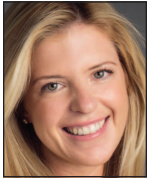


Thanks for the junky gifts

Dear Annie: I am in my 60s, as are my brothers and sisters, and we're all retired. We have always exchanged nice, thoughtful (though not expensive) gifts for birthdays, Christmas and maybe some other special occasions. Over the past several years, my brother "Rod" and his wife, "Erma," have, in addition to a lot of other rude behaviors, started giving people gifts that are, in a word, mean-spirited. These are things that the recipients almost surely don't want and/or can't use. Several of these "gifts" seem very clearly to be things they found in their closets or at some kind of garage sale. Others seem to be presents they're regifting — not really picked out for the recipients, to put it mildly. Money is not the issue for them. You'll just have to believe me on that.

DEAR ANNIE



Annie Lane
Creators
Syndicate Inc.

People have politely mentioned to them such things as, "I don't know when I'm going to be able to use this." Everyone has continued to buy them what seem to be nice gifts, and I really don't mind that (for the moment).

My question is: Should I send a thank-you note? I really don't want

to encourage this baloney. It seems kind of silly to put money and effort into a gift exchange just to insult people. To be honest, I don't exactly know what to say in a thank-you note. "Thank you for the nice jacket that doesn't fit and has absolutely no tags on it?"

I would prefer not to stop this gift giving, because for the rest of us, it helps us to connect and is a nice tradition. The most recent time this happened, I did talk to Rod about it. He would not admit there was anything wrong with the gift, although he did say it was not exactly what he had gone to the store to buy. Any thoughts? — *When Is a Gift Not a Gift?*

Dear WIAGNAG: I'll take your word that this isn't a matter of money (though do consider that you never can be sure what's in another's bank account). If you really believe they're acting out of inconsideration, then no, I don't think you need to send a thank-you note. Sending one would probably just make you angrier about the whole thing.

If the shared ritual and connection with your siblings are what you really appreciate about the gift

exchange, you can find those things elsewhere. Browse the internet (Pinterest in particular) to spark your imagination for holiday traditions you can start together.

Dear Annie: My wife and I can certainly relate to "Feeling Betrayed," who wrote to you about losing a ring. We were visiting my aunt and uncle many years ago on a week's vacation, and my diamond wedding ring went missing. My aunt loves all types of jewelry and wears diamonds often around the family.

My wife and I suspected that my aunt had somehow taken the wedding ring, but we just said it was missing and that we were looking for it. Your advice to "Feeling Betrayed" — "Jump to conclusions and you'll land in a mess" — was spot on, because when we returned home from our trip, the diamond ring fell out of the liner of the suitcase.

Thank goodness we didn't make any accusations, because as you say, there are many possible explanations for why the ring has gone missing. — *Mark and Betty*

Dear Mark and Betty: This is a great reminder of why it's best to keep our accusations to ourselves, no matter how sure we think we are. Glad you found the ring.

TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). To avoid wasting your energy, be strategic in your placement of it. Go where you're likely to get the most cooperation. Together you'll accomplish more.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). The word "fan" comes from "fanatic," meaning "a person filled with excessive and single-minded zeal." It's a state of being responsible for great harm in the world. It's far better to be gently and open-mindedly supportive.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Children make socially inappropriate statements because they have yet to learn what's acceptable in different situations. Then there are those who will never learn. You'll help them though. You'll be a guiding force of decorum.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). You may feel as though you are swinging your arms and flailing about in an attempt to regain some kind of balance. In fact, this is a rather accurate depiction of what everyone is doing. It is the very essence of "action."

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). In a cruel loophole, pointing out another person's rudeness is rude. And if there's anything to avoid at all costs today, it's rudeness — not because it will upset others, but because it will ultimately make you disappointed in yourself.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Silliness can be the preservation of sanity. And even if the situation isn't in dire need of silliness, it's the ingredient that will make your time memorable and fun.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Excellent question of the day: "Who cares?" — not in a snarky or defeatist sort of tone, but an investigative one. The answer will be your best customer, your ardent supporter, your dear friend.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). You've started many things with good intentions but life gets in the way of finishing. It doesn't make you a slacker; it makes you a person who tends to priorities. But do consider those priorities today. Is it time to adjust them?

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Someone you look up to as a role model isn't fit for the job. (Maybe you've made the common mistake of casting a movie star in that position.) You will seek and find guidance from one with real-world accomplishments.

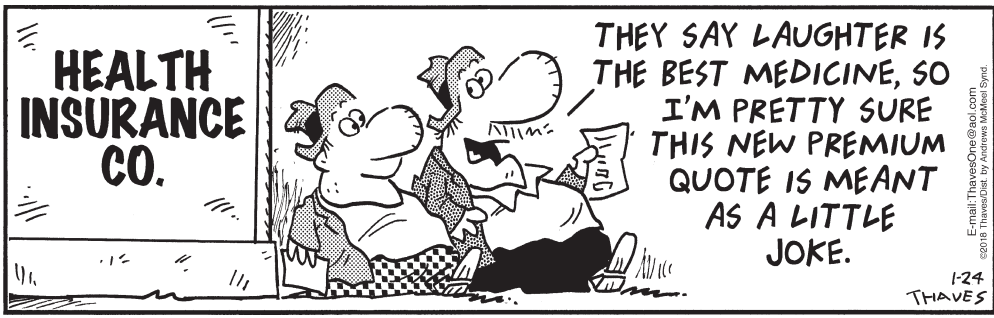
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Before you dive into a project or take things in a new direction, play it out in the theater of your mind. It will be easier to try new things if you first take away the potential consequences.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Here's an insane quest: Try and find the perfect partner, job or situation. The insanity will come at no extra charge. Accept imperfection, however, and you'll get brilliant results. Sanity will be included in the price.

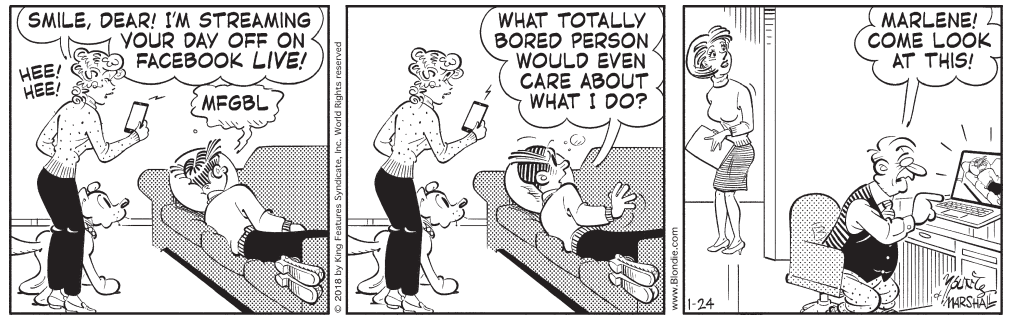
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). People who are hard to read can have you coming back for more. But once you feel you have them figured out, your fascination wanes. The one who intuits this and makes it a mission to keep you guessing will enthrall you.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (Jan. 25). You'll be surprised at what you can do. Of course, it takes something incredible to sustain your high energy throughout the year, and the juicy prize you'll choose works wonders to keep your tenacity and desire burning. Let yourself be frivolous this summer. Leo and Libra adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 10, 3, 38, 32 and 12.

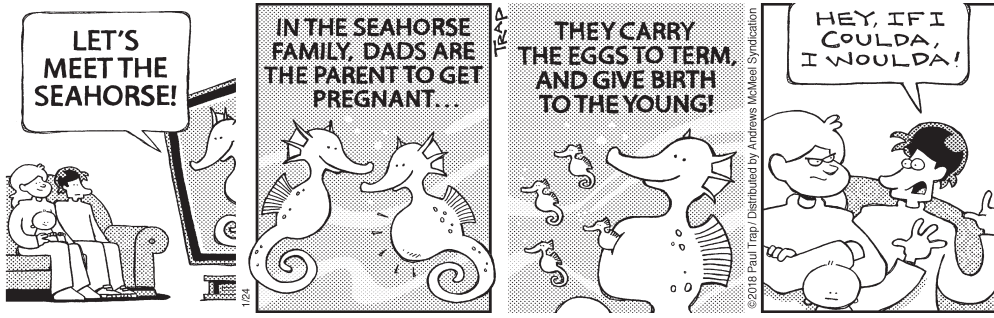
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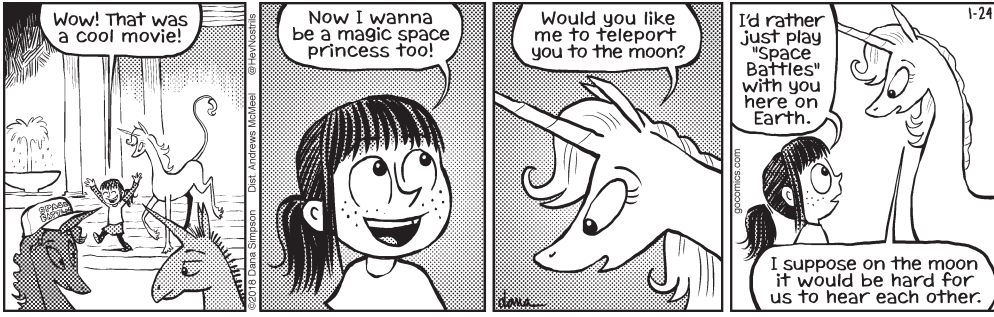
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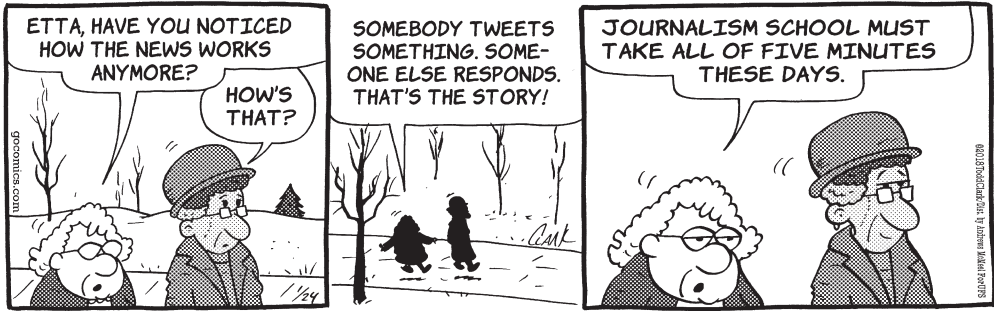
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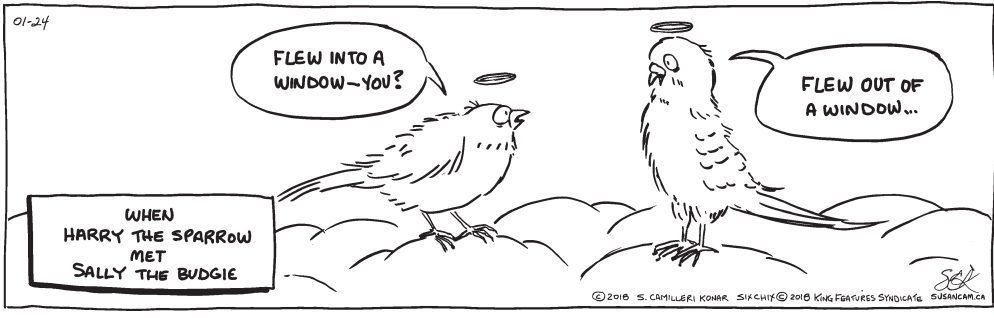
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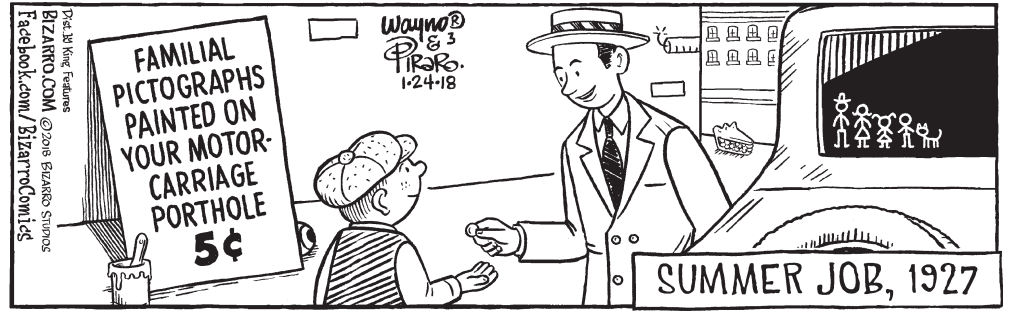
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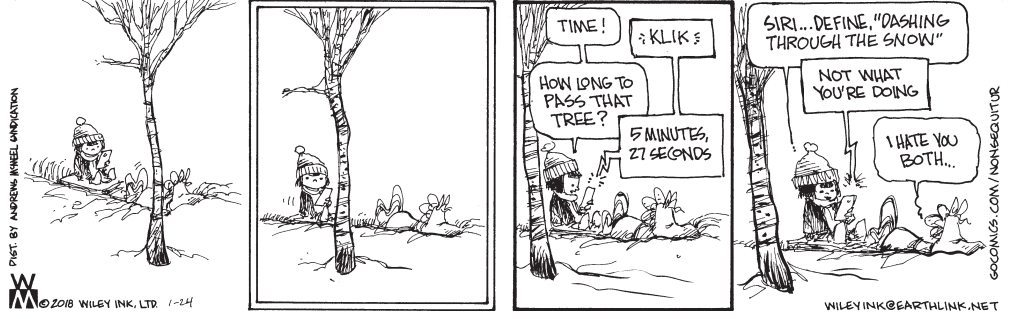
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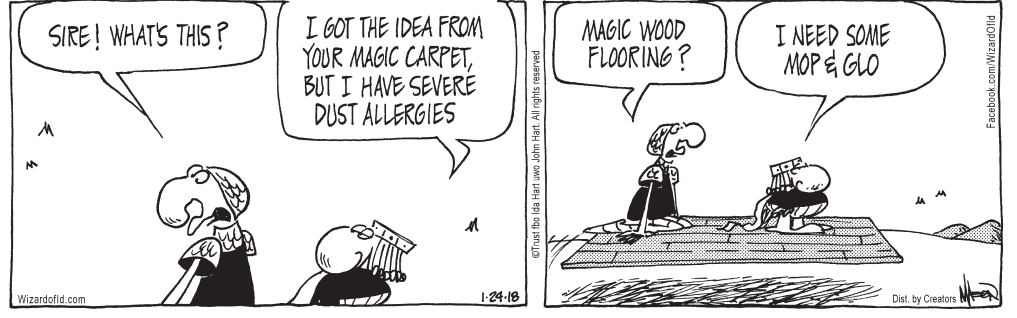
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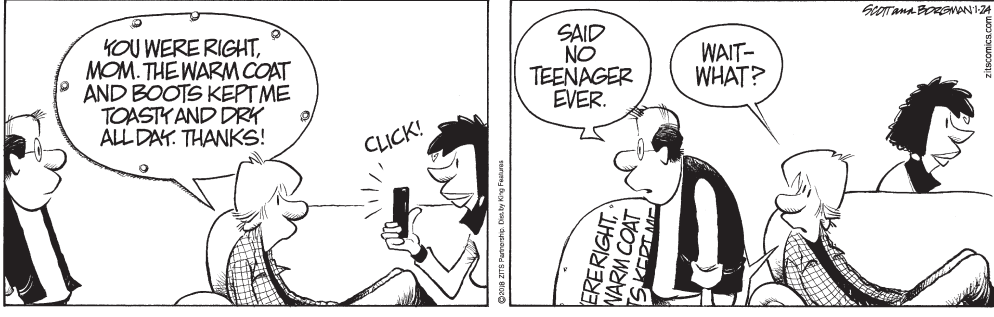
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