

Friend drowning in junk

Dear Annie: A close friend, "Jenna," has a mental illness: She hoards. Her house would be condemned if the health administration were to go there.

I can start tracing this behavior back to when she first became a mother and discovered that raising children requires more than just buying them new clothes and getting pictures taken. She worked and had trouble juggling everything. Fortunately, her mother lived next door and helped out a lot — did her laundry and fixed meals for the kids. But then her mother died, and Jenna's personality began to change even more. She could not keep up with the daily needs of her family. Then her husband died, only 10 months after her mother.

Long story short, her life has continued spiraling downward. Her house is a disaster, with holes in the walls that let the outside air in, mice, snakes and cat urine and feces everywhere because the litter box never gets changed.

She's met a man who lives

out of state. He will never be invited to her home, yet she's talking of marrying him and moving to his location. Her kids are well-adjusted to their hometown. The older one will be a senior in high school next year, and the younger one will be a sophomore. These kids don't want to move, but with her illness, she can only think of herself and getting a new start. She's not being totally honest with her new mate. Others close to her need to know how to help her and her kids. — *Stressed Out in Middle America*

Dear Stressed Out: Start with Jenna. Express your concerns about her mental health, and encourage her to seek professional counseling. Then expand to her circle of family and close friends. Make sure everyone is aware of the problem. If she's been preventing people from coming into the house, it's possible they have no idea how severe the situation is.

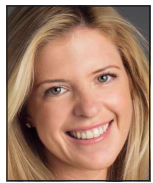
Visit the International OCD Foundation's hoarding website

at <https://hoarding.iocdf.org> for more resources.

Dear Annie: I had to respond to "Ex In or Ex Out." I married my second husband 29 wonderful years ago and met his ex a few months later at his daughter's high school graduation. I was so pleased to find out how friendly and outgoing she was toward me. I was a little jealous because he still cared for her, as he had two children with her. She wrote me a beautiful, kind, generous letter saying how happy she was with our marriage and how he deserved the best. From then on, she invited us to Christmas and Thanksgiving in Florida to stay with her and see the children. We each bonded as close friends from then on and have taken several trips together by ourselves and with others, separate from my husband. I came to know her as the most honest and caring woman I know and think of her as my best friend. She dubbed us "wife-in-laws"! — *Friends With the Ex*

Dear Friends With the Ex: Your example is a reminder that women can often find so much common ground if they just look for it. Thanks for sharing.

DEAR ANNIE

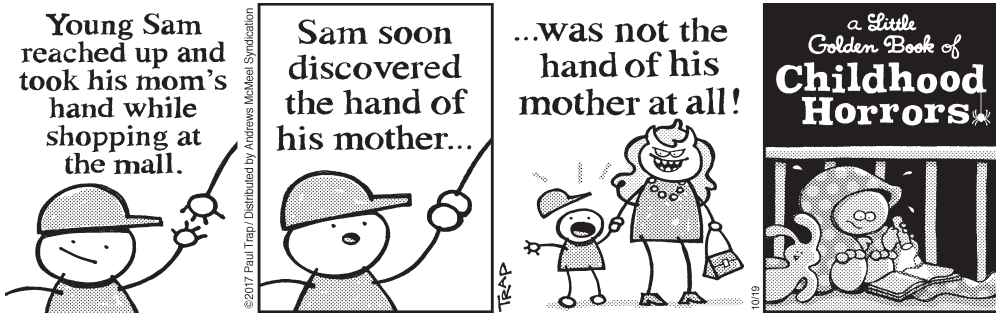


Annie Lane
Creators
Syndicate Inc.

FRANK AND ERNEST



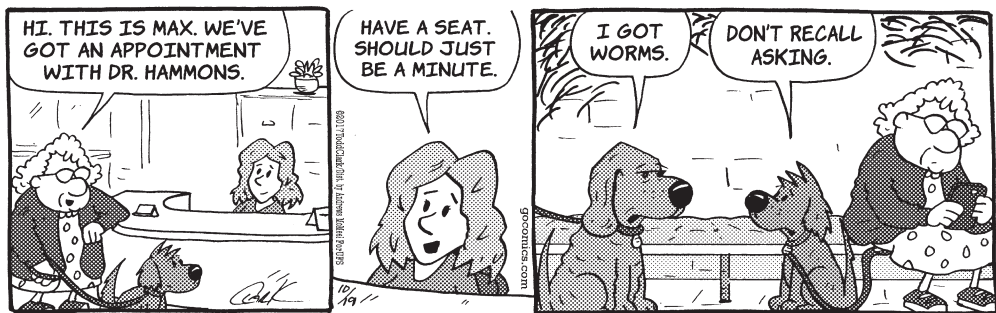
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PHOEBE AND HER UNICORN



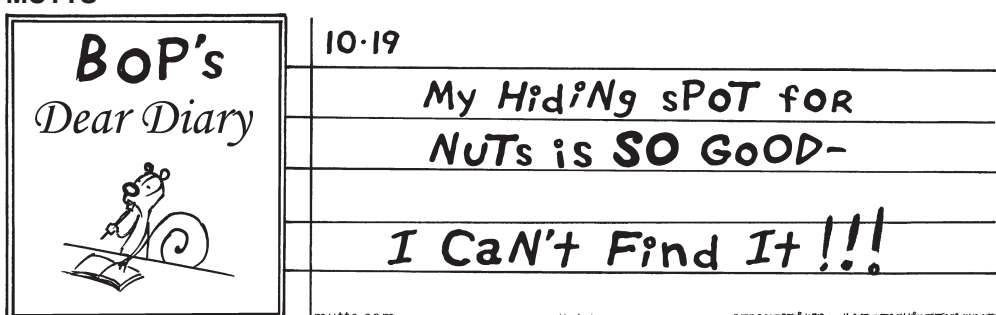
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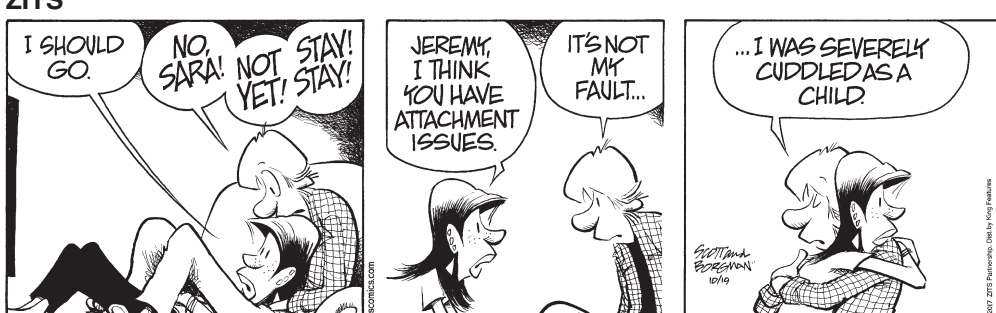
MUTTS



BABY BLUES



ZITS



TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). You'll slip into your zone. The frame of mind that comes with this allows you to be quick, masterful and impervious to any obstruction that would stop a less powerful operator.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Trust isn't an all-or-nothing game. It's about learning a person's nature to know what you can expect. Observation is the way. You'll ask a seemingly innocuous and open-ended question and then back off to see what's revealed.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). There's a relationship that's taking your focus now. The two of you are like porcupines in the snow. You need warmth but must keep a certain distance. You'll find the balance.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). You have no agenda and are not looking for what you can get out of a situation. You're simply there to help in whatever way you can, and because of this, you will be able to help many.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Remember when you experienced an instant attraction to someone you didn't know, and then you got to know the person and watched the attraction erode? It could go another way this time, though. You'll have to say hello and find out.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). New aspirations will form in your mind and heart. Bits of brainstorming will align. Disparate ideas will bond to make plausible ones. All that chaotic, random energy bouncing around crystallizes into a real thing.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Since you already know what you think, you'll try other people's opinions and viewpoints on for size. This will increase your capacity for empathy and your power, too, since it's easier to influence those you truly understand.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). There are those who will give before you ask, and in ways you never expected. It's not really a favorable dynamic now, as some contributions come with too much attached to them. Besides, you want to make your own way.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). If there were a multiple-choice test on your life right now, you'd be bubbling in a lot of answers like "None of the above" and "All of the above," as big groups of events seem to be either happening or not happening.

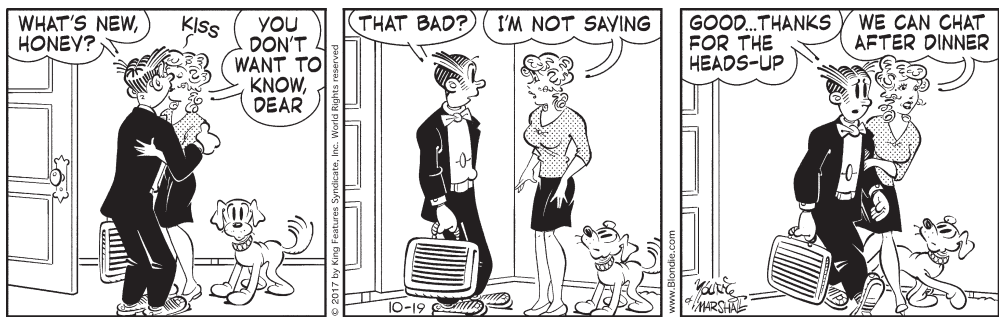
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). It happens all the time. Smart people do dumb things. Enlightened people do petty things. Simple people do complicated things. Maybe we should stop labeling people and just accept them and what they do.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Excitement and boredom are both states of mind that are inextricably linked to their impermanence. You'll relax into a deeper understanding of life as you accept what cannot be maintained indefinitely.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Learning is always forward movement, even when what you are learning seems to stop you from going further. Ask a different question. One good question may very well be all it takes to change everything.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (Oct. 20). Something quiet and small turns into a very successful and perhaps even famous venture. There's big love coming your way in the weeks to come. Through 2018 make your life easier by dealing with honest people — and, it goes without saying, being one yourself. Travel brings luck, especially a road trip next month. Cancer and Aquarius adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 6, 20, 14, 7 and 30.

BLONDIE



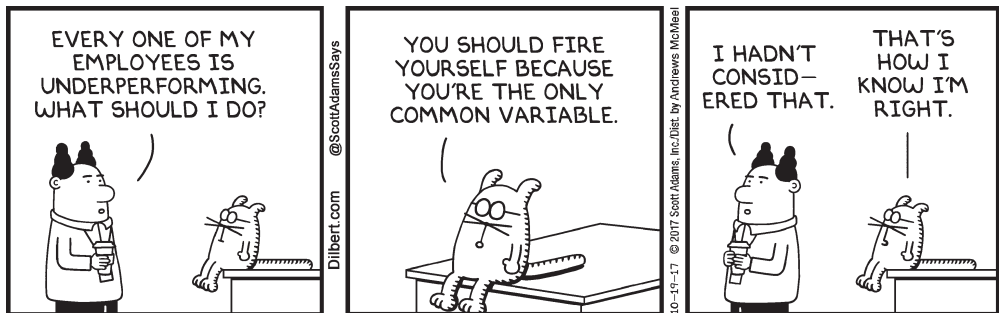
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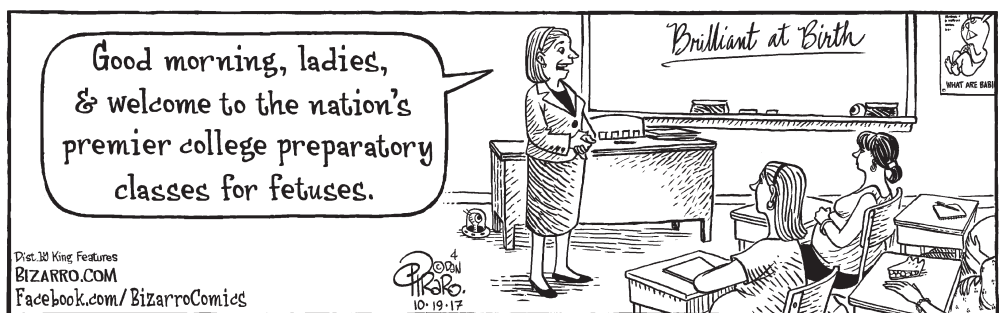
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DILBERT



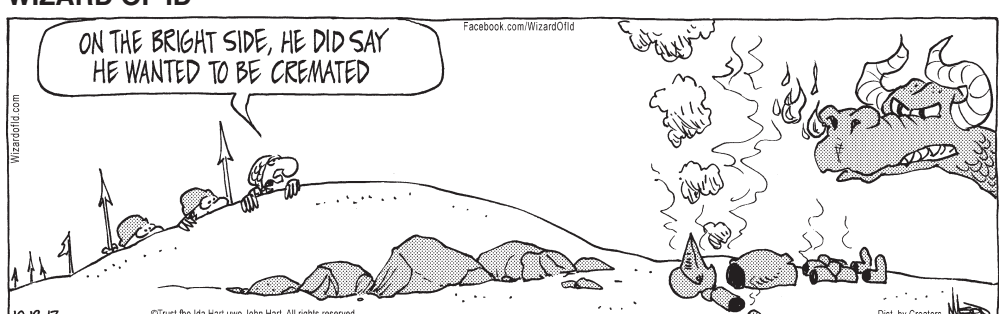
BIZARRO



NON SEQUITUR



WIZARD OF ID



ROSE IS ROSE

