

Scheming up a reference

Dear Annie: I am a college student in my early 20s. While applying for an internship recently, I contacted a former employer, "Lauren," to ask whether she would act as a reference on my application. This is a woman I genuinely like and respect, so I was excited when she said that she would be happy to do so and that we should meet to catch up over coffee.

The trouble started when she later invited me to a "meeting" instead.

I was aware that Lauren had recently become involved with a "multilevel marketing company" (read: pyramid scheme) that sells "safe" and "natural" nutrition and beauty products. Even though this was not something I was interested in, I decided to go to the meeting to see her and see what it was about. Although she was saving several seats, I was the only one of Lauren's friends to show up.

The meeting turned out to be fun and very convincing. I was careful not to commit to anything, but I expressed an interest in researching and trying the products and was invited to a product party. I was even privately considering becoming a consultant if I liked the products, and I suspect that Lauren and her friends could sense that. While driving home, however, I started to feel a little brainwashed. I respect the men and women who can be success-

Dear Annie



By Annie Lane

Creators Syndicate Inc.

ful in these businesses, but I am not one of them, and I have never had an interest in trying.

I am not against the products and might even like to purchase a few in the future, when I have a steady income and a regular routine. Unfortunately, Lauren seems more interested in recruiting me to the company than in selling me things.

It has only happened two or three times, but I am running out of polite ways to deflect or decline.

My question is: How do I say no to Lauren without upsetting her so that I will still be able to list her as a reference? Is that even possible? My past experience working for her (and therefore having a reference from her) is an important part of my resume and could make the difference between my getting an internship in my field and my not getting one. What should

I do? — *Making Up My Mind*

Dear Making Up: Timing is everything. I'm not suggesting you cook up a scheme of your own, but it wouldn't hurt to keep things on open-ended, friendly terms while you're still asking Lauren to be a reference. Instead of worrying over how to give Lauren a hard "no," focus on securing a hard "yes" from her on that front.

And meanwhile, come up with a plan B. If Lauren flakes on you like bad foundation, have someone else lined up to speak to your professional assets.

Dear Annie: I went to a funeral yesterday and sneezed immediately when seated. The woman in front of me was doused in perfume. I moved back a row (no place else to go), but that perfume permeated the entire church. I am sure she is a nice woman and did not realize how offensive she was. — *Enough of the Noxious Fumes*

Dear Enough: You may suffer from multiple chemical sensitivity. The exact science behind the condition is still up for debate, but some people have much stronger reactions to scents than others. Some have found relief by fanning themselves with paper, carrying around orange peels (to mask unfriendly scents) and using meditative breathing techniques.

Tomorrow's horoscope

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). You don't need a problem to push you to be your best. Improvement is in your nature. In fact, the only problem in sight today is that you've already improved to such a high level that you're not sure where to go next.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). You're not going to switch jobs today or tomorrow but you can see a dot on that employment horizon, growing as it nears you. Change is coming. Question: If money were no issue, where do you think you might like to fit in?

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Is the moment lush with silence, or is it awkward with the tension of not knowing what to say? Well, luckily you don't have to be the judge. Time will hand down the truest verdict. Until then, shrug it off.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Excitement bubbles up from new developments in your personal life. It's too soon to predict how this relationship will grow, but decide to have a good time no matter what and it will all work in your favor.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Fearlessness is artless and boring. Your fear is beautiful! Claim it. Then use it with grace. Like a gymnast, thrust your heart over the bar and the rest of you will follow.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). You're trying to relate to the other person, not outdo the other person. With this in mind, you'll probably hold back a few of your stories. Anyway, you'll learn more and love better through listening than you will through talking.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). The ones who are trying to help you will wind up doing just that — after they put you through some paces. No, this exchange won't be

so straightforward. The roads will wind and cross. Be patient.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Remember when you concerned yourself with being very, very good? You'd be hard pressed to say if it made a positive difference. Anyway, tonight, a little bit of wickedness is the spice that lights up the whole dinner.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). It takes quite a lot of energy to control the scene, and the planning will just drag on and on. Another way is to leave the others on their own and see what they come up with.

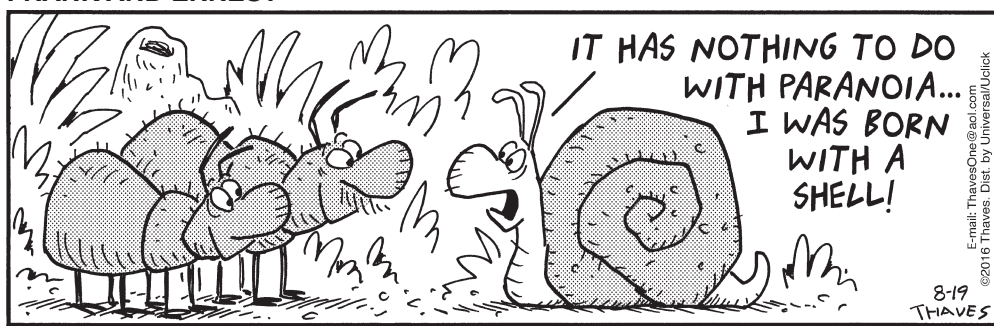
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). You enjoy a spritz of kookiness now and then, and you'll get a whole luxurious spoonful of it with the interesting cast of characters who surround you today.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Anticipation is a certain brand of joy. What comes before the exciting part will be the real exciting part. Of course, there is no anticipation without that future event. Set it up if you haven't already.

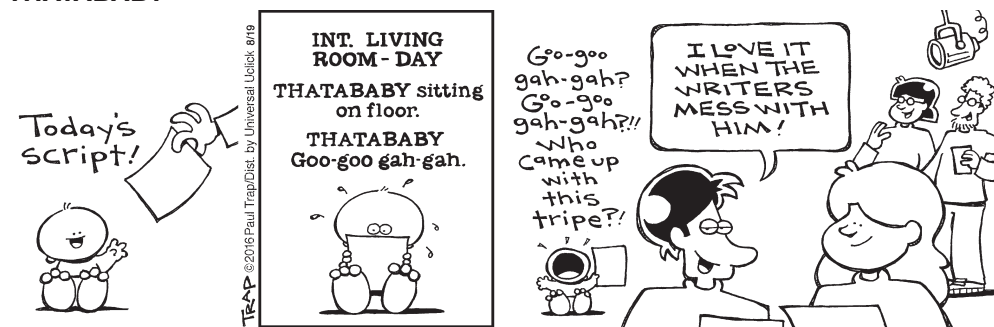
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You feel that the one who wronged you still hasn't been adequately punished. It's a seductive problem, but truly, to focus your energy there would only rob you of this beautiful weekend.

SATURDAY'S BIRTHDAY (Aug. 20). You're still deciding who to be. Your flexible, curious and experimental mindset keeps you creating. Many find you mysterious and attractive. You'll be swept into one adventure after the other and rarely will you have to foot the bill. Taurus and Libra adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 8, 40, 24, 1 and 16.

FRANK AND ERNEST



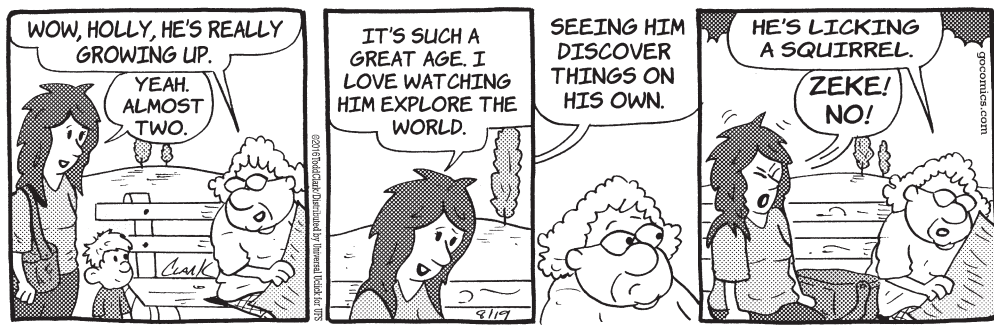
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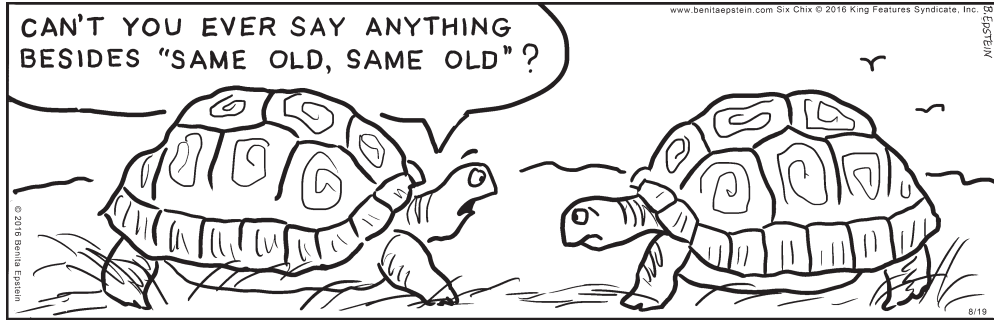
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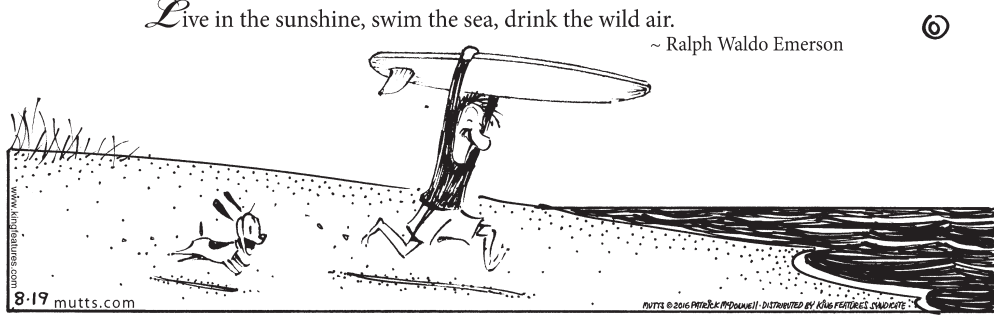
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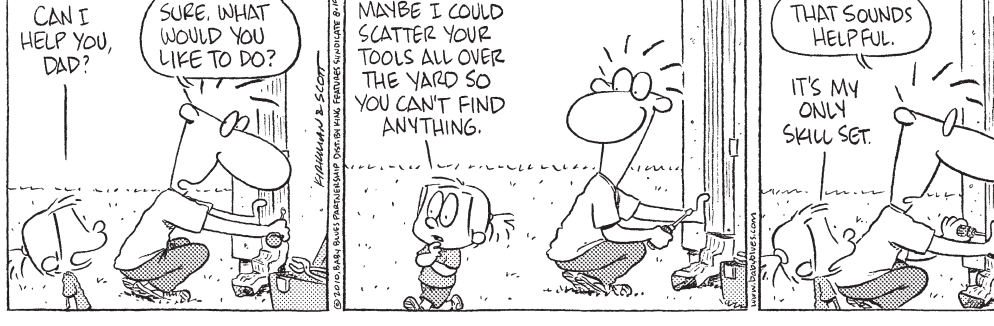
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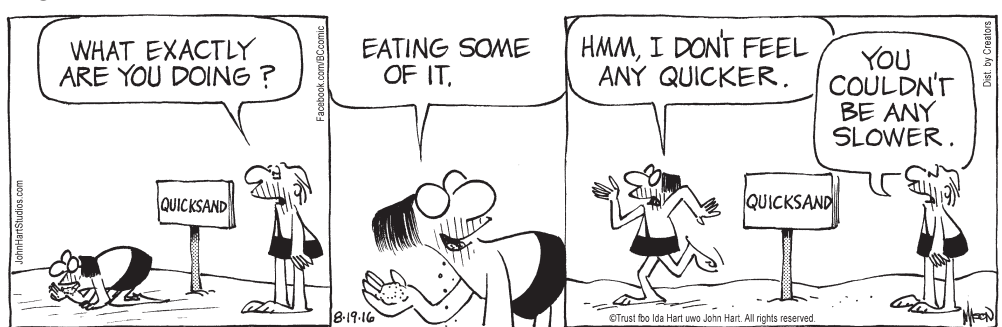
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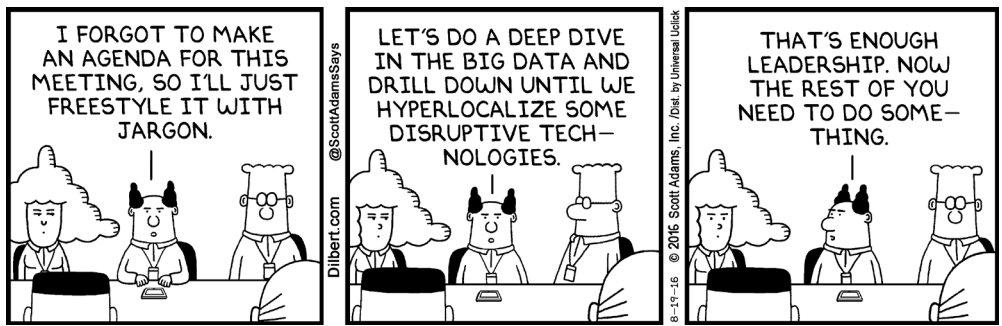
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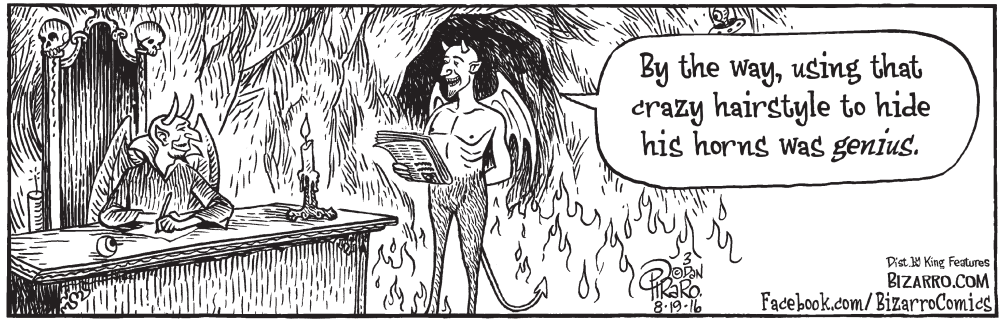
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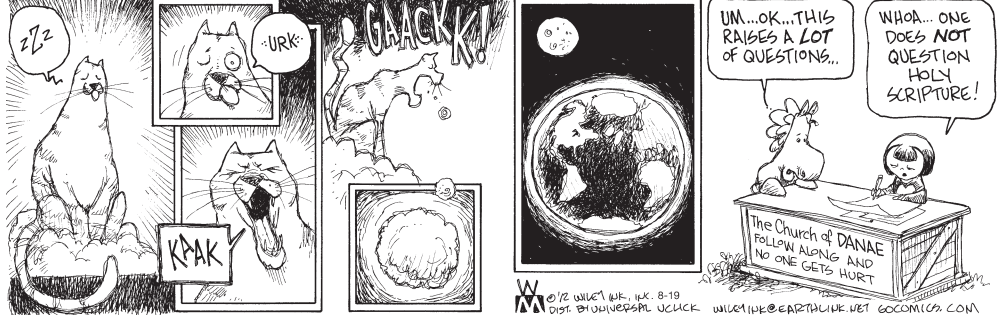
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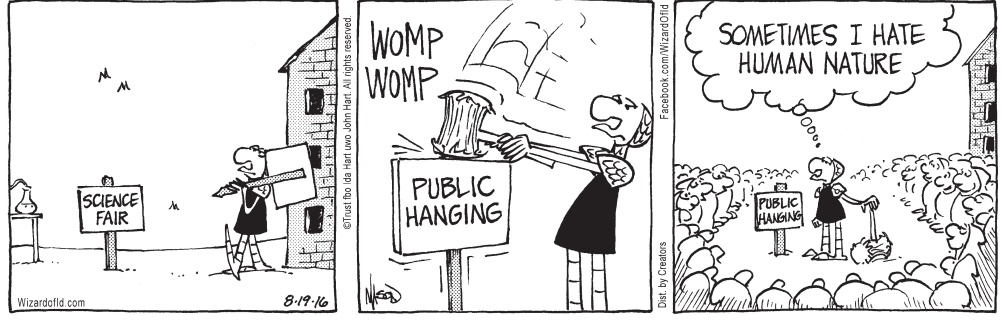
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