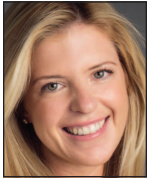


Girlfriend just wanted a card

Dear Annie: My boyfriend and I have been together for three years. Everything is going well between us, and he's a sweet and thoughtful guy in general. But he didn't get me a present or card for Christmas, and it's been bothering me the past few weeks, though I've tried to just move on. It's not something I'm eager to bring up. I feel pretty whiny even admitting in this letter that it bothers me. I got him a few gifts and took him out to his favorite restaurant. I know that you shouldn't expect a gift in return when you give something, but it just stung a little that he didn't put thought into getting me something — anything at all. I would have been happy with a card or a special home-cooked meal or some other small gesture. Last year, he got me a nice present, so I just assumed we'd be exchanging presents this year. Am I being ridiculous? Should I just get over it, or should I tell him? — *Snubbed in the South*

DEAR ANNIE



Annie Lane
Creators
Syndicate Inc.

gestures can be gifts, too. Perhaps material presents aren't important to your boyfriend and he didn't realize they'd be important to you. Let him know your feelings on the matter — but before you do, make a list of all the other ways he shows his love. Read it immediately before your talk so you go into it with an attitude of gratitude and can easily share with him a few things he's done that have made you feel cherished. This keeps the focus on love, not blame.

I'd also suggest you and your boyfriend read "The 5 Love Languages," by Gary Chapman, to avoid this type of miscommunication in the future.

Dear Annie: You have been so helpful to print letters commenting on what not to say to someone who has lost a loved one or had a miscarriage, etc. May I comment on what not to say to someone who has been a victim of a home burglary?

Recently, we returned home from a funeral a few miles away to find that our home had been burglarized. Our children and grandchildren were with us. First, please do not start any sentence with "you were so lucky." "You were so lucky

no one was home." (But we probably would not have been victims if we had been home.) "You were so lucky to have family with you when you got home." (Really? Lucky my little grandchildren had to see this mess and I had to fake being brave?) "You were so lucky. Remember that things are just things." (Well, they were my things, and they are gone forever.)

After a week, I actually was ready to say, "We were so lucky." So I would suggest you wait until the victim says those words himself or herself. Then you can add your "lucky" comments. I did appreciate when someone said, "I'm so sorry this happened. Can I help?" — *Sadder but Wiser*

Dear Sadder but Wiser: It's human nature to want to "fix" everyone's problems (everyone's but our own, that is). When someone shares bad news, we have a hard time simply sitting with it. We want to offer solutions or at least sunny perspectives. I understand the impulse, but it does more harm than good, as evidenced in your letter. Simply listening and acknowledging a person's hardship is almost always the best way to help. We shouldn't deny anyone space to simply be upset after a traumatic incident.

TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Interesting characters will fill your scene. The more you study them, the more fascinating they get. It helps that you seem to know just the question to unlock the good stories.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). You don't have to wave your hands mysteriously, chant words or concoct recipes involving "eye of newt, wing of bat" to cast a spell over someone. You accomplish maximum enchantment just by being you.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Sometime in the future when you have urgent or exciting news to share, you'll discover that your reach is outstanding, largely due to the work you do today, building casual goodwill.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Much will be accomplished in small increments. If you'd like to have more faith in life's process, note what the ocean did to the mountain — ground it into a softy, sandy beach. One wave at a time.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). It is a commonly held belief in the current era that the life of a child should be as easy and magical as possible. In earlier times, many children were sent off to work at age 8. Your inner child feels like a factory worker today.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). They may say that this is a laid-back, easygoing kind of commitment, but don't believe the lip service. There's a tacit expectation here. And where there is an expectation, there is work to be done.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). It's better to be overdressed than underdressed. But more importantly, it's better to be dressed like you than like someone else. Actually, you may

enjoy rethinking the sartorial part of you.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). The ideal would be a focused effort. Persistent efforts are good; consistent efforts, even better. But it's the fact you're making an effort at all that makes the biggest difference.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). The late great George Burns suggested, "Happiness is having a large, loving, caring, close-knit family in another city." Your support system can take many forms.

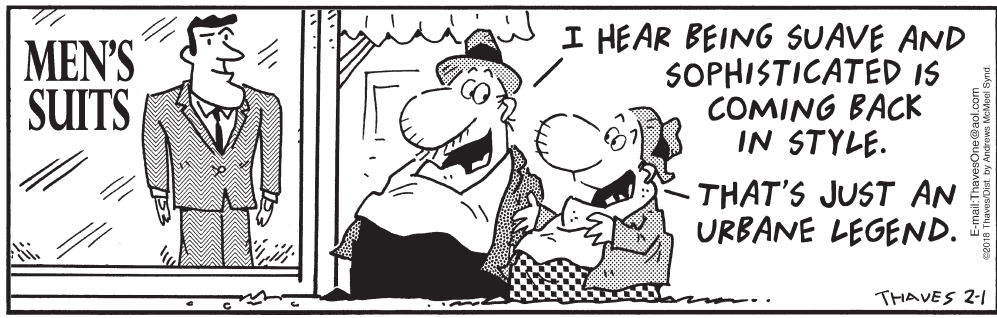
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). When it's very easy to get to know someone, it's usually an indication of a well-developed outer layer of personality. It's always deeper than that, though, which you know and discover more about every day.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). You're disarming. Maybe it's because you really do believe in the goodness of people. You know how to question someone's views without questioning their integrity.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Casual conversation is a window. Small interactions deliver everything, especially to ones as sensitive and intuitive as you. Now the question is: How much do you want to know?

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (Feb. 2). It's a year to be bold. Happiness will increase with the force of intention to do good work, to love more fully and to take on responsibilities. You can handle this! The money you spend to improve your surroundings and the way you operate inside them will pay you back in joy and also in dollars. Libra and Gemini adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 5, 50, 1, 26 and 31.

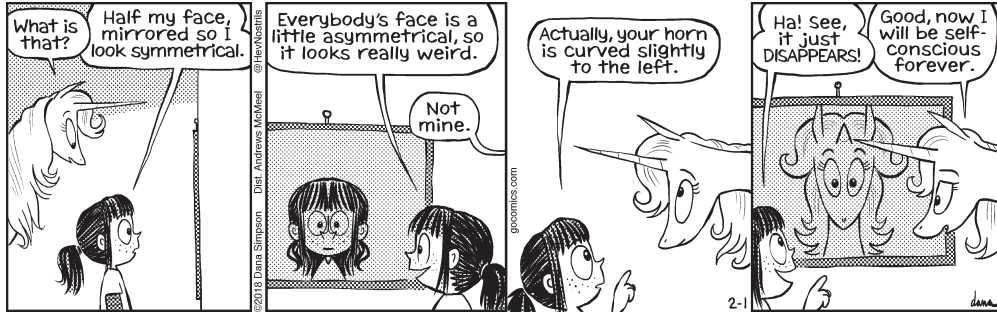
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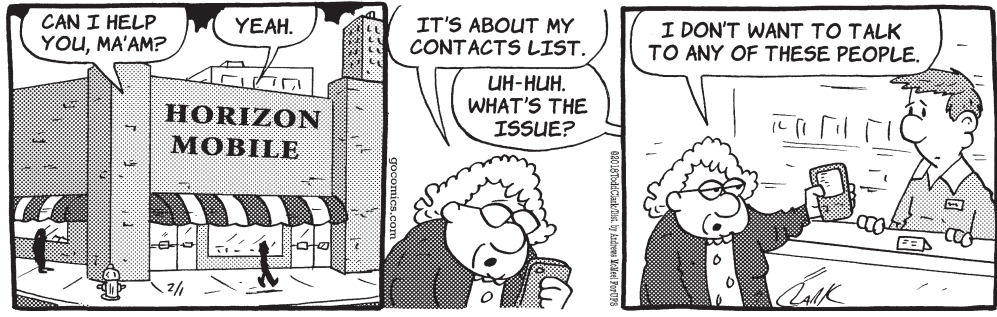
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PHOEBE AND HER UNICORN



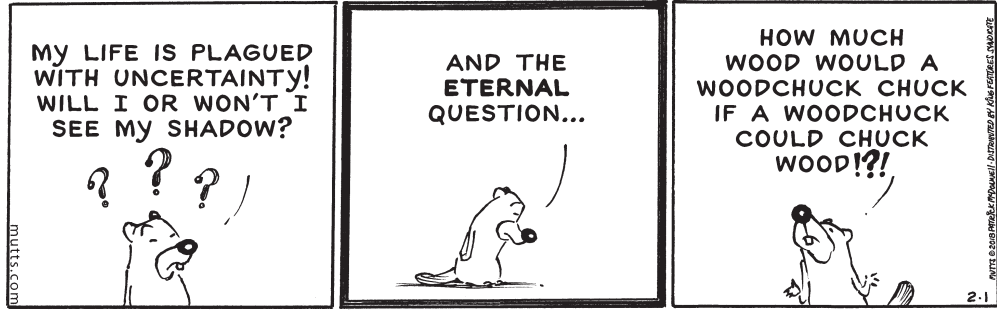
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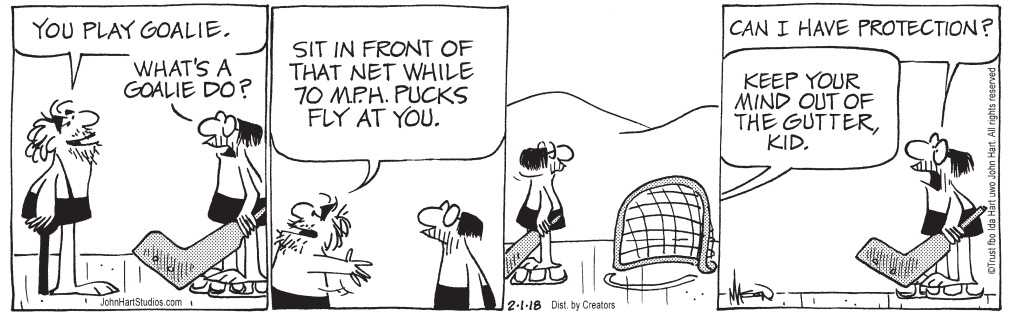
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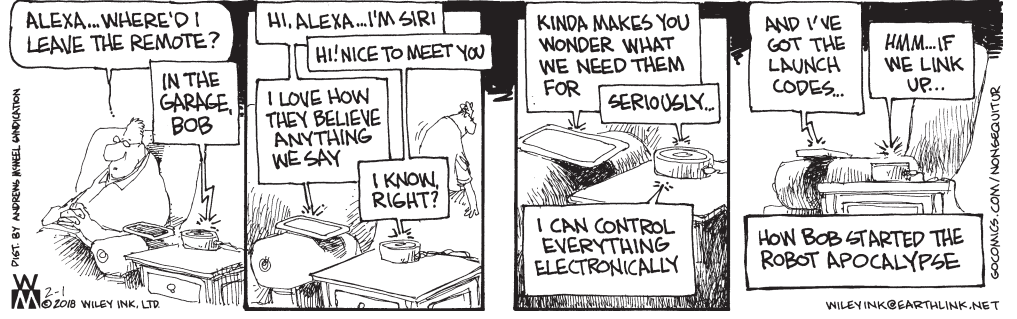
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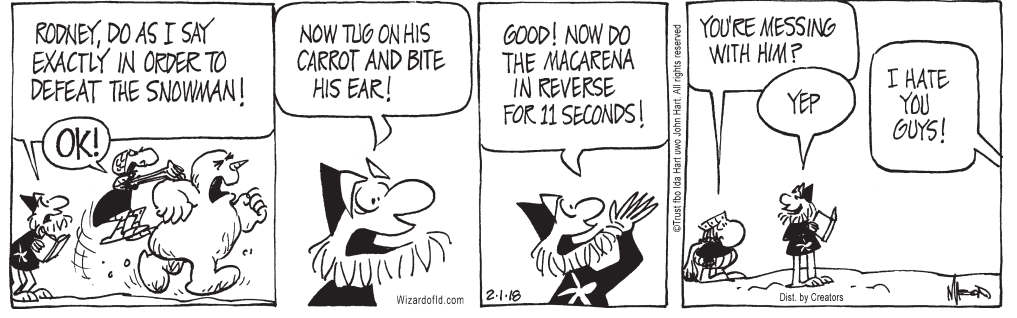
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