

# Mom adds strain to relationship

**Dear Annie:** My boyfriend and I are starting to get serious, and everything is going smoothly except for one constant bump in the road: his mother. His dad is out of the picture. She is single, and he is an only child and lives at home. She desperately wants him to be a mama's boy, but he never has been and never will be, which frustrates her. She needs to know where he is, texts him constantly, becomes judgmental when he drinks any alcohol or is out late, and demands his constant attention. He used to be able to maintain a balance; he would choose his battles but also try to talk her down and explain to her that he is an adult and can make his own choices. However, she seems to get needier as he and I get closer.



Annie Lane  
Creators  
Syndicate Inc.

I try my best to be friendly and kind when I interact with her, but I've overheard conversations between the two of them (I know; I shouldn't eavesdrop) that basically come down to her accusing me of taking him away and being a bad influence. He is aware of how difficult she is and apologizes

on her behalf, but I don't know what to do or say. Annie, I don't want to create conflict between my boyfriend and his mother, but I don't want to have to fight over him. Though her behavior irritates me, I would still like to get along with her, but she so clearly dislikes me, and nothing I've tried so far has changed that. How do I ensure that she will back off a bit so that my relationship can continue to grow? — *No More Tug of War*

**Dear No More Tug of War:** It takes two to engage in tug of war, so step away from the rope and stay out of the mud. Meet any of her rudeness with kindness. But do talk to your boyfriend about how you're feeling. It sounds as though his mom is overly dependent on him and he's enabling this dynamic. Though moving out would certainly help give him space from his mom, he might bring guilt with him, and then the codependent pattern might continue. Encourage him to attend a few therapy sessions so he can get a clearer perspective of his own emotional needs. Until

he establishes healthy boundaries with her, it will be impossible for him to have a healthy relationship with you.

**Dear Annie:** I reluctantly agree with your assertion that "anyone who can't afford to leave a tip shouldn't be eating out in the first place." But you missed an opportunity to point out the absurdity of the modern tip system.

Tips are supposed to reward excellent service, not serve as mandatory wage supplements. Today service workers are being paid less than minimum wage in most places solely because the economic system has adapted to assume that standard levels of service will always be acknowledged by an "optional" payment, whose standard value has risen from 15 percent to 18 percent to 20 percent just over the past couple of decades.

Servers should be paid at least the same minimum wage as everyone else, and restaurants should adjust their prices accordingly. — *Just a Tip for You*

**Dear Just a Tip for You:** I agree with you. I'd love to see that system change here in the United States. Here's hoping — though I'm not holding my breath.

## TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

**ARIES (March 21-April 19).** You don't have to be the cause of an event to feel that you're the one to do something about it. If all you do is hope for the best, you will be doing more than most. Of course, you'll take bigger action than that. It's who you are.

**TAURUS (April 20-May 20).** You have plenty that you can leverage into plenty more. It's all how you play it. Step back and assess where you are. Talk to outsiders about it — people who see you more objectively than you can.

**GEMINI (May 21-June 21).** When you act to please people, the opposite will happen — not always, just today. See, it's really supposed to be your turn. So take care of your own needs, and pursue what delights you. People will like you all the more for it.

**CANCER (June 22-July 22).** Narrow your focus. If you go too broad, people will have no idea how to relate to you, where to hook in or what to do with you. Home in on the one thing you want that people can support you in now. You'll make friends.

**LEO (July 23-Aug. 22).** There are things that should be discussed, and a lot that shouldn't. Discretion will be the better part of diplomacy. The proverb states, "Even a fish won't get into trouble if it kept its mouth shut."

**VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22).** Common sense isn't always common practice. If anyone can get in there and improve the ratio of logical action to nonsense, it's you. Bonus: You have a nice way of getting people to see it your way.

**LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23).** You'll spend time in planning mode and in living mode too. You're doing this right. When in planning mode, you think of the long term and the distant results. But when you're in living mode, you seize

each hour like it's the last.

**SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21).** A key secret to love, war and life in general: Know when to get out. Everything has its cycle. Leave the party when the going is good and you'll have the right energy for what's next.

**SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21).** Positive leaders and influences will help get your mind off nagging issues that can't be changed. They'll inspire you instead to start dealing with things that can be changed: There's so much to work with in that realm.

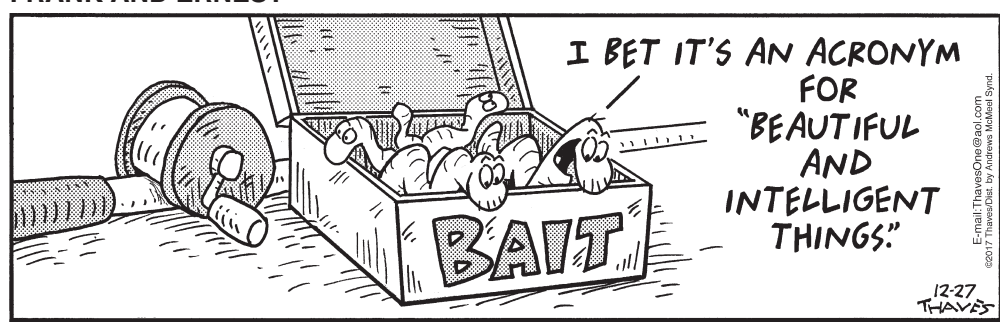
**CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19).** The more you care about others the more they care about you. Respect is the same. You've a healthy amount of it flowing through your world now to command and to give.

**AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18).** It's as though your purpose clears a path for you. Once you know why you're doing a thing, you can figure out how to do it much more easily. Also, you can understand, see and tolerate things better.

**PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20).** The quarrelsome people tend to find each other — or rather, they bring it out in each other. Avoid them altogether, because they'll be especially difficult, and there's no sense in messing up the perfect peace available to you today.

**TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (Dec. 28).** Discuss how you feel, because that will tell people more about you than any fact you could share. Why do you want them to know? The better they know you, the better they can help you or allow you to help them. Your relationships are your gold. The connections you make will bring you your heart's desire. Scorpio and Pisces adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 3, 22, 31, 25 and 5.

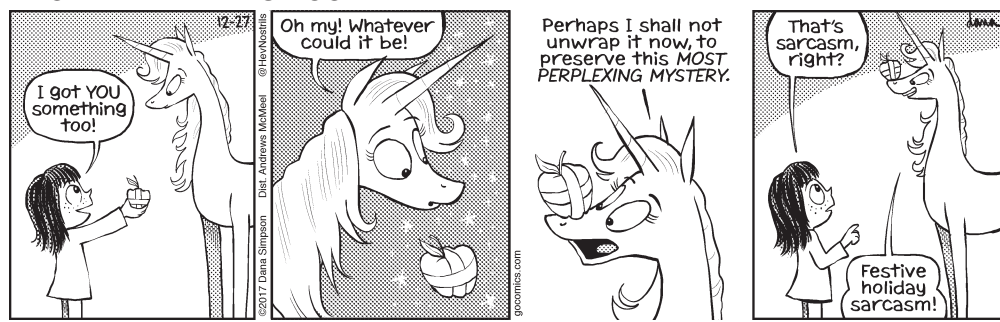
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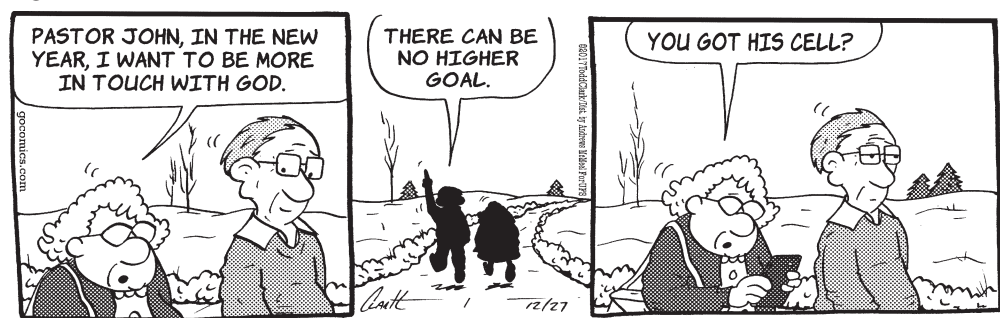
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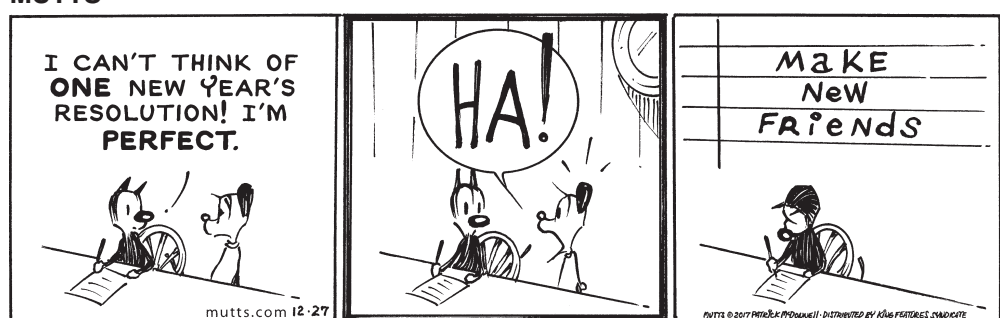
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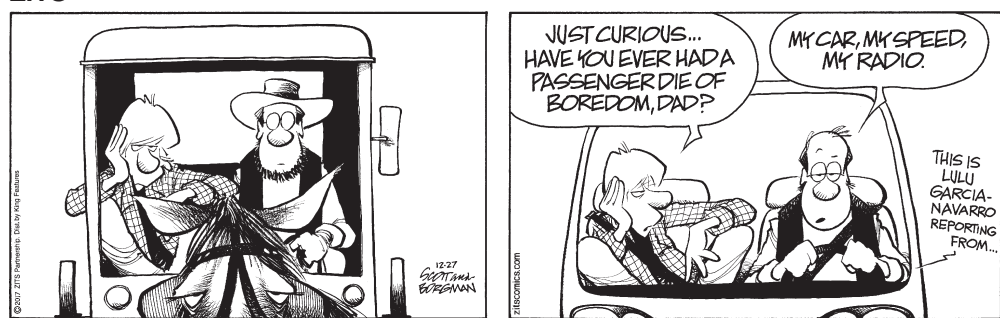
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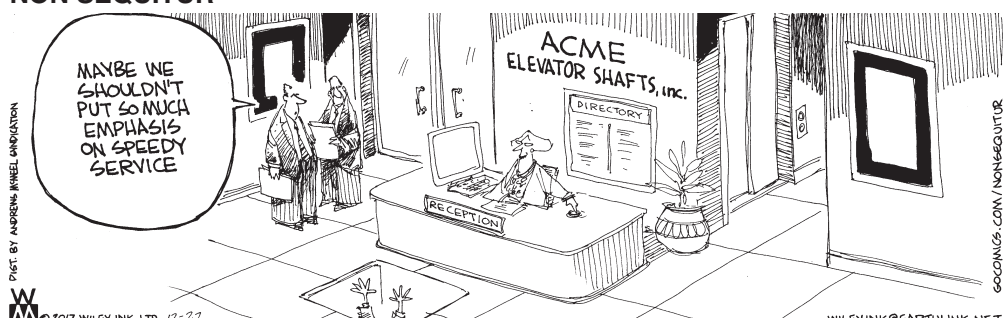
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