

Dealing with a difficult past

Dear Annie: I am a 32-year-old married man with two children. I am trying to come to terms with my childhood. I grew up in a dysfunctional family, with an alcoholic father and a mother who had numerous affairs.

My elder brother, "Michael," was my world. He is only three years older than I am, but he practically raised me. He is the one who got me dressed and ready for school every morning, fed me, helped me with my homework, and tucked me in at night.

When I was 12 years old, my parents were going through a nasty divorce, and our home had become a war zone. I began to cling to my brother even more for comfort and safety.

I am ashamed to admit that our relationship became inappropriate and sexual in nature. To this day, I am not sure how it happened. It was never the same after that, and we never discussed what we had done.

About a year ago, I started to go to therapy to deal with my past. I still love Michael and want to try to understand what we did and how it happened.

I approached him about meet-

ing with my therapist, but he reacted with anger. He claims to have no memory of any sexual encounters between us. He says it never happened and I must be imagining the whole thing.

As God is my witness, I remember what happened between us. I am not looking to accuse. I just want to understand. He has told every member of the family, including our divorced parents, that I am some kind of a pervert with bizarre, sick fantasies about him. Unfortunately, the family believes him.

My therapist says that there is little I can do to get Michael to admit to our past, that I need to reach peace of mind on my own. Is there anything you can suggest to get him to at least sit down with my therapist and me?

—*Recovering*
Dear Recovering: I am so sorry for what you went through, but I'm very glad to hear that you're in therapy. I believe that your therapist is right — that there is little you can do to get Michael to admit the past. I encourage you to stay in therapy, as I believe you'll find that you have many pathways to recovery that

don't require Michael's participation. Call the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network's hotline anytime if you need someone to talk to: 800-656-4673.

Dear Annie: Though your answer to "Craving Kicks" was good, I think it was slightly incomplete.

She said she felt completely free, present and powerful when she scored her first soccer goal and was indeed recalling those feelings. But I submit that any endeavor also has the potential to give those exact feelings of freedom, power and presentness when it is pursued with practice and then success is achieved. It depends on the intensity of the pursuit, the amount of focus and practice, and how crowd-pleasing accomplishments are. It does not have to be soccer. Successful professionals in all sports and in other endeavors — music, acting, academics — experience the same power, freedom and presentness, which come from concentration and focus. This makes me wish I had practiced the piano more.

—*Kathy in Virginia Beach*

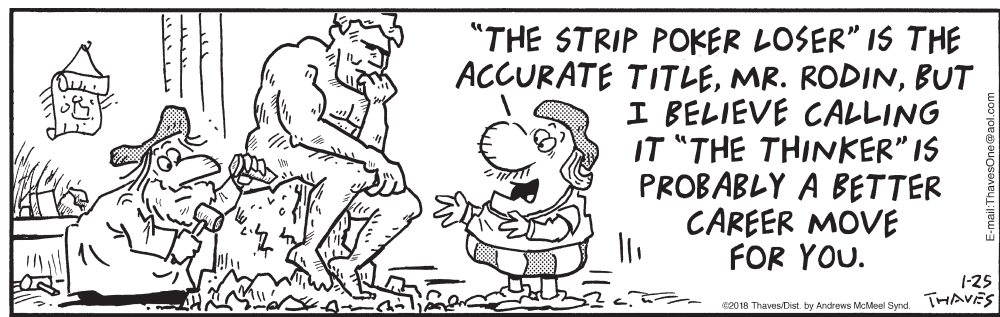
Dear Kathy in Virginia Beach: I'm printing your letter because I agree completely. Great points. And it's never too late: Go tickle those ivories!

DEAR ANNIE



Annie Lane
Creators
Syndicate Inc.

FRANK AND ERNEST



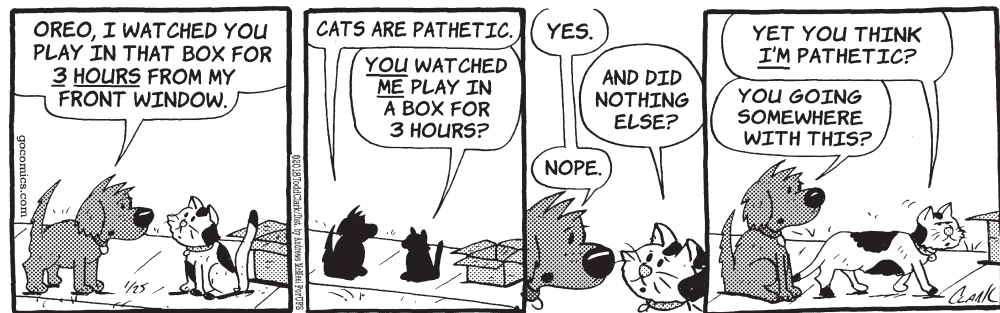
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PHOEBE AND HER UNICORN



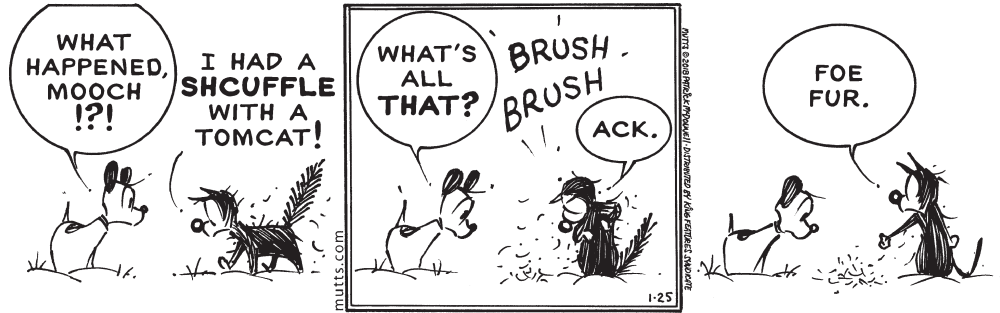
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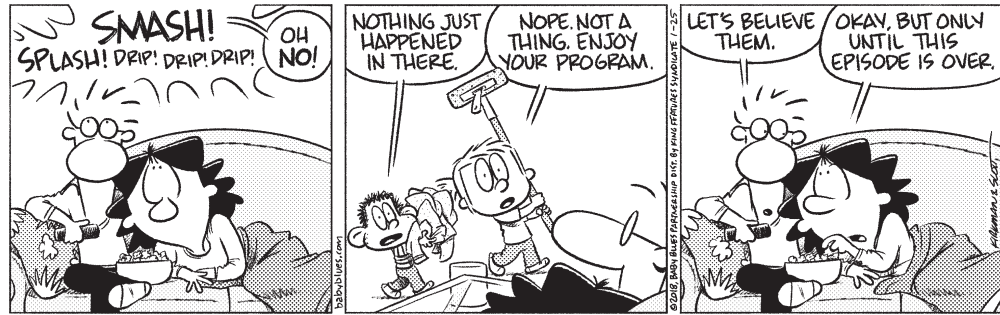
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TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Your best friends aren't the ones who go along with everything you say without question. They're the ones who will challenge you once in a while and, in doing so, either cause you to take a stronger stand or change your mind.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). There's something in you that will keep you doing things the way you've always done them. It's not that you can't fall in line and follow the directions; it's that you think there might be a better way. So go on and find it.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Some people love sentimentality. There's hard evidence of this in box-office statistics and television-watching trends everywhere. But you'd rather take tenderness, sadness and nostalgia in small doses.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Three is an age-old magic number, from building seating, to knocking on wood, to setting up the punchline of a joke. Three will be present in the magical triptych of this day.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Life is rooting for you, though you may not love the cheer. It's aggressive-sounding. Unnecessarily acrobatic. But the players aren't the ones who get to choose the cheerleaders. Give in to life's enthusiasm, whatever form it takes.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Talent creates opportunity. Opportunity creates talent. Neither are crucial to success. Desire is the magic. Desire will bring you everything you need: talent, opportunity and the work ethic to keep going until you get there.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). People's bad vibes can affect you even if they are not about you. Who needs that? Get away. Don't wait for

them to be directed toward you. The minute you get a whiff of less than optimal environs, enact a location change.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). You have an especially tight bond with family these days. There are those who might get a little jealous of the love flowing between you and your favorite people. Be sensitive to the feelings of others.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Even loners are better off with a little social support. And for the socially motivated, it's especially important to gather a team. Accountability is key in goal getting. Build some into your plan in the form of other people.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). If you can't figure out how to eliminate the obstacles in your path, maybe you can imagine a way to arrange them differently. For instance, stack them like stairs you can climb up and get over.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Since you live inside your own head, you're acutely aware of your insecurities in a way that no one around you could ever be. So stop worrying and project yourself as you would like to be. They won't know the difference.

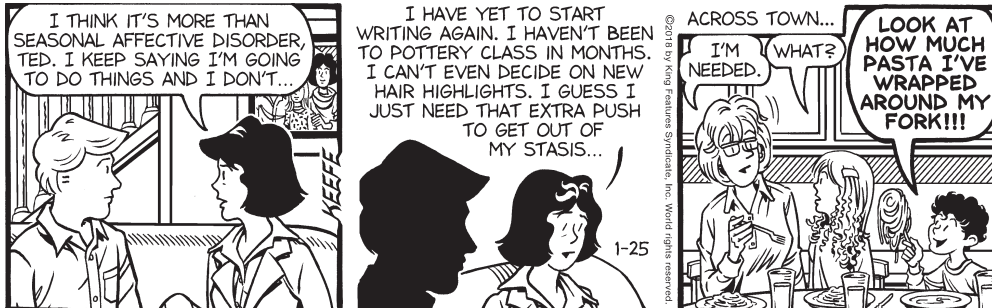
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Older people find the banter of younger people amusing, or possibly obnoxious, as it's a reminder of how they themselves used to relate to others before they knew so much of life.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (Jan. 26). You are driven by strong forces within and guided by angelic benefactors around you. You could support, or even save, another person in April by sharing your expertise and resources. Capricorn and Scorpio adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 2, 24, 1, 28 and 6.

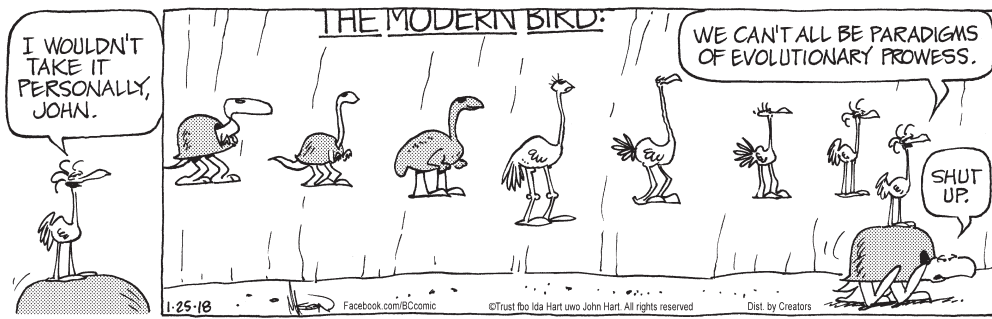
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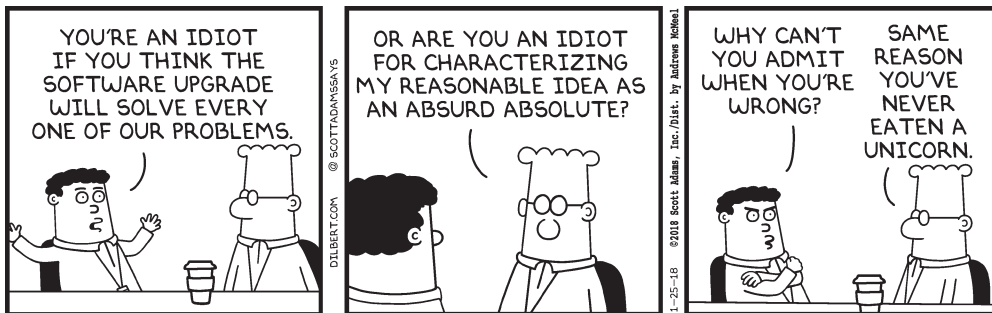
SALLY FORTH



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WIZARD OF ID



ROSE IS ROSE

