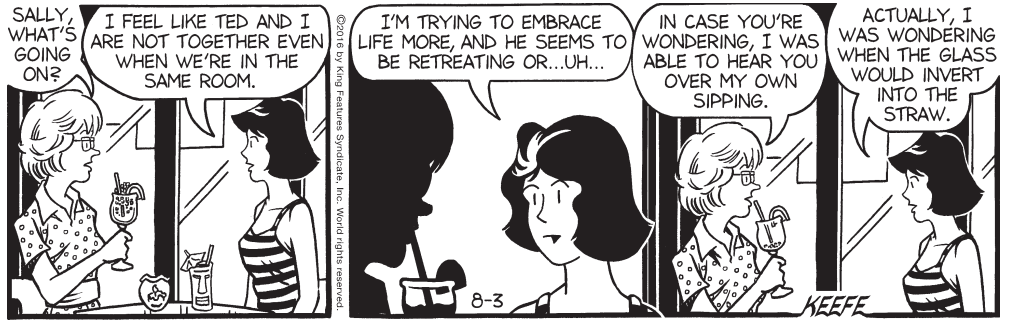
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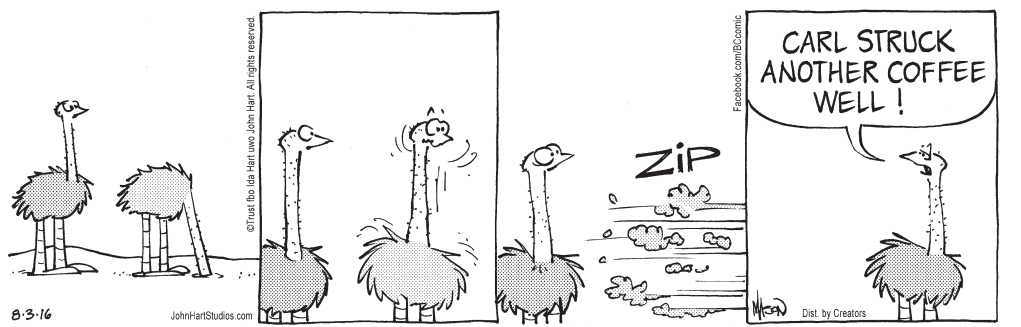
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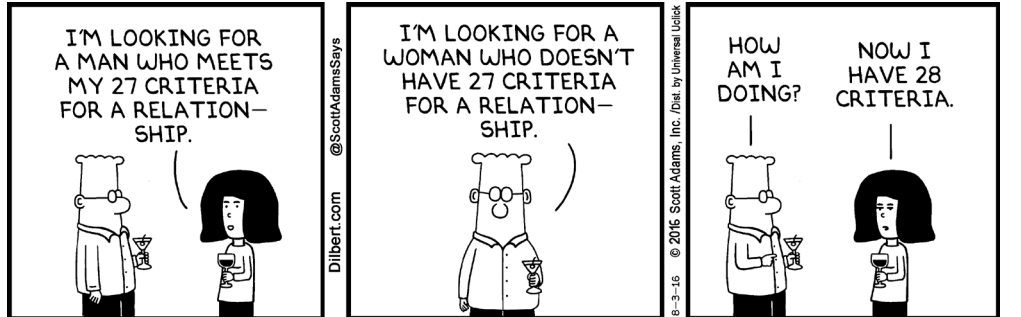
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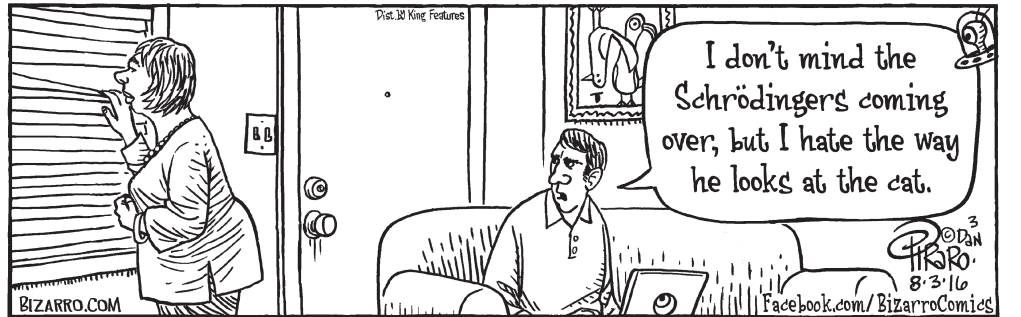
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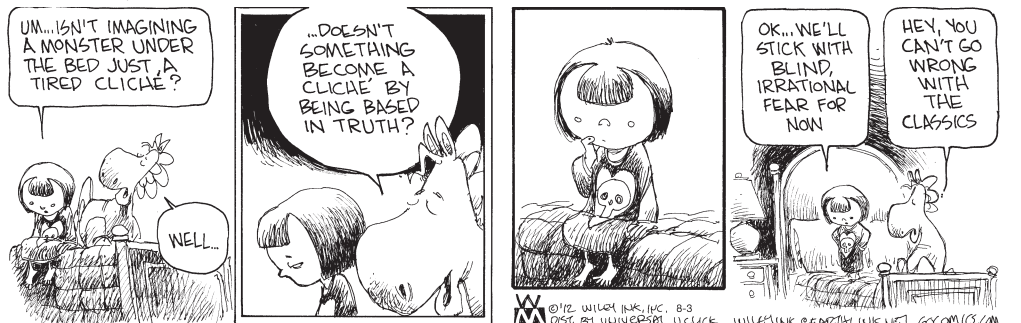
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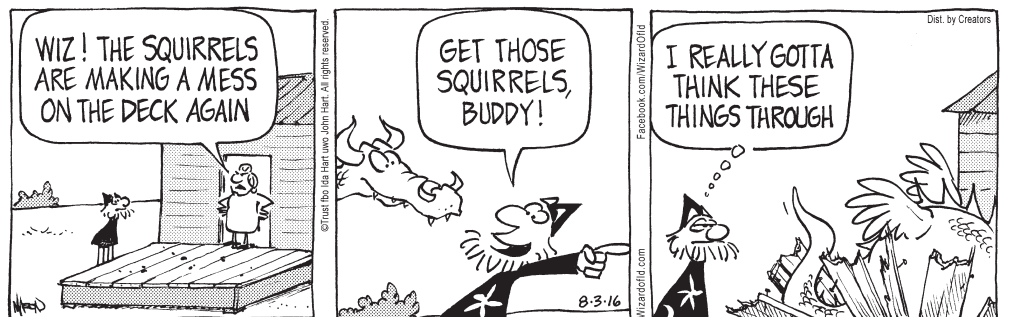
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