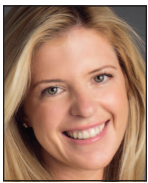


My mom is a food hoarder

Dear Annie: My mother is 79 years old. She was born during the Depression, and I know that when she was younger, she didn't get enough to eat. The problem now is that she still hoards food. She admits that she has a problem, but she can't seem to stop buying food for the freezer. She has a huge chest freezer and two smaller freezers that are stuffed full of food. Some of the food in the freezers must be over 10 years old. When we mention this to her, she says all that food is good because it has remained frozen. If she would still be cooking for big family get-togethers the way she did when my dad was alive, I could understand why she would want to store extra food.

DEAR ANNIE



Annie Lane
Creators
Syndicate Inc.

I realize that I don't have any right to tell her how to spend her money. My problem is that I know there are family members who could use this food, which just sits there getting freezer burn. Since Mom has gotten older, she has lost her sense of taste. When she does cook for us, the food always tastes freezer-burnt. How do we tell her that her food has freezer burn when she is being kind in cooking

us a meal? There are a lot of things worse in this world, but Mom is beginning to wonder why we don't eat at her house, and I don't want to hurt her feelings. — *Troubled by Hoarding*

Dear Troubled by Hoarding:

It's time to unfreeze the tension with a warm and honest conversation with your mom. Tell her how you feel about the expired food. Most frozen food lasts up to three months before it starts to show signs of freezer burn. As you said, your mom was born at the tail end of the Depression. Childhood experiences of deprivation can last a lifetime. Show understanding for her fears while helping her to make a few adjustments, but don't expect miracles. She needs as much love as possible, and your letter shows you feel that for her.

Dear Annie: Our 50-year-old daughter was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and a personality disorder about 10 years ago. She is very bright and holds two degrees. In her early 30s, she started imagining many things and divorced her husband. She hears people telling her absurd ideas and insists they

are hurting her. We tried to advise her, but any mention of mental illness is rejected. She takes some financial help from us and her brother but refuses to go on disability and is homeless, working when she can at temp agencies. My husband and I are in our late 70s and find her personality to be very difficult at times. She doesn't threaten anyone or herself and doesn't take drugs. We're in the South, and she is in the Northeast. We do go to National Alliance on Mental Illness meetings for support, but we worry constantly. We're flying her down this week for a short visit because she has a bad cold and I'm afraid she'll get the flu. Any advice? — *Worried Parents*

Dear Worried Parents: It's wonderful you're attending NAMI meetings. Keep it up. The Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance is another organization you might find helpful. Its website (<http://www.dbsalliance.org>) offers diverse resources, including podcasts by family members of people with bipolar disorder.

As long as your daughter is not a danger to herself or others, I'd encourage you and your husband to try to focus more on yourselves and your own mental health.

TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). It's easy to know who is good for you. You're somehow more and better than you thought you could be and you can trace your progress back to the moment you took this person's hand.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). You both know how close you are to one another, though you've never tried to entirely articulate the bond. There's a feeling exchanged in eye contact that is both too simple and too complex to explain.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Life works out. Love happens. You can't force these things and when you've tried it only complicated the process unnecessarily. So you take your hands off the controls and enjoy yourself.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). To learn another person is to love. On the other hand, to remain mystified is a missed opportunity. So you give your attention, carefully, non-intrusively, ever more curious.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). You've changed in order to be the person that another person needs. This, for you, has been the best reason — not a conscious one, but a reason that kept you magnetized to your best self.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Love has its own elastic relationship with time and seems to be able to speed it up until it's short as a snap, or slow it down until it's an eternal stretch — either way you'll savor the moments with loved ones.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Infatuation comes with odd distortions of thought and reality, but true love makes things clearer. True love shows you what's petty and unimportant and also what's silly and therefore worth cherishing always.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Is love made

or is it born? It feels as though it was it always there, waiting to be discovered ... and yet you could swear that you created it with every exchange, every decision to put the other person first, every burning desire.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Often in life you can keep what works, get rid of what doesn't. Love is more of a package deal. The challenge is not in deciding what to keep, but in accepting it all. You do this well. Your loved ones make it easy.

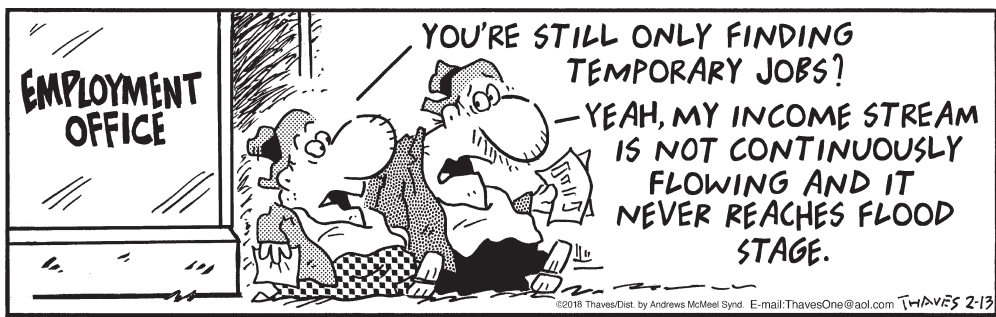
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Loving people is an artistic expression and your approach is completely original. You're becoming more conscious of how you want to be loved and creating subtle and beautiful changes in the way you choose to love others.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). When it comes to your love ones, you embrace (instead of run from) the chance to give to them in a way that will never come back to you. After all, the chance to prove your love doesn't come along every day.

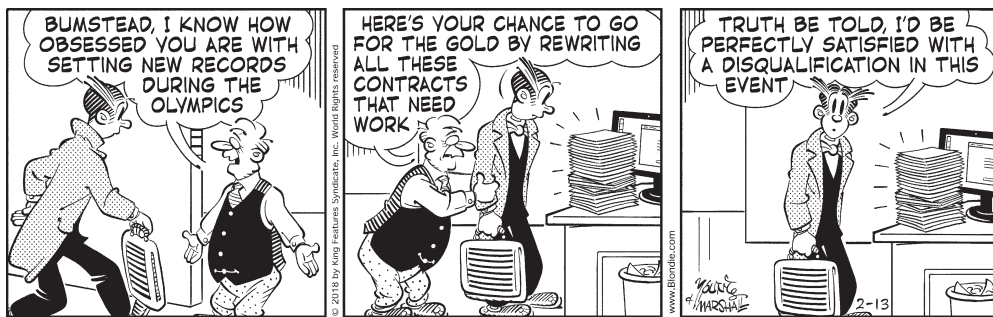
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). It's not that you're fulfilling a role in another person's life, it's that you're making a connection, building a unique bond, making something happen for each other that couldn't happen with any other person in the world.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (Feb. 14). You seize the chance to use your talents to make people smile. It won't take long for a new sense of prosperity to drop in. Supportive people are your true wealth. When life doesn't go to plan in March, resist trying to bend it to your will. Relax, observe, and you'll soon be able to turn all to your advantage. Gemini and Libra adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 8, 3, 39, 22 and 18.

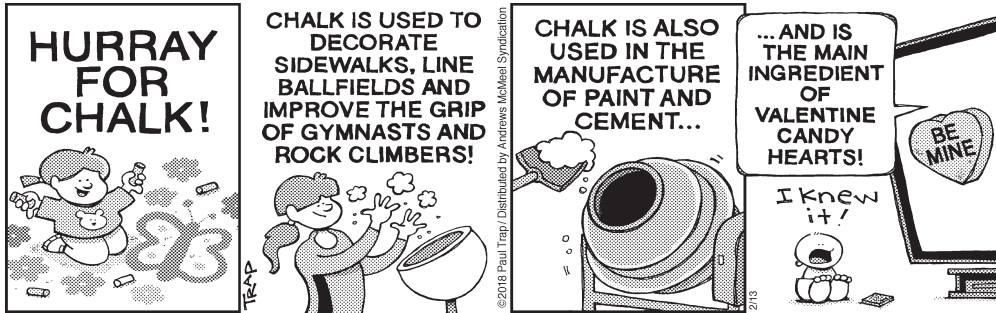
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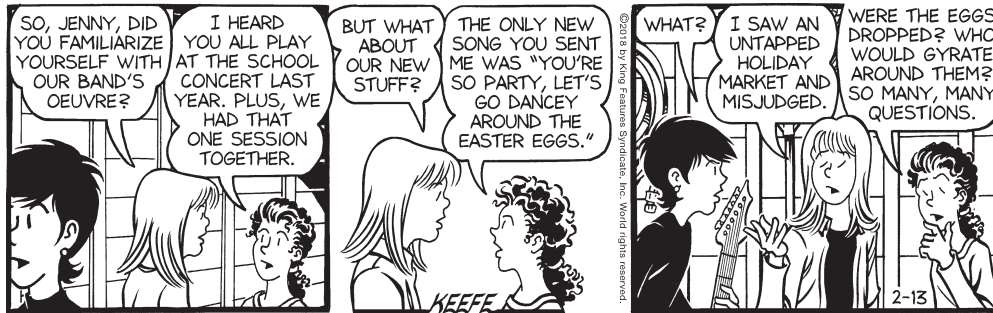
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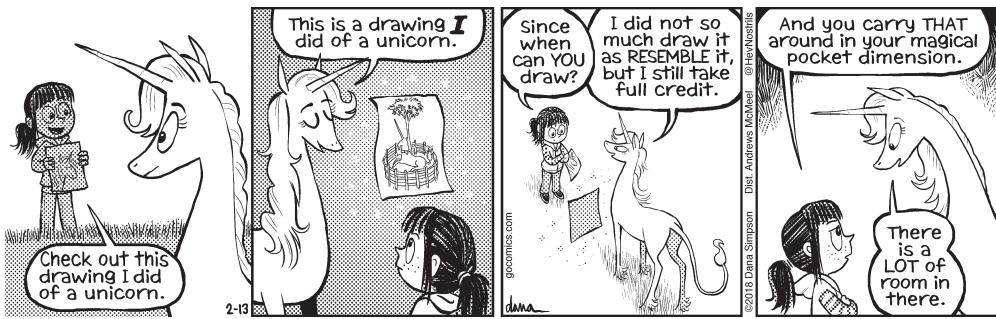
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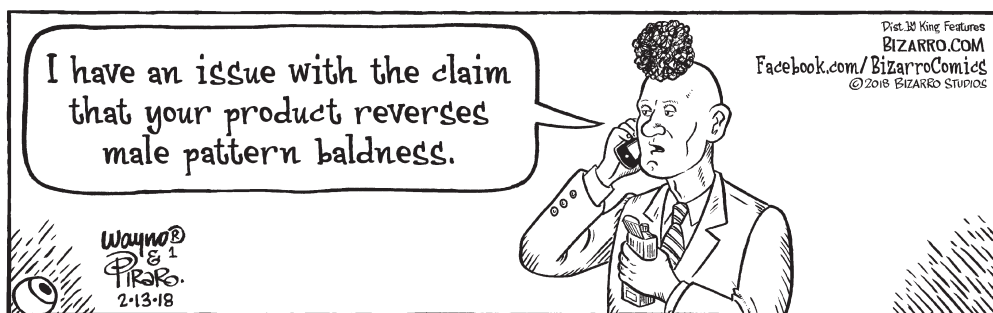
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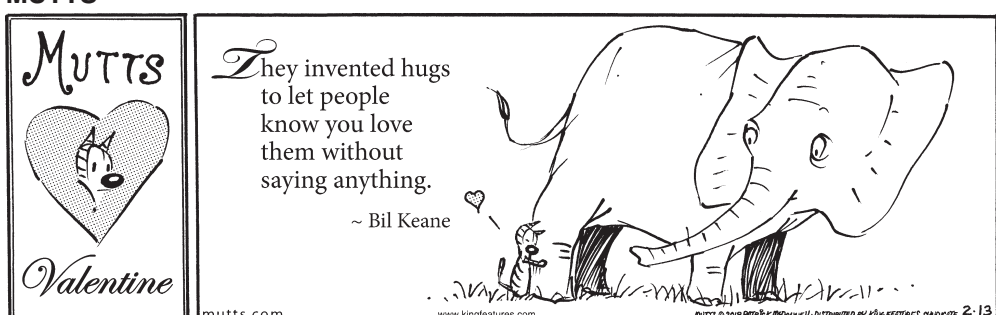
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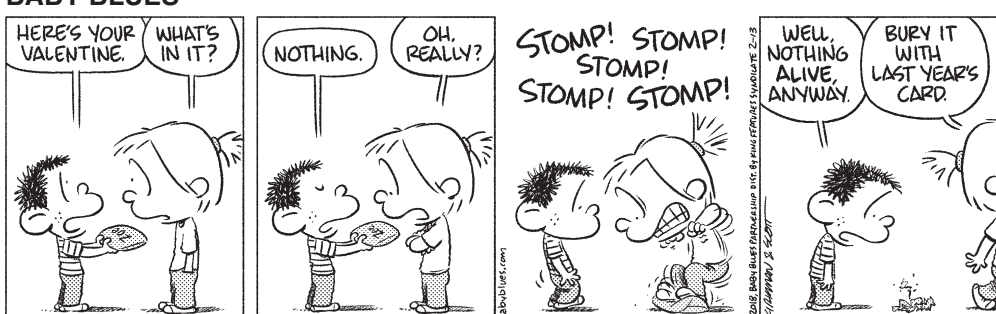
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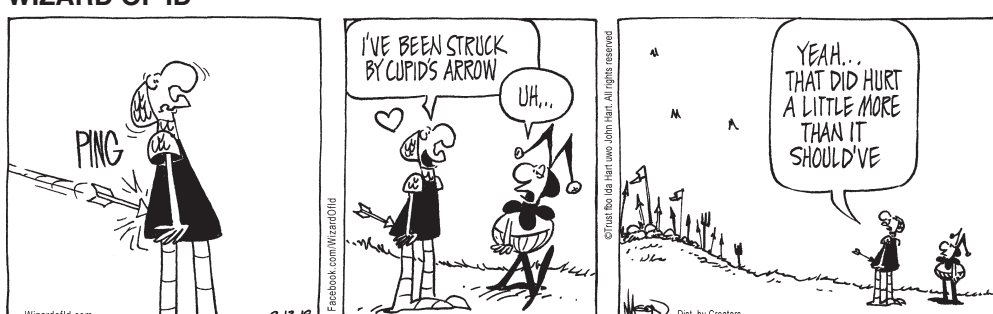
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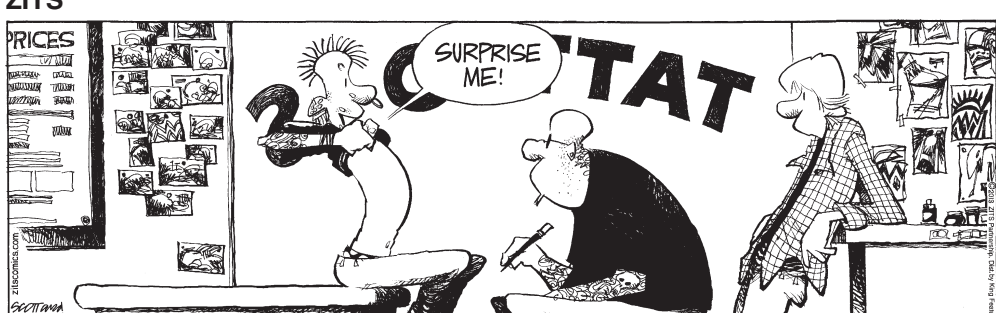
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