

Behind-the-back talk

Dear Annie: I have a problem with my friend "Julie" that I'm not sure how to handle. She's a really good friend in many ways. She's always there when I'm going through hard stuff. She's generous with food and gifts and other thoughtful gestures. For instance, last year, when she was watching my dog while I was out of town, she took him to the vet when he seemed sick, with no hesitation. And one time when there was an issue with my apartment that required me to be out of the unit for a few days, Julie let me stay with her even though it was on very short notice. You get the picture. When we're on good terms, you couldn't ask for a better friend.

DEAR ANNIE



Annie Lane
Creators
Syndicate Inc.

the years because these mutual friends have let slip things that she's told them about our fights. I've also put it together for myself because whenever she fights with another friend, she tells me all about it. I know that I'm not special and that when we have fights, she does the same thing.

Personally, I think it's wrong to talk negatively about someone to a mutual friend, so I never want to do that myself. But I worry that with everyone just getting one side of the story, people have a skewed picture of me. Should I try to correct the record by letting these friends know my side or just be the bigger person and let it go? — *Ears Burning*

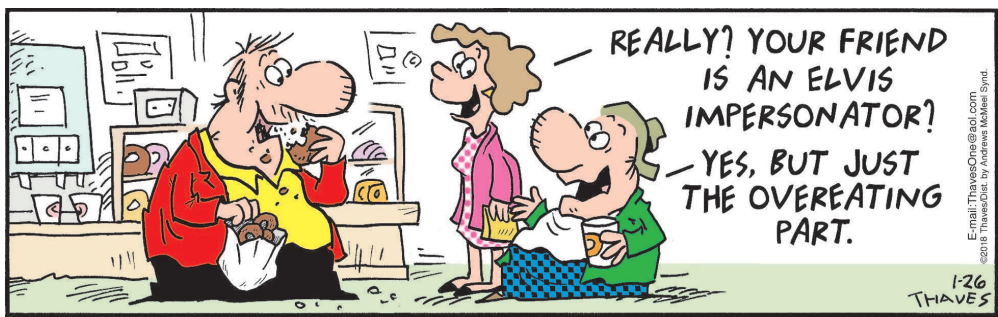
Dear Ears Burning: It's bad enough when high schoolers do this. There's no excuse for grown adults to be engaging in this sort of gossip mill. Rather than dive into the mud yourself by trying to explain your side of the story to friends, rise above and address

the problem at its source. Confront Julie. Explain how her oversharing (to put it nicely) hurts you. If she continues talking behind your back after that, reconsider how close you want to be with her.

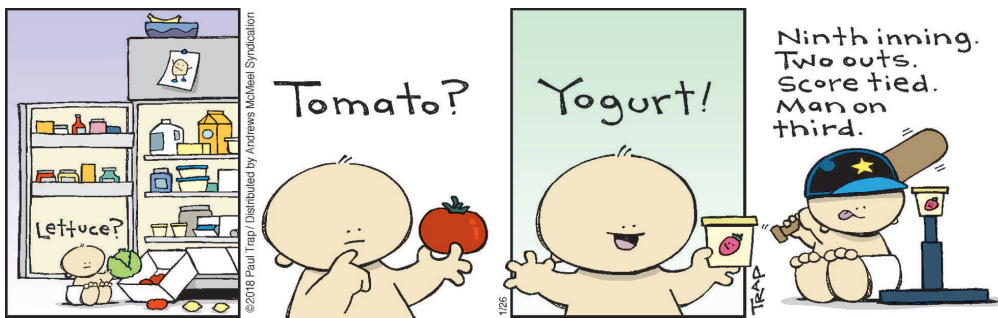
Dear Annie: I understand and sympathize with "Sleepless in Spokane." My husband of 36-plus years and I have successfully slept in separate bedrooms for over 10 years. I like your suggestion of twin beds. I might also suggest that "Sleepless in Spokane" put a nightstand between the twin beds and use a white-noise machine or even a fan. That is what I do whenever we have company or are on vacation and hubby and I share a bed. — *Been There*

Dear Been There: I'm glad to hear that separate bedrooms have worked out for you and your husband. That arrangement truly does seem to do wonders for many couples these days. The white-noise machine is an excellent tip that I should have mentioned in my original answer. Thanks for writing.

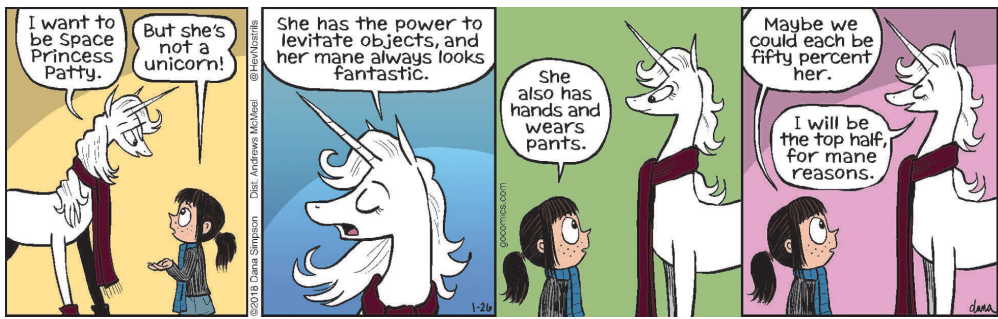
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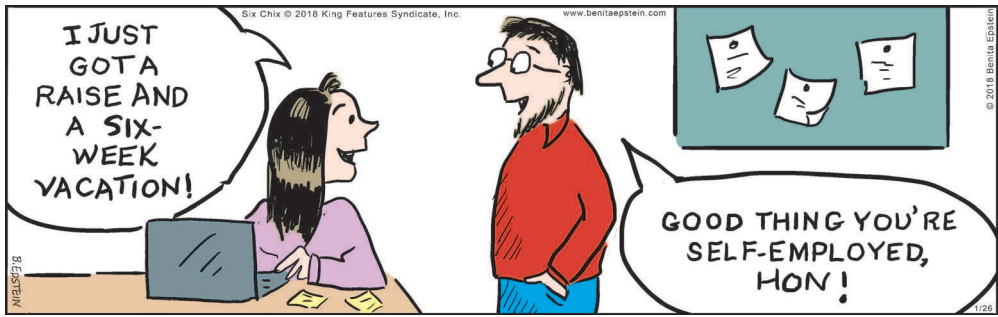
PHOEBE AND HER UNICORN



LOLA



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BABY BLUES



ZITS



TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Entrances should come with announcements. Whether you're stepping into the room or into someone's life, make sure there's some style to it. Don't sneak in. Take this opportunity to make a unique statement.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Thousands of stunning selfies cannot a beauty make. There is no image that can make a person beautiful, because images are always in the past and being beautiful is a present state, one that you'll easily achieve today.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). You shine in even the most ordinary of situations. Actually, the ordinary situations of today will be especially good for this, as you'll catch people off guard. Just don't let it go to your head when they fall for your charms.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Today's work will be a little like stringing beads. As you make small, continuous improvements, you wind up with something intricate, lovely, substantial and complete.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). You are strongly inclined to help another person and want the best for this person — that's almost enough to call it a friendship. Take it the rest of the way by making this a habit, and a mutual one.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Smiling is the easiest way to show confidence. And if you're not exactly feeling confident, smiling is also a good way to get there. So is listening carefully. People will thrive under the nourishment of your attention.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). People, encouraged to do as they please, will generally imitate others — not for a lack of creativity; it's just that

humans are wired to learn through imitation. So when you do something different today, it will be all the more remarkable.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). It is said that there's no money in poetry and no poetry in money, and yet there will be a bit of financial justice today that plays out in such a way that challenges this assertion.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You can't change the facts of what has happened, but you can realize the deeper reasons involved, and this may cause just the change necessary to allow you to let it go.

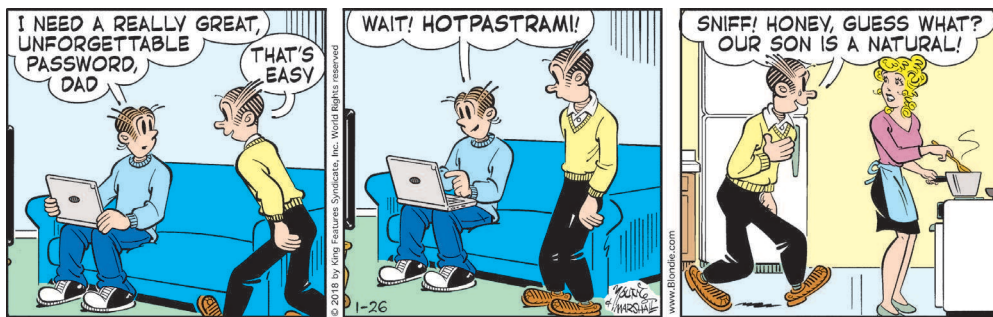
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Putting people on pedestals is bad for everyone. For starters, at some point, the elevated person is going to have to come down, whether by fall from grace, gradual decline or purposeful humility.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). You'll be asked to weigh in, though it might not be smartest thing to do. Try asking this magic question instead: What do you think you should do?

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Though it seems that everything has a price, in today's case it's an emotional price that will matter more than a dollar amount. It's not about the money; it's about what the money means.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (Jan. 27). People can relax and be themselves around you, and that's why you have so many friends and fun times over the course of this solar return. You'll attract a like-minded partner next month, and by April you'll have a whole team. Making money will be your specialty, starting with a training in May. Virgo and Sagittarius adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 5, 30, 44, 2 and 18.

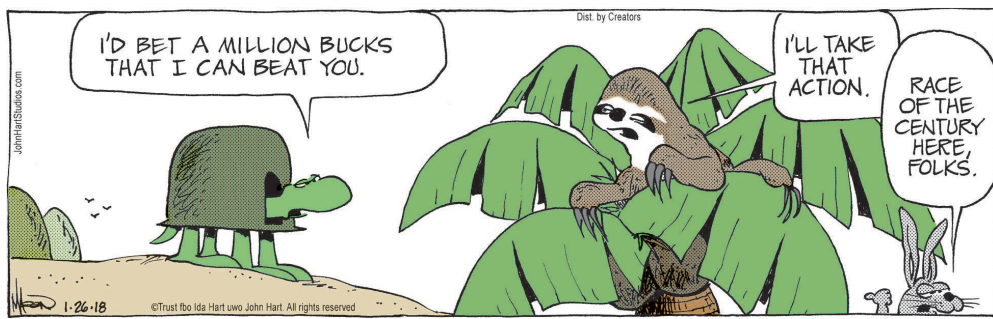
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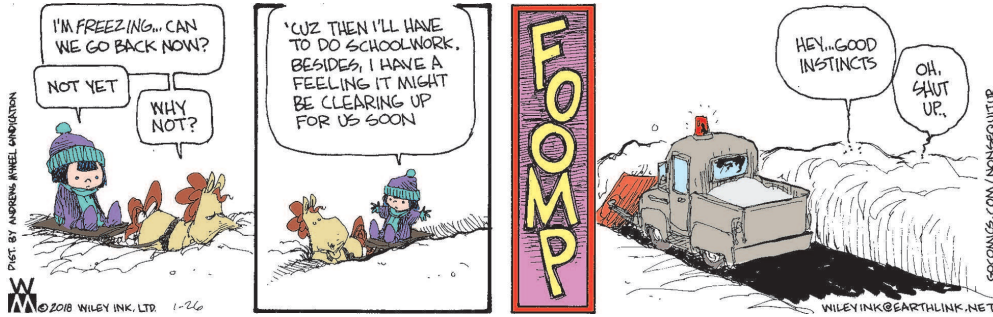
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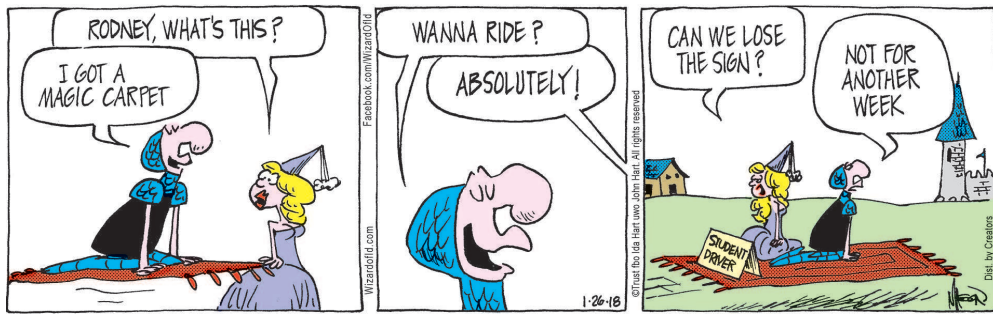
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ROSE IS ROSE

