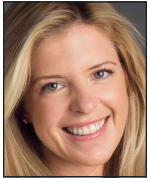


The other side of the law

Dear Annie: I bet you're surprised right now, and I don't blame you. I know it is not an everyday type of thing to receive mail from an inmate. I read your section of the newspaper every week and have to admit that it's pretty interesting. I'm a 19-year-old man currently residing in this lovely facility, facing four years and eight months for robbery and possession of a controlled substance for sale, with a gang enhancement and a bail enhancement. I stress about my case often. That has nothing to do with the amount of time I'm serving, because I can do that standing up; all I've got to do is count my blessings and tell myself that there are people in here who aren't ever going home. But sadly, there's a possibility of my joining them because I've taken two strikes at such a young age.

DEAR ANNIE



Annie Lane
Creators
Syndicate Inc.

I know I have to change my ways, and I wouldn't have to worry about anything if I did, but I'll be honest: I won't change. I chose this lifestyle, and it's all I know. I don't want to change, either. I just want to know one thing: Do you think I'm wrong? I'm so confused. I see

you throwing light into dark situations with the flick of your tongue and would appreciate some help. — *Confused in California*

Dear Confused: You are so young, and I promise you that the world is so much bigger than it seems right now. You can still be whoever you want. And I think that deep down, a part of you does want to change, or you wouldn't be writing me.

The most important factors will be the people you surround yourself with and the help you seek in your first year out of prison, especially during the first few weeks and months.

There are a number of resources for people in your shoes in California, such as the Men of Valor Academy (510-567-1308) and the Center for Employment Opportunities (510-251-2240). Please don't give up on yourself.

Readers: If you have been in a similar spot and turned things around, let me hear from you.

Dear Annie: This is in response to "Mrs. in Minnesota," who is offended by her daughter's friends using her first name — even

though the friends are now adults.

Here in the South, we have a custom that works well in this situation. From the time we are young, we are taught to call adults "Mr." or "Miss" followed by their first names. For example, my children's friends always called us "Mr. Albert" and "Mrs. Linda." Even though my children are now in their 50s, I am still "Mrs. Linda" to their friends, as well as to any other people in our small town who are younger than I am. This is so much more personal than being called "Mr. Smith" or "Mrs. Smith." A more familiar approach makes sense in small towns because we often see each other every day.

One funny example: A man in town was "Mr. Jim." Mr. Jim had a son we called "Little Jim." Mr. Jim is now dead, but his son is still "Little Jim" to everyone. In the local restaurant recently, a waitress was calling him to the telephone and called him "Mr. Little Jim!"

I just finished up serving 40 years in our local government. I served as mayor for the final few years, but I was still addressed by everyone in town as "Mrs. Linda." When people called me "Mayor Smith," I knew they were from out of this area. — *Affable in Alabama*

TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Seize the opportunity to meet new people. On the surface you may not have all that much in common. A little effort is all it takes to go deeper. What you'll learn from this is that you're more alike than different.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Everything will be better with a little preparation, especially those things that you usually wouldn't have to prepare for — a casual conversation with a friend, for instance.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). People will respond to your respect. In fact, it's the most motivating thing you can do for another person today — respect the efforts, the attitude, the person's expression in this world.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). You heard the music before, and now you can't hear it. But this is not cause for alarm. The songbird has not flown away. The songbird is inside you always. It just needs to, once in a while, rest its voice.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Don't let other people's opinions knock you off your game. Someone else's judgment doesn't have to be unsettling; uncertainty could, in fact, call forward your best self. It's all in your interpretation.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Your imagination gets an injection of color. It's like a brand-new ink cartridge in your printer, ready to flesh out some vivid imagery for you. Dream that you'll make it. Dream big and dream wild.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). It's not enough to have an opinion. Anyone can do that. But to have an opinion that's thoroughly and uniquely thought out — you really admire the person who presents you with such a thing today.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). If thoughts were furniture, a few timeless pieces deserve the prime mental real estate you give them. Then there are some broken down, archaic pieces that you would do well to move on out and replace.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). To know someone very well, so well that you're comfortable with this person in a myriad of situations — it's a wonderful feeling. Plus, making efforts toward this end is nothing but pleasure.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). You may find yourself thinking harshly of a situation. It doesn't make you a bad person. It's natural to have a whole array of feelings, some darker than others. Just watch your words, is all. You can't take them back.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Some have trouble saying "no" while others are afraid to say "yes." Everyone is different. Set up those personal rules again, and this time, make sure they are catered to you.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). How can you take the relationship to more splendid levels? You will accomplish this aim, mostly because you have the creativity, curiosity and moxie that it takes to ask this question.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (Dec. 13). You will accept people who felt unacceptable, love those who exhibit unlovable behavior and emotionally support individuals who might never reciprocate. These exercises in exemplary character would be pure selflessness if they didn't happen to make you rich in every conceivable way this year. Cancer and Taurus adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 3, 30, 12, 24 and 48.

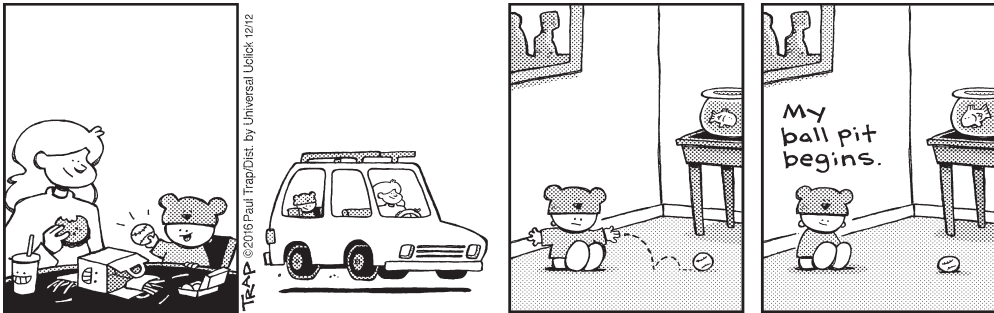
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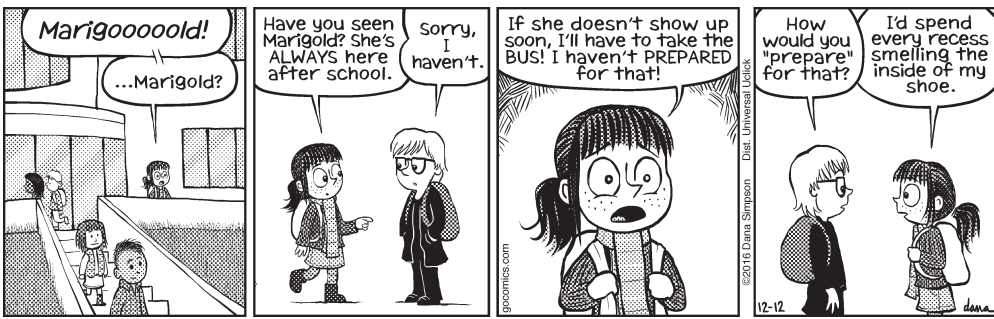
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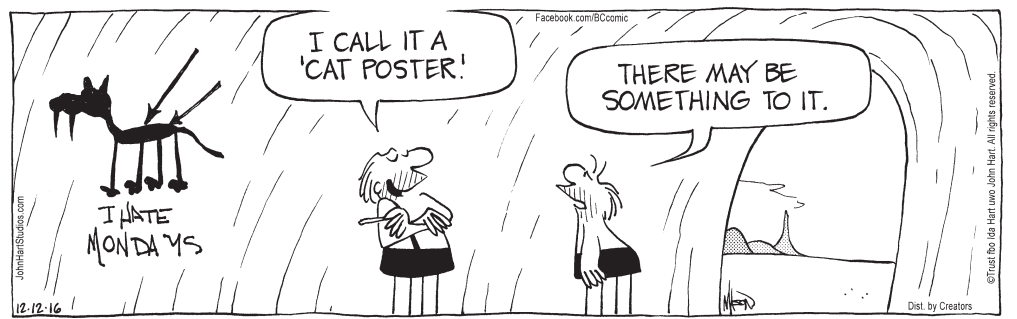
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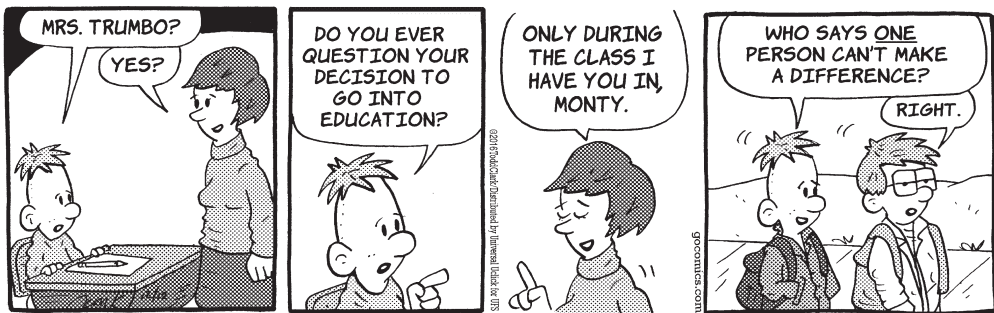
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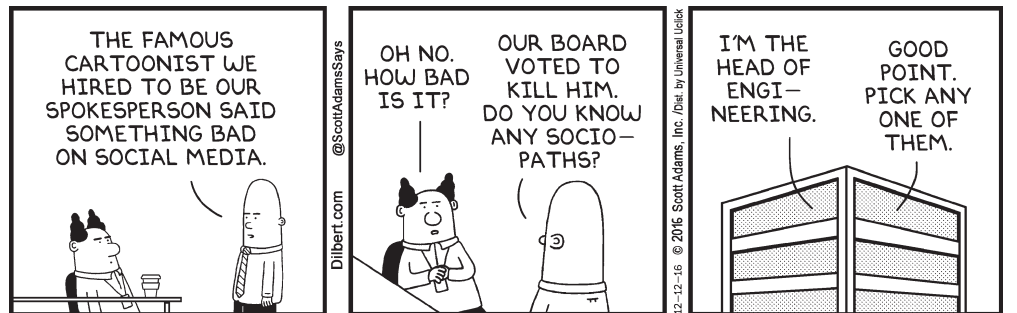
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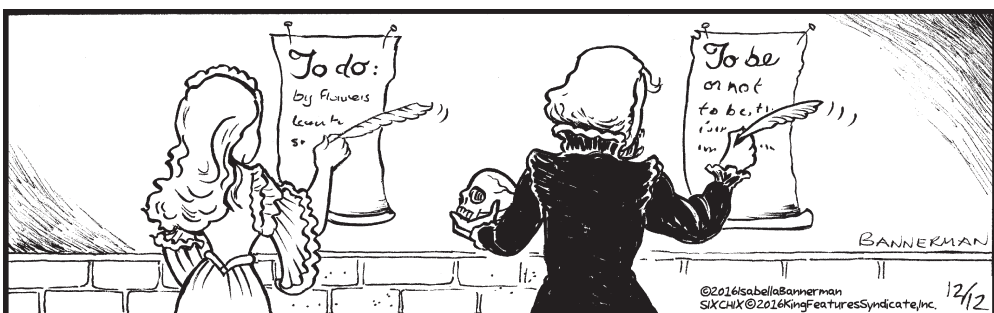
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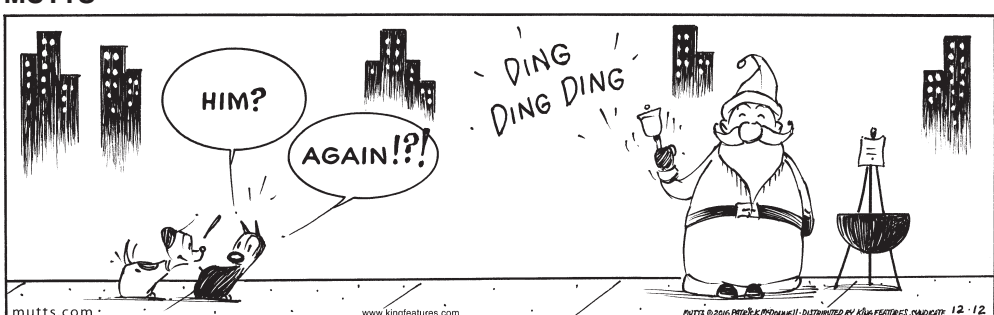
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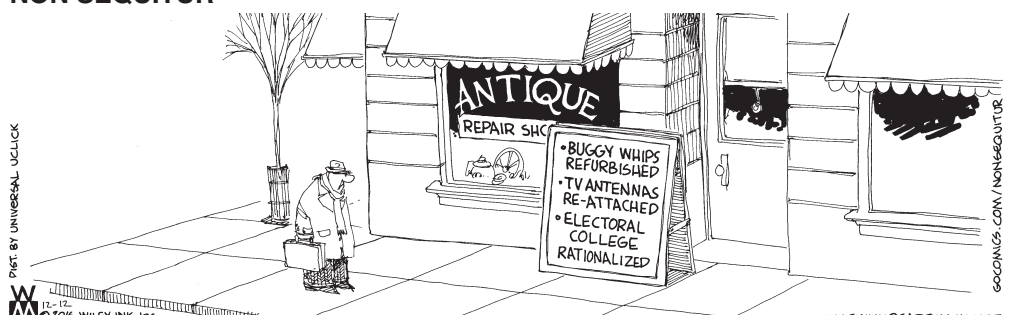
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