

Last-minute parties are irksome

Dear Annie: I have a sister-in-law who always has spur-of-the-moment birthday parties for her children — usually just giving us all one day's notice. They are active in school activities and sports. All of these activities have schedules planned weeks in advance, but my sister-in-law's excuse is that the parties have to be "squeezed in" when they have time. Well, what about my time? I am expected to drop plans and sacrifice my own children's activities so they can go to their cousins' birthday parties? I feel disrespected. I'm sure her kids wonder why no one comes to their parties. How should I deal with the next surprise-for-everyone party? — *Party Pooper*

DEAR ANNIE



Annie Lane
Creators
Syndicate Inc.

Dear Party Pooper: The next time this happens, go to the party, because your little nieces and nephews really shouldn't have to pay the price for their mom's mistakes. But afterward, sit down and have a talk with your sister-in-law about her schedule. It sounds as if she is a bit underwater with the kids' schedules

and struggling to stay organized. Encourage her to cut back on a few of the activities. In the long run, she and her kids would benefit from a "less is more" approach.

Dear Annie: This is my first correspondence to any advice columnist — and I go way back to the days of Ann Landers. Your response to "Scuffed" was wrong from the salutation to the period of the last sentence! "Scuffed" wrote to you because her sister-in-law's fiancé "scratched" her car with his truck tires backing out of the driveway and he refused to pay for the damages. "Scuffed" had been leaving her children there for her sister-in-law to baby-sit but was reconsidering that arrangement. You told her to follow her instincts and not leave the kids there anymore.

You would have her cause a family upheaval involving young children because of scratches to a car? Really? Just because you feel you should always follow your gut feeling? And then you told "Scuffed" to just invite the sister-in-law to her house to visit

with the kids instead and said she would probably want an excuse to get out of the house anyway because of her fiancé's "lousy attitude."

It's as if she had an angel and devil on her shoulders and all your advice came from the one holding the pitchfork. How about taking the high road and a deep breath and worrying about more important things in life? In the fleeting precious time we have on this earth, keep the peace and show the love. You'd have her give that up because of paint on a car door. C'mon. — *Older and Wiser*

Dear Older: I appreciate your outlook about keeping the peace and showing the love, but I think you misunderstood my point. I wasn't suggesting that "Scuffed" stop speaking to her future brother-in-law. I only meant that she should stop leaving her children with the couple. Given the man's bizarrely aggressive response to the incident — calling up "Scuffed" and her husband to tell them that he'd never apologize — it seems plausible he has anger issues. Why risk exposing your children to that sort of volatility?

TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Everybody needs somebody, and you're the somebody who is so needed now that somebody else seems fastened to you. Being needed so intensely could bring up mixed feelings.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Money isn't inherently emotional, but somehow it will end up being a hot-button topic today. You'll be the reasonable one; you know to separate your own value from the monetary one in question.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). There's something you want that requires a lot more attention than you planned to give it. Until you can lend full focus, it will remain out of reach. The question now is: How badly do you want it?

CANCER (June 22-July 22). You're not the casting director for every scene in the grand play of life. But when you do have the power, use it. Surround yourself with nice people and you won't have to teach people to be nice.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). You don't befriend anyone just because you think it will take you places. However, there are some special friendships that generate such a fantastic energy that you can't help but soar upward, regardless of your original intention.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Hesitate and you will lose the opportunity, or worse, cast doubt in the mind of the one who's doing it out. Today's one of those times to just say yes. You'll learn all you need to know along the way.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Higher learning will be featured in your day. This may be costly in values of time, energy and money, but you'll never be sorry, as your richer life will eventually reflect all the potential benefits

of the effort.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). As it is with everyone, your powers of magnetism ebb and flow. They are flowing now. You may notice that you're getting special treatment. Enjoy this, and don't give into the temptation to play with your power.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Today you'll be reminded of the inherent tally inside every relationship. Don't worry; everyone involved knows the score, and life is about to settle a few things up.

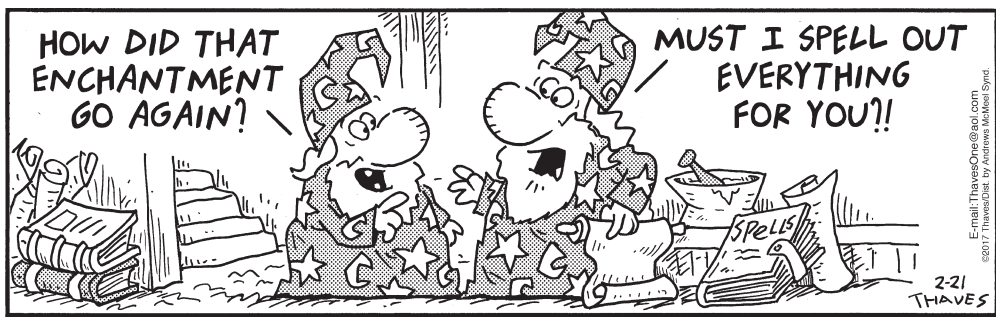
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). You belong to many groups, though one stands out as being more central to your well-being lately. You'll put your focus there, and you'll become an even more effective member of that team.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Those who obsess over others don't have quite enough going on in their own inner circle. You can help that. Actually, this is a good opportunity for you to gain support for your cause.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Things are about to get busy again. If the arrangement isn't working, this is the moment to have a talk, change the agreement or decide on a different kind of relationship. Do what's needed, and do it quickly.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (Feb. 22). Your times of wishful thinking are over. You're ready to make it happen this year. March sees you well-connected, and relationships lead to prosperity in the months to follow. You'll choose assertiveness over diplomacy in March, and appropriately so. You'll update your environment in April and May. Gemini and Cancer adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 9, 50, 3, 24 and 14.

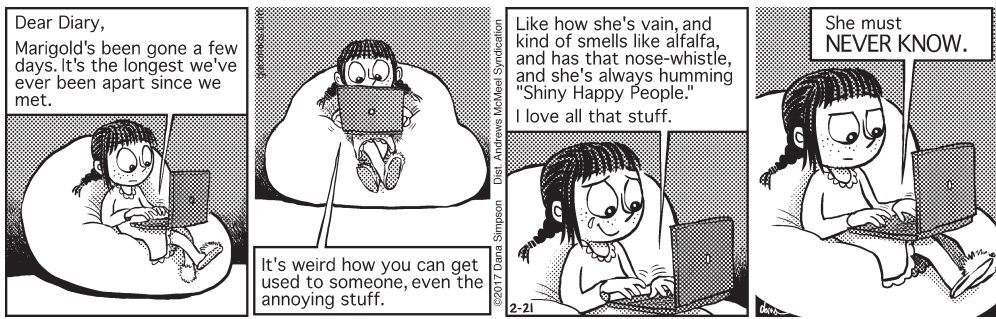
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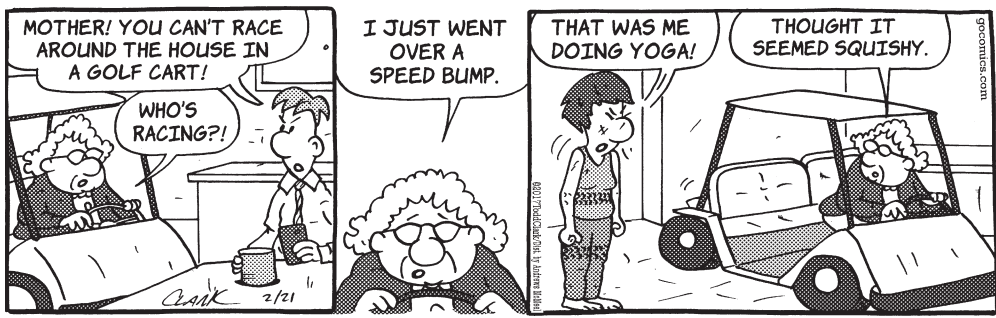
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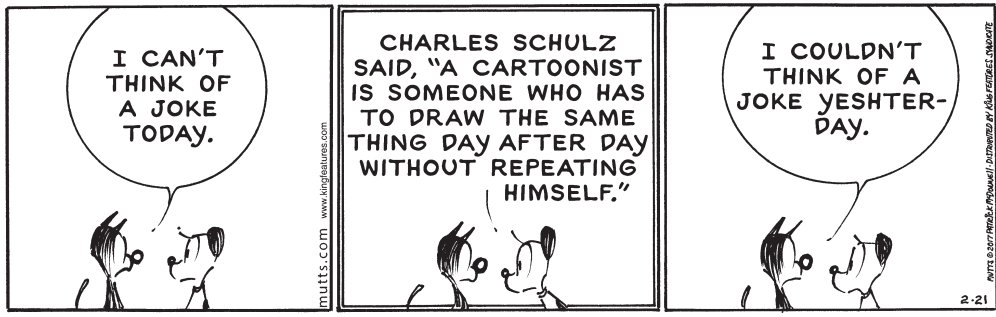
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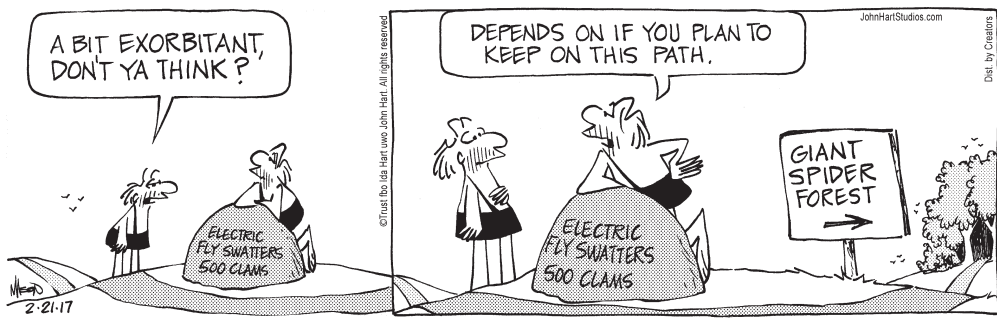
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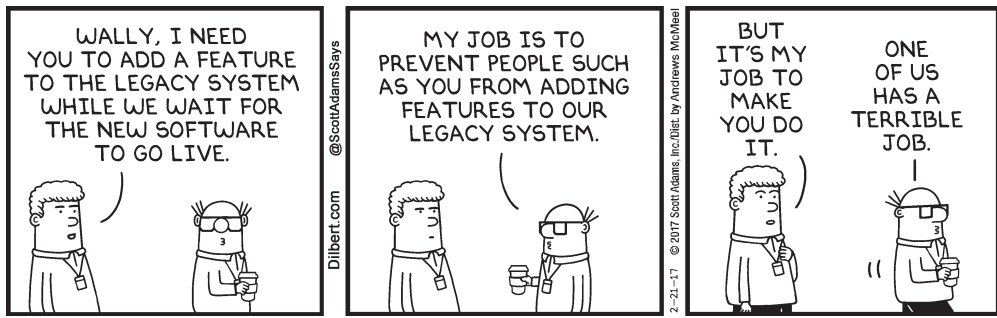
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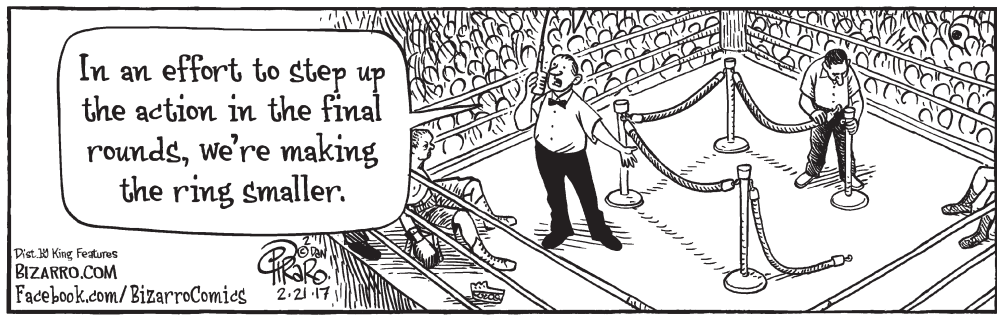
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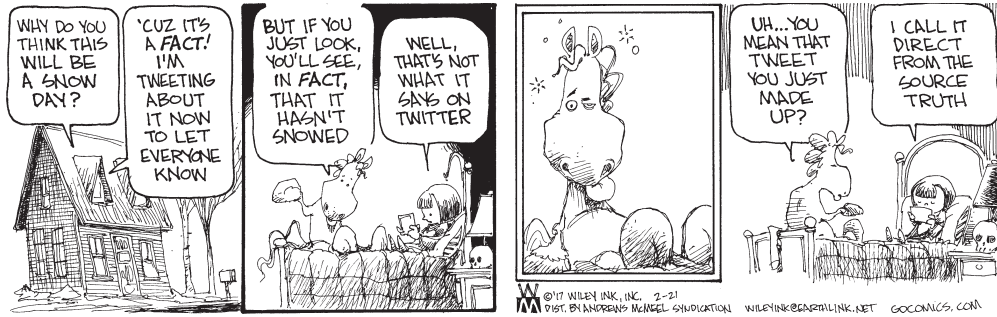
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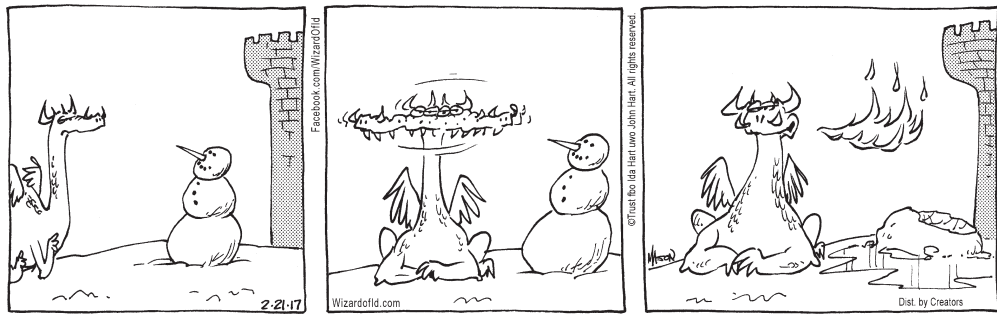
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