

Bridesmaid reciprocity

Dear Annie: I'm engaged to a man who is the love of my life, and I couldn't be more ecstatic. My fiancé, "Anthony," proposed last week. We've tentatively set the date for next spring, and now I'm starting to do some preliminary wedding planning. I'm facing a dilemma regarding bridesmaids.

DEAR ANNIE



Annie Lane
Creators
Syndicate Inc.

I'm the youngest of five siblings, and I'm the only girl. Yes, I have four elder brothers. (To answer the question almost everyone asks upon learning that fact, no, they were not overprotective of me. In fact, they teased me quite a bit.) Anyway, all of my brothers are married, meaning I finally have some sisters. I was a bridesmaid in all four weddings and the maid of honor in one of them. I'm not extremely close with any of my sisters-in-law, but I love them, of course. They're family.

My conundrum is that I also have four best friends — two from high school and two from college — whom I would like to be my bridesmaids. They're like sisters to me, too. Only one of them is married so far, but I was a bridesmaid in her wedding.

Now to the problem: Do I have to ask my sisters-in-law to be my bridesmaids? Or can I just ask my friends? I know that some brides today have eight (or more) bridesmaids, but I'd like to keep it to four. I have no idea what the etiquette here is. I've read things online saying that you should pick whomever you want because it's your wedding, but I could use some objective and realistic advice. Thanks in advance. — *Always a Bridesmaid, Now a Bride*

Dear Always: Do you have to ask your sisters-in-law to be bridesmaids? No. Should you? Yes, if you want to promote harmony in your family and grow closer with the women your brothers married. I know I'll hear from readers insisting that reciprocity is not a stipulation of being a bridesmaid. Just because a bride included you in her wedding party does not mean you have to return the honor. I completely agree with that. But this is family. Though your sisters-in-law would probably not hold any grudges if you didn't ask them, I'm certain they would forever be touched by the gesture if you did.

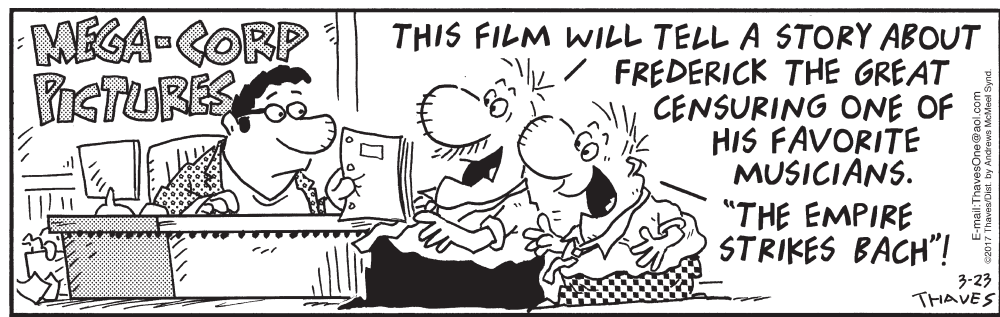
Your best friends should understand that better than anyone.

Dear Annie: "Tired of Wedding Free-loaders" does not appreciate wedding guests who attend the festivities but who give a gift whose value is less than the cost of their participating. She considers a gift of \$100 for two people an insult. Her opening sentence questioned how many times you go out to eat and expect a free meal.

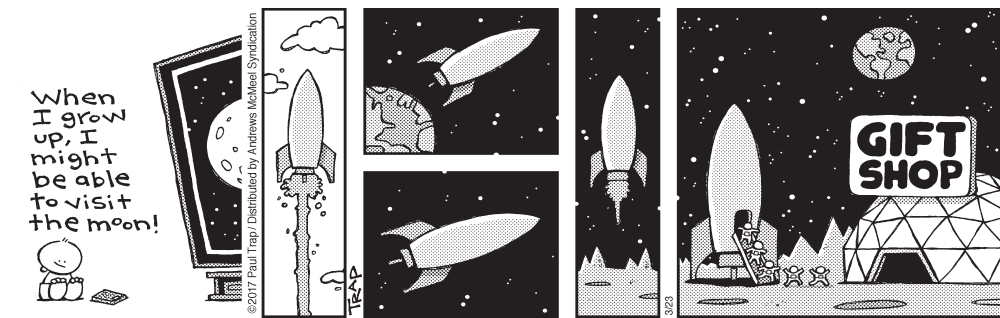
Your answer — to invite loved ones because you love them and want them there — was adequate, but I feel it didn't go far enough. "Tired" needs to realize that when people go out to eat, they always choose a restaurant they can afford. When they attend a wedding, their only choice is to go or not to go. They have no control over the venue or the menu or the cost. Weddings can be simple or extravagant, but the bride is usually the one who makes most of the decisions. If the math does not work for her, she needs to scale back her wedding plans and/or invite fewer guests. — *Imagine*

Dear Imagine: I absolutely agree with you, and I've advised other brides that way in the past. Thank you for adding that sentiment here.

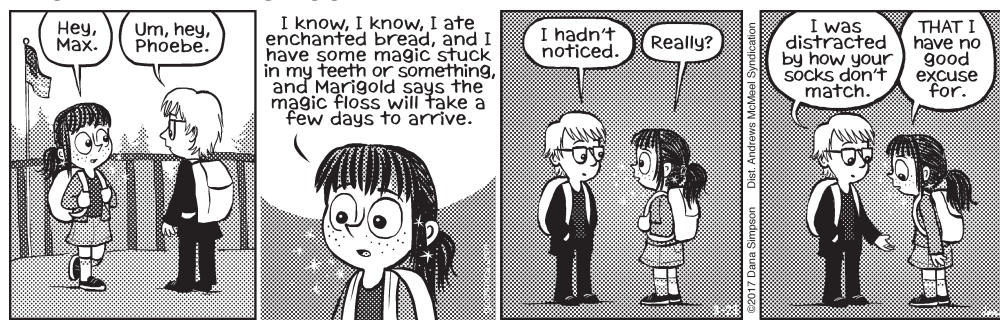
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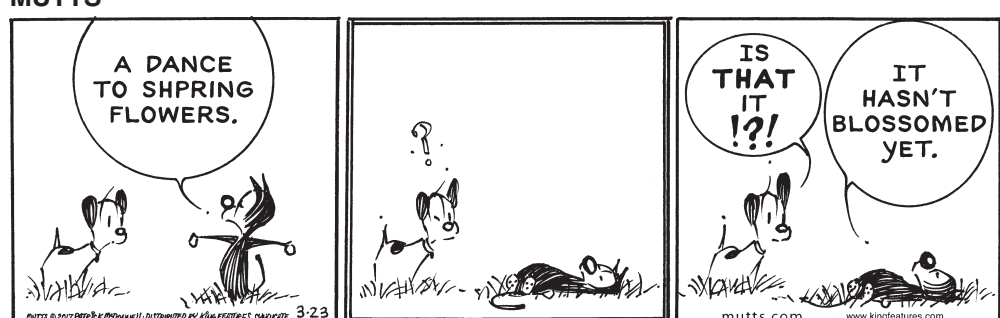
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TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). You can make a promise about what you'll do, because you have a reasonable amount of control over that. To make a promise about how you'll feel, though — it's just not something you can predict at this time.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Life will be sweet. Today will present you with an embarrassment of riches. Such a thing can be dangerous. Better to share with a friend than to have the whole pie to yourself.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Some say that it's possible to know the character of a person through his or her errors. Others suggest the better moments point the way to a person's soul. Right now it will be enough just to pay close attention, for better or worse.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Something a tad jarring may stir you from the comfortable spot you were in. The trouble with waking up to reality is that, once awake, you have to confront that you were, in some sense, asleep.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). You tell yourself to do something and then do the opposite. That's just human. Sometimes you can tolerate this, other times, like today, you can overcome it. You'll clear away the contradictions wherever possible.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Relationships are complicated, sure. Is a never-ending, always-growing love even really possible? Believe that it is. Cynicism is the enemy of love.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). It's not always so easy to find common ground with people, but when you can't find it, you still will

find a way of showing support. Your eyes and attitude will say it all.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). It's exciting where you are right now in your life. It's not perfect, and there is still room for growth. But you've accomplished something, and you'll build on that. Feel good about it.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You're not aiming to get a return on your relationships. You go with your heart and your attractions. The fact that you are rewarded so richly today is a bonus.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). The more desirable a scene is, the more people want it all to themselves. Don't be discouraged. With enough intention and will, you'll soon break through.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Don't worry about making choices that are in keeping with the current style. Fashion doesn't even apply to you now. Your classic ways and tastes will always be in favor.

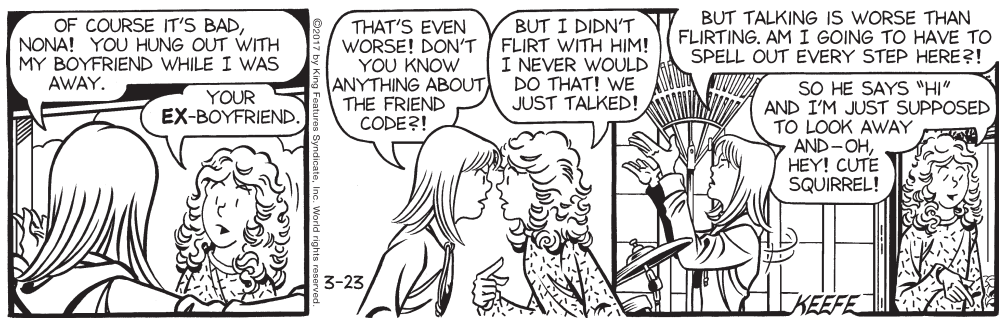
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You won't exactly solve the problem going on between two people you love, but you can make it better by hearing both sides and being generally neutral.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (March 24). You'll see more of the world this year. A change of venue brings something fresh and fiery to your personal life. In April you'll reach back and fix something that you broke a few years ago. June is for stretching your emotional muscles and taking risks with your heart. August will introduce you to new income. Scorpio and Libra adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 4, 30, 20, 1 and 18.

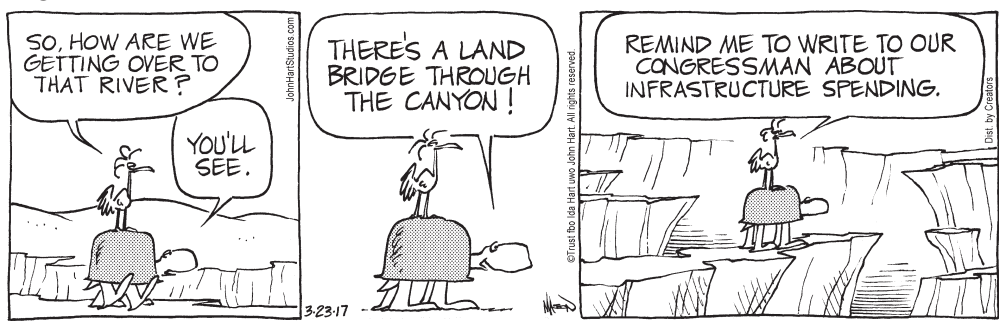
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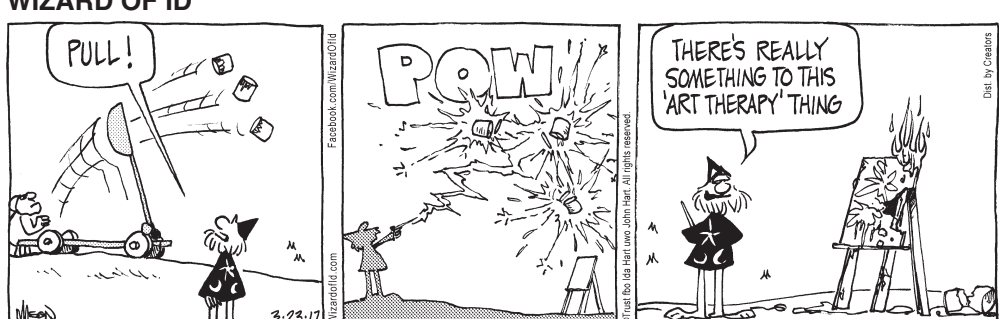
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