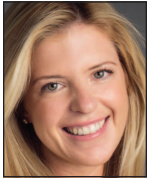


A bothersome third wheel

Dear Annie: My girlfriend has a brother, "Joel," who is 23 years old and has Asperger's syndrome. Now, don't get me wrong; I have nothing against people with Asperger's. But this guy is too much. He always has to have the last word, argues constantly and thinks he knows everything. Their mother insists that my girlfriend let him tag along whenever we're together, and she actually lets him. I'll say, "It's just going to be us tonight, right?" She'll say yes, but when I get there, she has him with her. I'll take her aside and remind her that it was supposed to be just us, and she'll say, "But my mother didn't want him to be at home by himself." He'll proceed to ruin the evening. First he'll insist on a different restaurant. Then he'll interrupt everything I say. And by the time we get our food, I'm ready to walk out.

DEAR ANNIE



Annie Lane
Creators
Syndicate Inc.

Recently, we were out with some mutual friends, and sure enough, she had Joel with her. We all went back to my place. Then he wanted to order pizza. I calmly said, "Joel, you don't need to order pizza. There's food here already."

He ignored me and ordered pizza to be delivered. Because of a mix-up, the order arrived cold just as everyone was leaving. He wanted me to warm it up in my oven, and I suggested he do that when he got home because I just wanted to go to bed.

He started giving me all kinds of stupid reasons, and I cursed at him and told him, "Be a man and eat it cold." My girlfriend then got angry with me for being mean.

The last straw was last week, when we went out to a nice restaurant for my birthday. Joel showed up even though she had said he wouldn't be there. I tried to bribe him to leave by handing him \$20 and saying, "Get a sandwich and see a movie." But that didn't work.

Everything would be fine in my relationship if it weren't for Joel and the way my girlfriend enables him. She and I get along really well, and we have fun together, but our time together is limited. My job is tough, and I don't have a lot of patience for aggravating things outside of work. How can I get her to stop letting her moron brother tag along? I don't want him around,

but my sweetie can't seem to act like a grown-up and say no to her family. — *Over It*

Dear Over It: Long-term relationships aren't just about getting along well. They're about priorities. And it sounds as though you and your girlfriend have some irreconcilable differences in that department. In all the incidents you mentioned, Joel's presence never seemed to be a nuisance to her, only to you. Even if firmer boundaries would be beneficial for her, that's a decision she needs to make on her own. It could be that her family will always come first. If you're not prepared for that, consider ending things now. That would give her the chance to meet someone a bit more sympathetic to her family.

Dear Annie: I'd like to respond to "Child-Free and Tired of Judgment," who wondered what to say when someone asks her why she isn't having children. She should just look at the person and say, "Why do you ask?" I find this works for someone who is being just plain nosy. What could anyone possibly say except, "I'm nosy?" — *More Caring*

Dear More Caring: Those four words really do say it all. Thank you for sharing this excellent retort.

TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). This is a balancing act between openness and vigilance. As it is with tightrope walkers, special tools (e.g., the right shoes and a flexible horizontal rod) can help you maintain the equilibrium. Seek helpful accoutrements.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). You may hardly notice when loved ones and acquaintances seem inquisitive about you. While there's no ill intent in such an error, it really is an error. You deserve and need attention. Go where it flows toward you.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). It's a strange dance, the dance of intimacy. In the beginning, you're not sure how much you want to know and be known: This is the stage to savor. Soon enough, familiarity will change everything. Why rush it?

CANCER (June 22-July 22). What you give to one person you'll get back from another, seemingly unrelated source. Some would call this coincidence; others would call it karma. Whatever you call it, it's a cycle that will continue.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Feeling important isn't the same as being important. In fact, those who really are essential to the outcome of any given equation are rarely overly aware of their position, because they are too busy doing the work.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). You don't need others to admire you in order to feel good about yourself, and yet, it's nice, isn't it? You get a slice of admiration today, and it certainly doesn't hurt.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Consider that your self-imposed limits might be far more stringent than the rules of the game or of society, and they may also be stricter than would allow you to develop to your full potential.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). It's the little things — the things that matter to others that you can gladly supply. Those will be the wins of the day. For instance, remembering and addressing people by their names: It will make a difference.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Humans learn at an early age that sadness tends to elicit comfort-giving. Ideally, the baby's cry brings a parent's attention. Hopefully, you won't be sad today, but if you are, don't ignore it. Provide your own comfort.

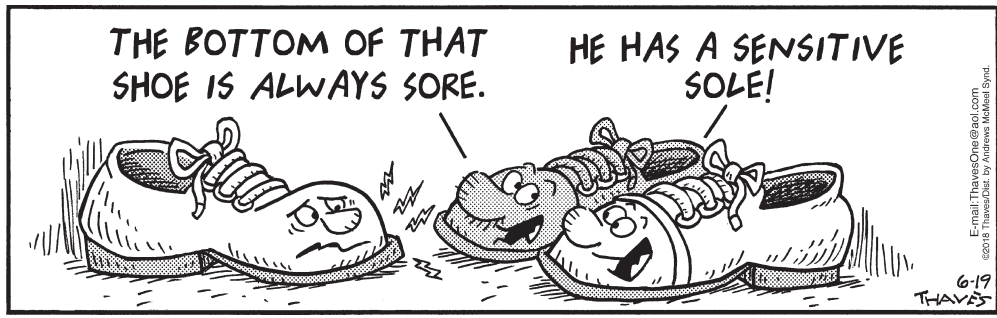
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Be wary of words or actions meant to show one person's superiority, uniqueness and specialness. Solutions rarely venerate one person, and it's solutions that will make the world a little better today.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). The parenting concept of "planned ignoring" speaks to the efficacy of diverting focus from unwanted outcomes in the hopes that they will lose power without attention to fuel them. It will be an effective tactic for many situations.

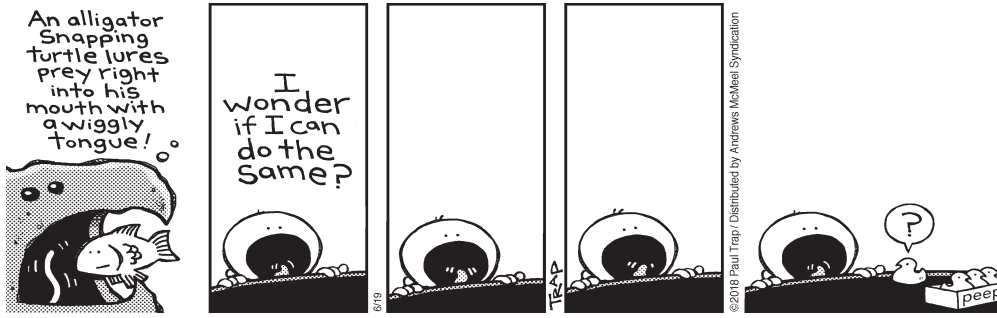
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Tantrums come in many forms. You're throwing a form of tantrum right now — a silent, internal and complex rebellion against something you've requested of yourself. The childlike part of you will make some good points!

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (June 20). Your efforts to change the world will be successful. Sure, it starts as something very small, but don't underestimate the ever-expanding power in this. July offers a different revenue stream. August presents prime opportunity to use and expand your talent. You'll find love in the process. Aquarius and Capricorn adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 4, 44, 38, 17 and 22.

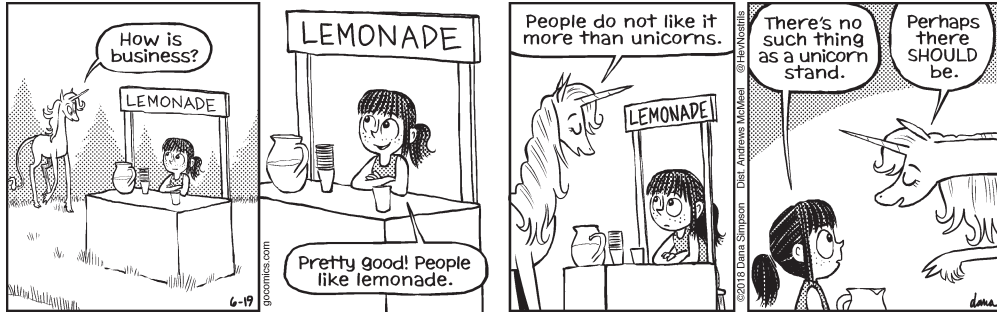
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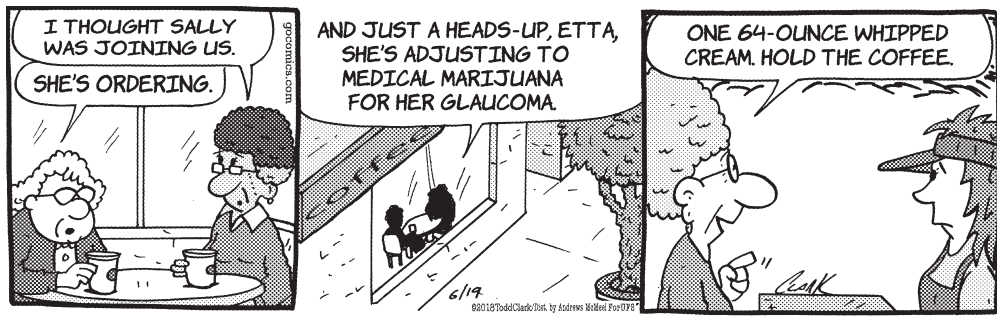
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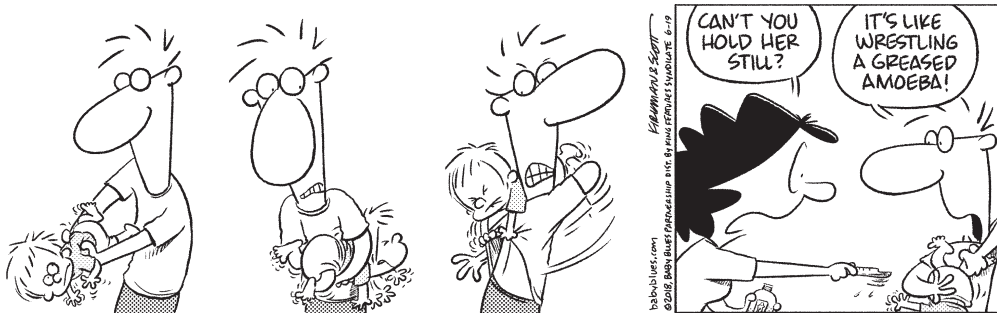
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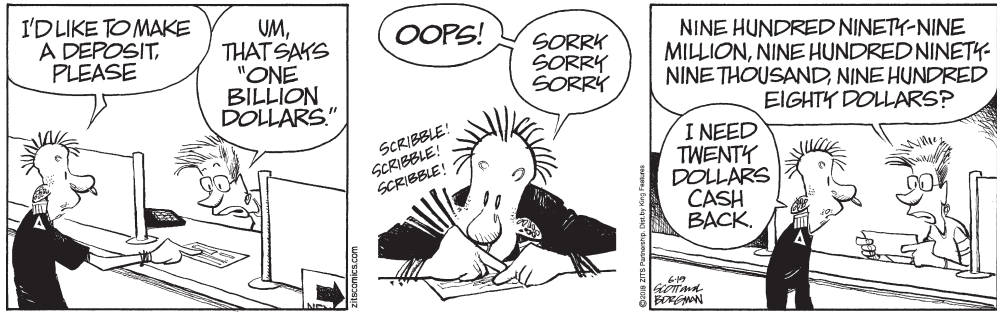
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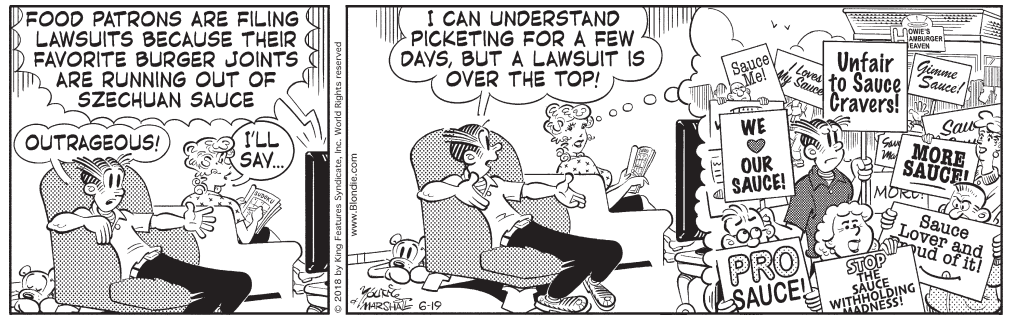
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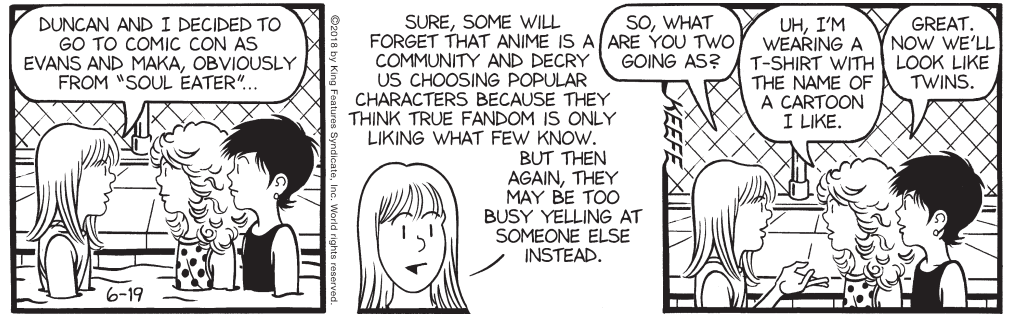
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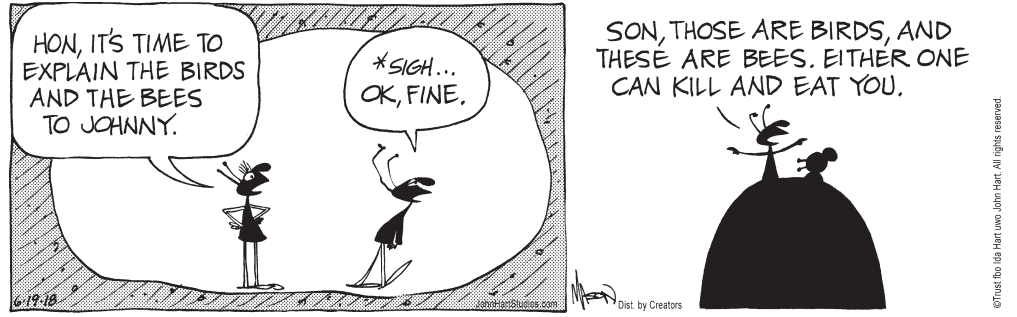
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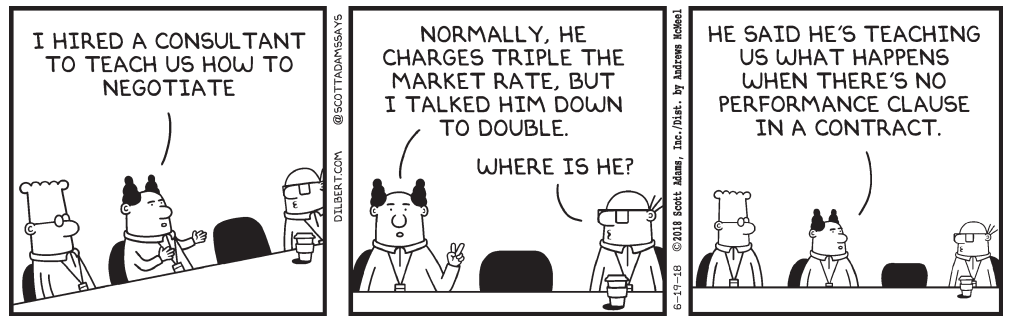
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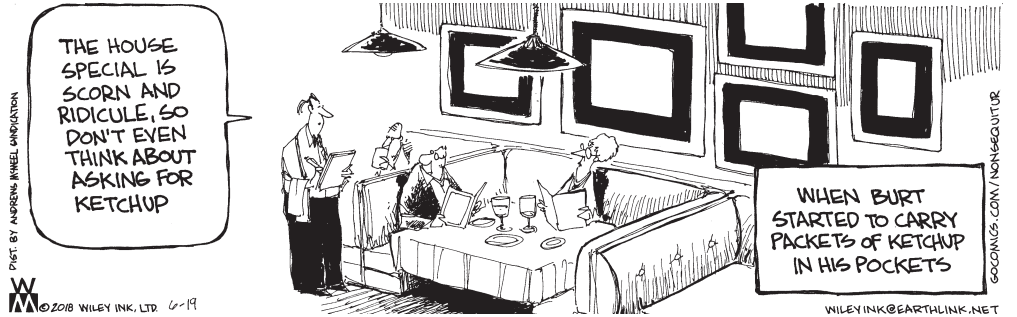
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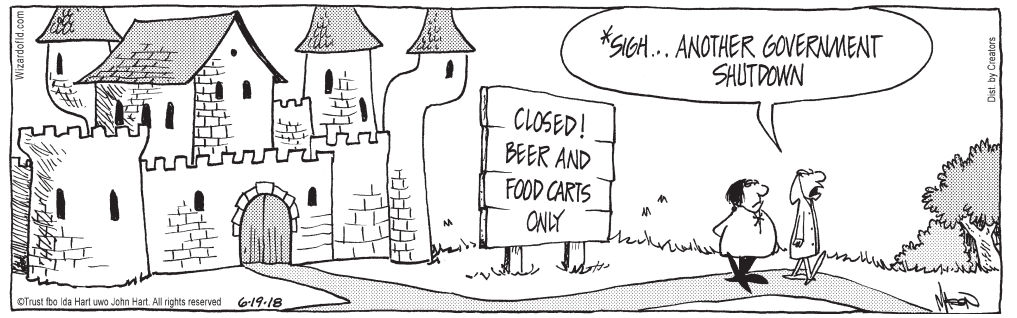
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