

The stranger in my house

Dear Annie: I'm wondering whether you have a copy of a piece that I believe was in an Ann Landers column. It featured a woman who felt that someone she did not know was living in her house, and it was about getting older. I thought it was very funny but have never seen it again. — George H.

Dear George: I'm glad you brought this piece to mind. It's "The Stranger in My House," by Rose Madeline Mula — later released with the title "The Stranger in My Mirror." I've had to abridge it slightly below; read it in full at <http://seniorwomen.com>, and find out more about the author at <http://rosemadelinemula.com>. ("The Stranger in My House," by Rose Madeline Mula, copyright 1997.)

A very weird thing has happened. A strange old lady has moved into my house. I have no idea who she is, where she came from, or how she got in. I certainly didn't invite her. All I know is that one day she wasn't there, and the next day she was.

She's very clever. She manages to keep out of sight for the most part; but whenever I pass a mirror, I catch a glimpse of her there; and

when I look into a mirror directly to check on my appearance, suddenly she's hogging the whole thing, completely obliterating my gorgeous face and body. ... I've tried screaming at her to leave — but she just screams back. ...

If she's going to hang around, the least she could do is offer to pay rent. But no. Every once in a while I do find a couple of dollar bills on the kitchen counter, or some loose change on my bureau or on the floor, but that certainly isn't enough. In fact, though I don't like to jump to conclusions, I think she steals money from me quite regularly. I go to the ATM and withdraw a hundred dollars, and a few days later, it's gone. I certainly don't go through it that fast, so I can only conclude that the old lady pilfers it. ...

For an old lady, she's really quite childish. She also gets into my closets when I'm not home and alters all my clothes. They're getting tighter every day.

Another thing: I wish she'd stop messing with my files and the papers on my desk. I can't find a thing. ...

She finds innumerable, imaginative ways to irritate me. She gets to

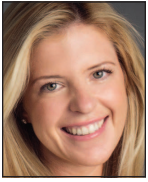
my newspapers, magazine and mail before me and blurs all the print; and she's done something sinister with the volume controls on my TV, radio and phone. Now all I hear are mumbles and whispers. She's also made my stairs steeper, my vacuum cleaner heavier, all my knobs and faucets hard to turn, and my bed higher and a real challenge to climb into and out of.

Furthermore, she gets to my groceries as soon as I shelled them and applies glue to the tops of every jar and bottle so they're just about impossible to open. Is this any way to repay my hospitality?

... She's taken all the fun out of clothes shopping. ... When I try something on, she dons an identical outfit — which looks ridiculous on her — and then stands directly in front of me so I can't see how great it looks on me.

I thought she couldn't get any meaner than that; but yesterday she proved me wrong. She had the nerve to come with me when I went to have some passport pictures taken, and she actually stepped in front of the camera just as the shutter clicked. ... How can I go abroad now? No customs official is ever going to believe that the crone scowling from my passport is me.

DEAR ANNIE



Annie Lane
Creators
Syndicate Inc.

TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). The end of this quest will be the start of the next one. In this light, there's really no reason to rush to the finish. In fact, you'd do well to slow down so you can absorb the lessons in this stretch of the road.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). No one seems to want to say, "I don't know" today, least of all the clueless. Show up sponge-like. It really is possible to learn through osmosis if you're open enough.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). When we were children, more seemed possible. We had yet to learn the limits, so it seemed that what we'd later call "magic" was just another way that things might happen. Can you return to that mind today?

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Honor your flaws. You wouldn't be you without them. Besides, you're not going to live with them forever. Some are dropping by the wayside as you read this. You may as well appreciate them while you're waving goodbye.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Someone is helping you behind the scenes. You can feel the good will even if you don't know who it is. You may never know the secret angels who are on your side, which speaks to the purity of their generosity.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). You may give someone you love a little breathing room, but you can't help but check back perpetually, as it seems written in your love clause. "I tried to throw a yo-yo away; it was impossible." — Mitch Hedberg

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). They say you can't go back, because it's never the same when you do. If you physically return, you'll find the old

place has been either updated or ravaged by time. Go back in your mind instead and it's just as you left it.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Historians rarely agree and can theorize endlessly about how things really happened. You'll be in a similar quandary, with evidence that adds into quite a different story than the one being told to you.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Stars smile and wink at you as if to sanction your more daring (possibly selfish?) choices. Then again, why shouldn't your own fun be a priority?

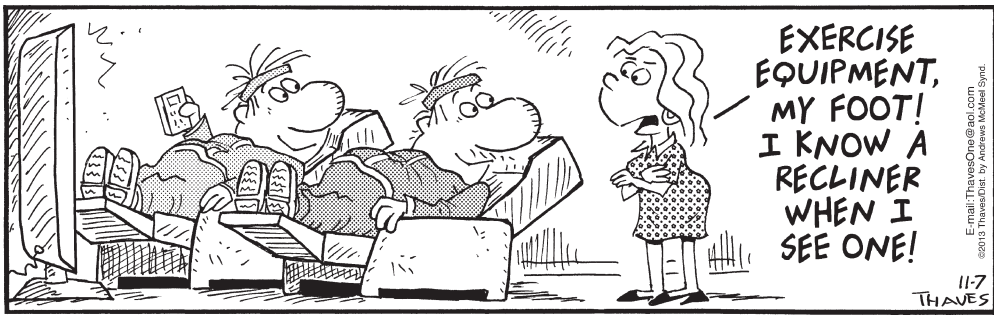
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Owing is overrated. What you own, you have to find a place for, organize, maintain ... and it's a bit much when all you want to do is move around the world unfettered.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). The information you're given is incomplete. Ask for more. What's the plan? What's the reason? What's the backstory? The more you know, the more powerful you'll be in the situation.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Your work hasn't received the deserved accolades. This might take some time. What you've accomplished will stand the test of time. If you need acknowledgment sooner, just draw more attention to what you've done.

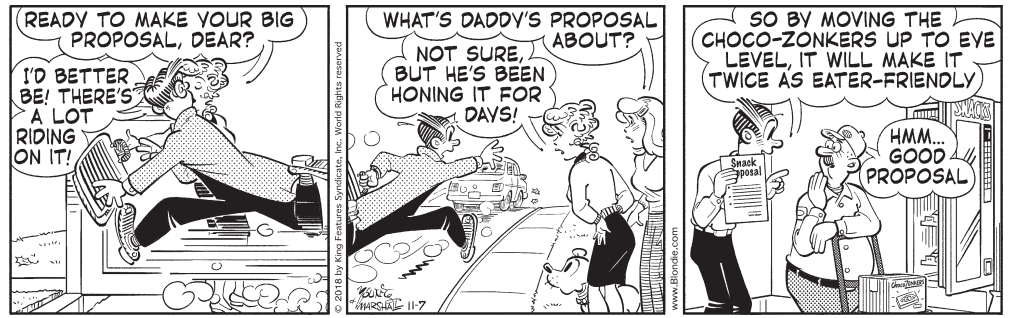
TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (Nov. 8). In the past, you've chosen heroes and aspired to great things. Would you believe that this year you'll be your own inspiration? Yes, you have already overcome so much. Just list it and you'll see how your many accomplishments add up to success that continues on and on. If you can't see this now, use a friend's eyes. Aries and Taurus adore you. Your lucky numbers: 7, 30, 22, 9 and 8.

FRANK AND ERNEST



EXERCISE EQUIPMENT, MY FOOT! I KNOW A RECLINER WHEN I SEE ONE!

BLONDIE

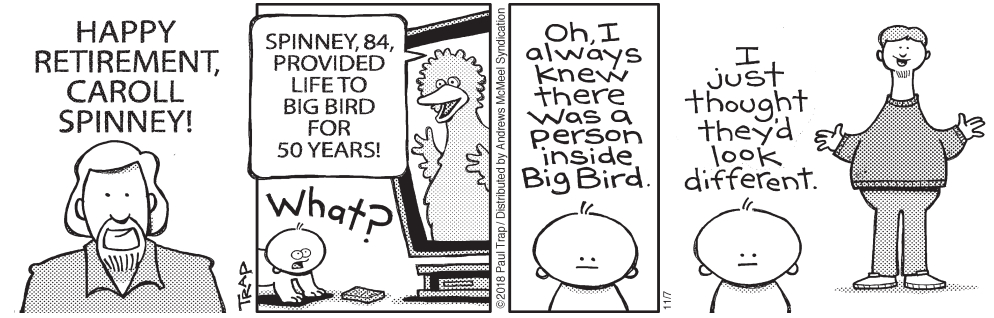


READY TO MAKE YOUR BIG PROPOSAL, DEAR?
I'D BETTER BE! THERE'S A LOT RIDING ON IT!

WHAT'S DADDY'S PROPOSAL ABOUT?
NOT SURE, BUT HE'S BEEN HONING IT FOR DAYS!

SO BY MOVING THE CHOCO-ZONKERS UP TO EVE LEVEL, IT WILL MAKE IT TWICE AS EATER-FRIENDLY!
HMM. GOOD PROPOSAL

THATABABY



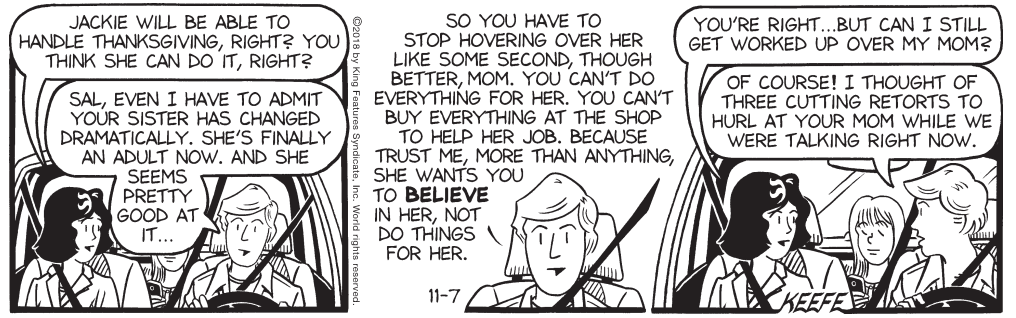
HAPPY RETIREMENT, CAROLL SPINNEY!

SPINNEY, 84, PROVIDED LIFE TO BIG BIRD FOR 50 YEARS!
What?

Oh, I always knew there was a person inside Big Bird.

I just thought they'd look different.

SALLY FORTH



JACKIE WILL BE ABLE TO HANDLE THANKSGIVING, RIGHT? YOU THINK SHE CAN DO IT, RIGHT?
SAL, EVEN I HAVE TO ADMIT YOUR SISTER HAS CHANGED DRAMATICALLY. SHE'S FINALLY AN ADULT NOW. AND SHE SEEMS PRETTY GOOD AT IT...

SO YOU HAVE TO STOP HOVERING OVER HER LIKE SOME SECOND, THOUGH BETTER, MOM. YOU CAN'T DO EVERYTHING FOR HER. YOU CAN'T BUY EVERYTHING AT THE SHOP TO HELP HER JOB. BECAUSE TRUST ME, MORE THAN ANYTHING, SHE WANTS YOU TO BELIEVE IN HER, NOT DO THINGS FOR HER.

YOU'RE RIGHT... BUT CAN I STILL GET WORKEP UP OVER MY MOM?
OF COURSE! I THOUGHT OF THREE CUTTING RETORTS TO HURL AT YOUR MOM WHILE WE WERE TALKING RIGHT NOW.

PHOEBE AND HER UNICORN



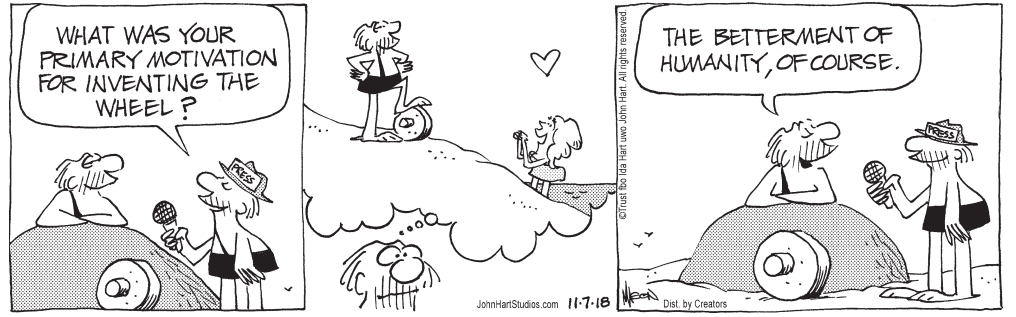
What kind of stupid world are adults MAKING for my generation, anyway?

They should just give it to us now. Kids couldn't possibly do a worse job.

But like...not all kids. Most kids at school are kind of meanies, too.

Maybe just ME. Queen Phoebe, ruler of Earth.
I think you should finish fourth grade before you become Queen of Earth.

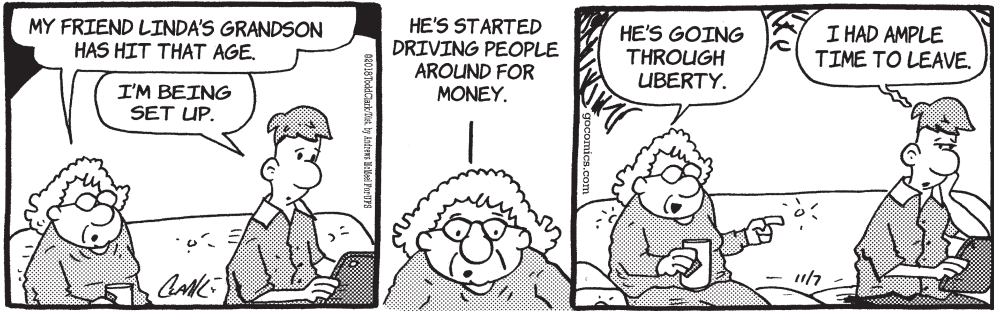
B.C.



WHAT WAS YOUR PRIMARY MOTIVATION FOR INVENTING THE WHEEL?

THE BETTERMENT OF HUMANITY, OF COURSE.

LOLA



MY FRIEND LINDA'S GRANDSON HAS HIT THAT AGE.
I'M BEING SET UP.

HE'S STARTED DRIVING PEOPLE AROUND FOR MONEY.

HE'S GOING THROUGH LIBERTY.

I HAD AMPLE TIME TO LEAVE.

DILBERT

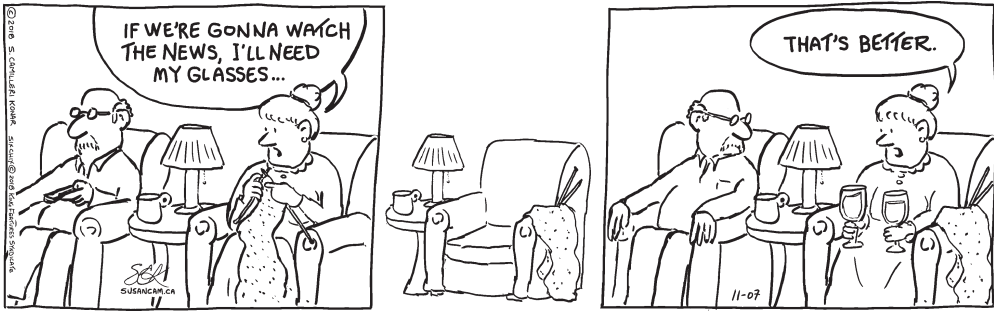


WE ONLY HIRE PEOPLE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCE.

HOW CAN I GET EXPERIENCE IF NO ONE WANTS TO HIRE INEXPERIENCED PEOPLE?

OH, GOOD. I HAVE TONS OF EXPERIENCE.
WE DO HIRE LIARS.

SIX CHIX



IF WE'RE GONNA WATCH THE NEWS, I'LL NEED MY GLASSES...

THAT'S BETTER.

BIZARRO



Sir, you do realize the HOV lanes require at least ten persons per vehicle.

MUTTS



SHELTER STORIES
"DWEEZIL"

BESIDES DOGS AND CATS, THERE JUST MIGHT BE A FERRET AT YOUR SHELTER

IF YOU'RE LUCKY

BABY BLUES



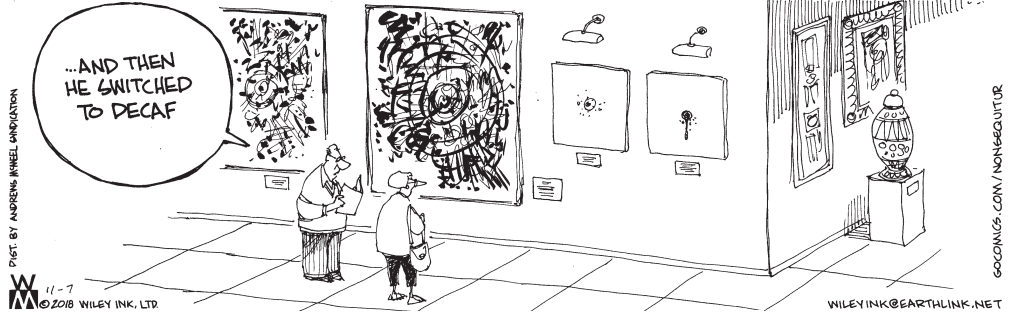
SHRIEEEEEEK! I KNOW MOM, WHEN IS JUST SCREAMING FOR THE FUN OF IT.

SHRIEEEEEEK! SHE SEEMS TO REALLY LIKE THE SOUND OF HER OWN SCREAMING.

SHRIEEEEEEK! SHRIEEEEEEK! SHE'S NOT THE ONLY ONE.

HEY! THIS IS NOT A TEAM SPORT!

NON SEQUITUR



...AND THEN HE SWITCHED TO DECAF

ZITS



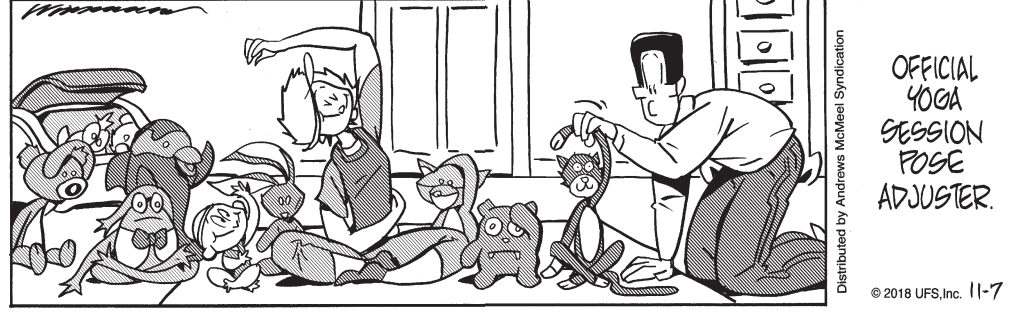
I MIGHT HAVE A MORTAL POSSESSION PROBLEM. SERIOUSLY?

YEAH, THE GAME IS REALLY MESSING WITH MY MIND.

YESTERDAY I FORGOT TO THINK ABOUT SEX.

DUDE, THAT'S A CRY FOR HELP!

ROSE IS ROSE



OFFICIAL YOGA SESSION POSE ADJUSTER.

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