

Toxic mother-in-law

Dear Annie: I'm at my wits' end. Yesterday my mother-in-law, "Alice," called my husband, "Gavin," to complain about how I am not nice to her and how she is tired of being pushed around. This is not the first or second or 22nd time that Alice has painted herself as the victim. She has a lot of issues, though she refuses to get counseling, which is why her first marriage fell apart, and most of the time, I just let her vent and try to not let her get to me. I'll play nice and then continue my life with Gavin and our 2-year-old daughter, "Vivian."

DEAR ANNIE



Annie Lane
Creators
Syndicate Inc.

should speak with me, not my husband or his siblings. She proceeded to attack me for more than an hour — insulting my family, my parenting, my "secrecy," my work and everything else under the sun. I admitted that I haven't been very open with her about how things are going as Vivian continues to grow and said I will try to fill her in more. Yet she refused to admit that she has been doing anything wrong, saying she must be right because she's a mother of three. Also, she says I'm too sensitive for not being OK with her disparaging my abilities as a mom to my entire family.

I don't even know where to go from here. Annie, how do I resist getting into another argument with my stone wall of a mother-in-law? — *MIL Troubles*

Dear MIL Troubles: You're right to want to resist arguing with your mother-in-law again. It would be as foolish as arguing with an actual stone wall. From the sound of it, she had issues long before she met you, and if

you weren't around, she'd probably just be taking out her frustrations on somebody else. So accept that she has certain limitations, and try not to take any of this personally. That said, Gavin needs to step up and do all he can to help manage the situation and create healthy boundaries between your family and his mother. You might glean some insights from Susan Forward's "Toxic In-Laws: Loving Strategies for Protecting Your Marriage." At the very least, reading it would make you feel less alone.

Dear Annie: Just a brief note about the chatty doctor described by "Enough Chatter." Good doctors can learn a lot about their patients by engaging them in conversation. The patient's tone, responsiveness, speech patterns, attitude, level of comprehension, etc., can often clue the physician in to issues that poking and prodding don't. This is an art that is rapidly fading in our digitized world. Just sayin'. — *Old-Time Doc*

Dear Old-Time Doc: Great point, and one I hadn't considered. Thanks for writing, doc.

TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Your leisure is another person's work, and your work is another person's leisure. From this frame, it's really not what you do, but the quality of relaxation you bring to it that puts it in the category of enjoyment.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). The biggest winners have failed the most times. The great people have failed greatly. Failure is the best teacher, though a reviled one. Is that really fair? Befriend it instead.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). It's said that fate doesn't like to be tempted, although you're not one to live your life by the preferences of others, not even fate. You're curious about what will happen if you hang a temptation in the air, and you'll find out.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). The confident move is to let people take as much space as they need without interjecting your own feelings on the matter. However, it should be noted that sometimes the most confident move doesn't accomplish your aims.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Your instinct will be to make quick decisions. Often they will be fast, sometimes not — and that's fine, too. Wrong choices lead to right choices for those committed to learning from them.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Count on it: This is not going to unfold in the way you expect, but it will unfold in the way it's supposed to. Interruptions will be lucky and lovely. Extras and additions will be better than the main event.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). There are many ways to expand your creative potential, but the one that will most appeal is the same one you employed so often as a child: copying

the older kids as you played and managed the challenges of life together.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). A chain is only as strong as its weakest link. A conversation is only as strong as its most sensitive topic. And a relationship is only as strong as its most vulnerable aspects.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Because learning comes with its own payoff (complete with a wonderful change in brain chemistry at that "I've got it!" moment), it can be very seductive to stay in the education bubble. Take courage. Step out and apply it.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). You'll be around physical beauty and intellectual beauty, both equally attractive at first. However, over time, intellectual beauty may grow as quickly as physical beauty fades.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). You'd rather solve your own problem than appear needy. But people want to help. That's a need, too, and one that would be easy for you to serve. Just ask for the help they need to give.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Plato suggested to his young student, "Time will change and even reverse many of your present opinions" — a fine reason to steer clear of the big topics. The same will apply to you today.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (March 3). This year you'll have the sort of people in your life who will grow and change right along with you, celebrating all of your incarnations — what an astounding treasure! Also it will get easier and easier to see and take the steps leading to your own happiness — simple, yes, but people are generally not so good at this. Libra and Sagittarius adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 4, 27, 6, 10 and 22.

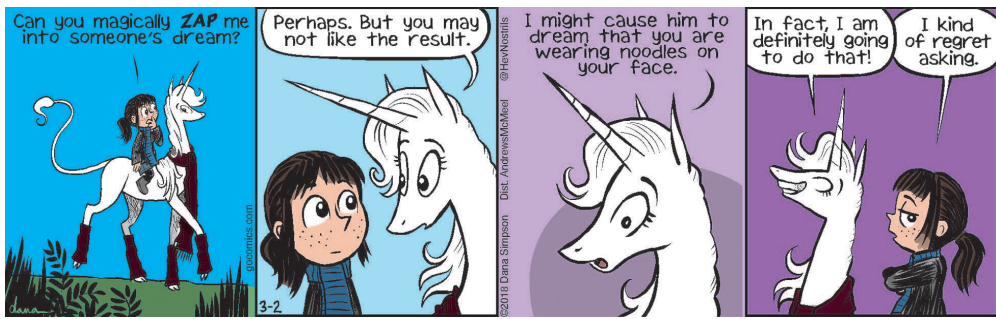
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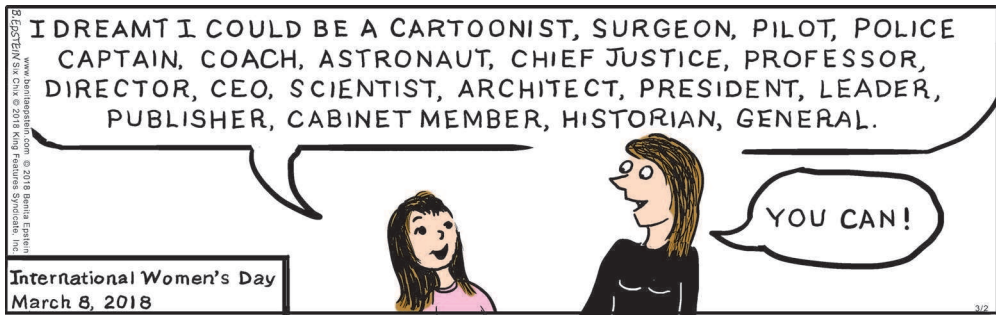
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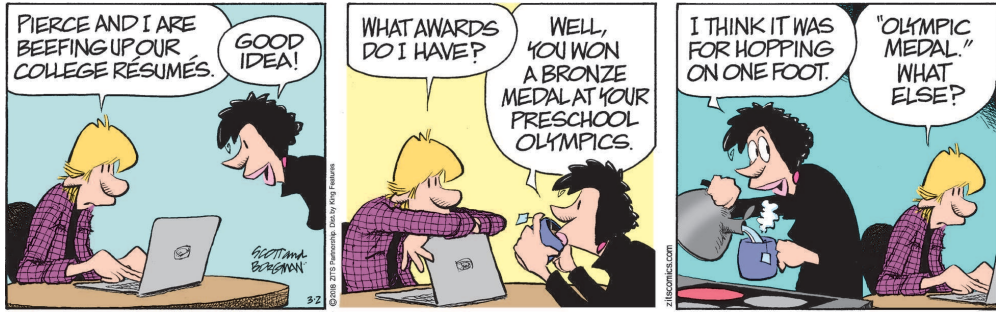
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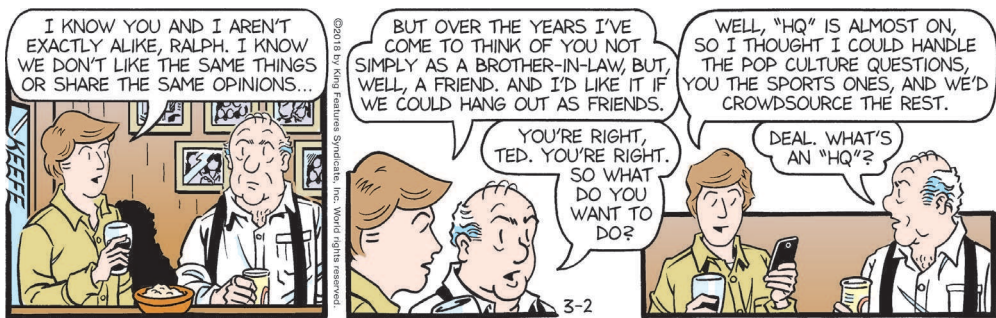
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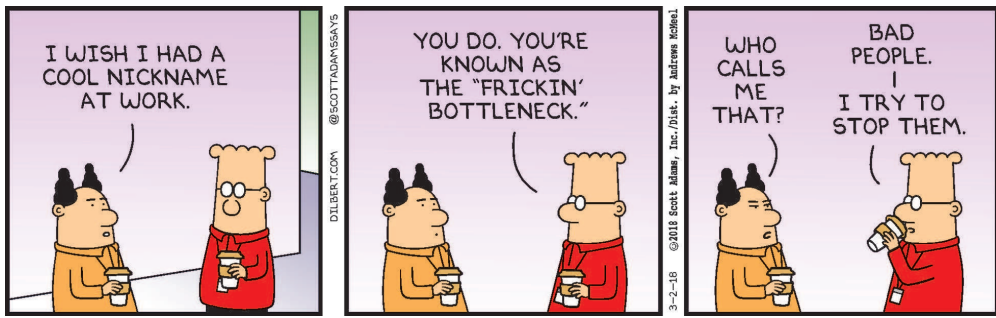
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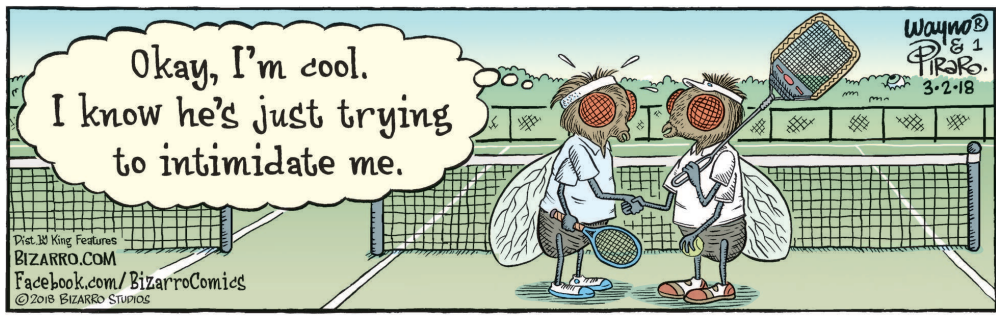
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