

Sibling's gift-giving concerns

Dear Annie: As the holidays draw near, I like to be prepared and buy my gifts early. Every year, I get stuck when it comes to thinking of a gift for my younger brother "Henry." Henry is a teenager whose only interest is playing video games. For Christmas, the only things he ever asks for are video games and money. I have made very clear to him that I don't want to get him electronics or money for Christmas, but he never tells me anything else that he would like.

I have given him gifts that I thought he would like, but the books go unread, and the hobbies go untouched. I am to the point where I may just buy him socks for Christmas this year. Do you have any advice for how to shop for video game-playing teenagers? — *Stumped Santa*

Dear Stumped Santa: The decision not to get your brother any more electronics sounds like a great one. Gift-giving is tricky in this situation because you love your brother yet don't want to encourage his passion for video games.

However, seeing as he loves games, what about a board game? That way, you could play with the whole family and engage with one another while at least temporarily avoiding the dreaded "screen time." Another possibility is to get tickets for a game or theater performance that might interest him.

Dear Annie: Could you please say something about people who want to stay with a friend or relative and want to have their pet with them? I am an animal lover and have two dogs and a cat, but I worry about having strange pets in my home — especially if the visit is more than a day or two.

Pet owners insist their pets are friendly and very well-behaved. I believe them, but when their pets come to my home, my dogs can be possessive and my cat unpredictable. It seems that their pets may be nervous in strange surroundings and not be the perfect pets they are at home. I'd feel awful if anyone's pet were injured. I hate to sound unwelcoming to people who want to visit me, but when people bring pets into my home, I'm distracted

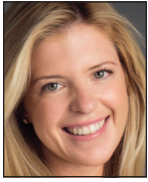
and worried, and I can't enjoy their visits. — *Marilyn*

Dear Marilyn: I'm happy to print your letter to encourage more thoughtfulness around this issue — but I hope you're also vocalizing these thoughts to your visitors. Everything you said in your letter would be appropriate and helpful to explain to would-be guests. I don't think anyone ought to take offense to your perfectly reasonable explanation.

Dear Annie: This is a response to "Upset Employee," who is bothered that a supervisor's friend was hired over other employees. Employment law is rather tricky. If the supervisor's friend was qualified, then it was legal. Nothing in the rules says an employer has to take the most qualified candidate. And someone in the position of "Upset Employee" is not supposed to know what anyone else's score was. That's a violation of employment law. So, "Upset Employee," if you like actually working there, you just need to let it go. Life isn't fair. If it were, then this would be heaven and not life.

— *Christopher*
Dear Christopher: Thank you for the insights on employment law — and the nature of life.

DEAR ANNIE



Annie Lane
Creators
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TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Tune into the subtleties of your language. Avoid using words that convey pessimism, cynicism or sarcasm. Ditch the negativity, not because others are listening, but because you are.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Anyone not at the meeting gets talked about. So go to the meeting. It will show your solidarity with the group. Maybe lower your expectations first. It could get boring. Little will be decided or learned. Go anyway.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). It's one thing to accept that you're human and you've made mistakes and quite another to actually love your mistakes because they contributed to who you are. Also, no one can (or wants to) relate to seemingly flawless people.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Good living is like good chocolate; there's a little bitterness in there but not too much. Acknowledge and explore your negative feelings (they are part of the recipe, too), but don't dwell there. Life is mostly sweet!

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). You'll advise and be advised today. A good thing to keep in mind is that no single piece of advice fits every person. Even if it were the soundest and best line of thought in the entire world, it still wouldn't be right for all.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Because you want to experience more, you'll meet different sorts of people and let them influence you, all the while never losing sight of who you are. You can do this because your roots grow deep.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). No one likes being in environments they can't, at least to some extent, control. An environment has become stifling. You may resent having to be there. But

you can influence this place. Look for ways. There are untried options.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Unencumbered people move quickly. Something is weighing you down. Throw the baggage overboard. A person without baggage is a person who will soon be getting new things.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). While there's nothing less funny than a person trying too hard to be funny, you appreciate the effort. In this and other ways, people will try to impress you. It's flattering.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Each phase of the day has a gift. Morning gives you your freshest mind. Afternoon gives you a body warmed up and ready for the hardest thing it has to do today. Night gives you the need to give and receive for loving comfort.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). There is no "perfect." And if there were, it would only close your mind to new ideas and standards. Instead of seeking the ideal, seek a solution that's as quirky and flexible as you are.

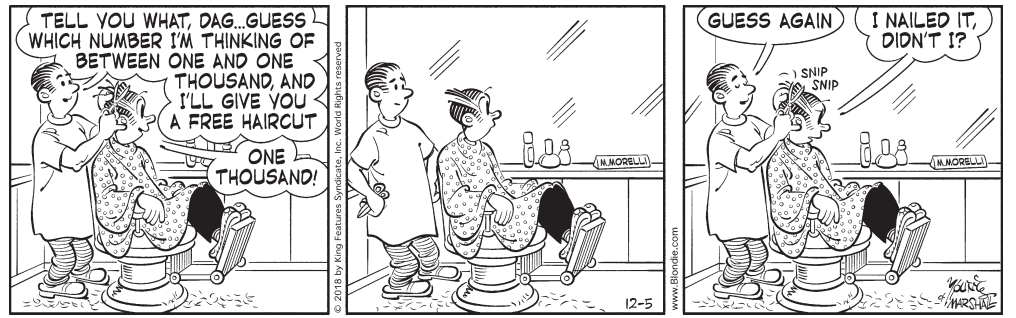
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You may be agitated by today's sky because it calls for more honesty than you feel would be kind. Perhaps the poet Kahlil Gibran can help: "If indeed you must be candid, be candid beautifully."

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (Dec. 6). Don't worry about being heroic. Heroism is the byproduct of doing the right thing consistently. That's the true aim of your heart so you can't go wrong. More highlights: the purchase of property, a leadership role in which you share what inspires you, inspiring others along the way, and countless escapades with a jolly friend. Pisces and Scorpio adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 8, 20, 7, 22 and 19.

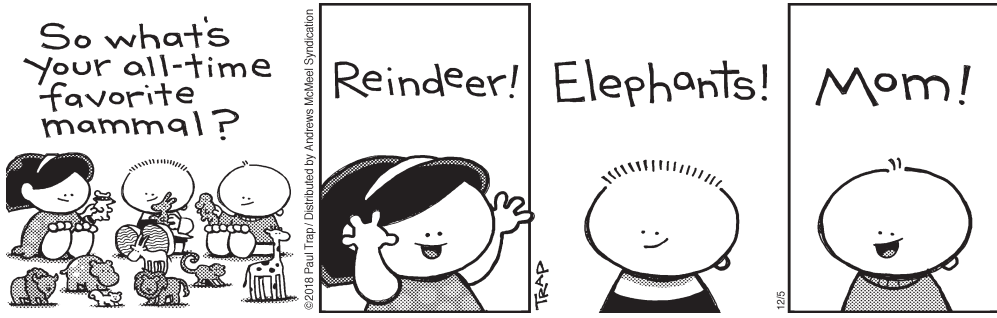
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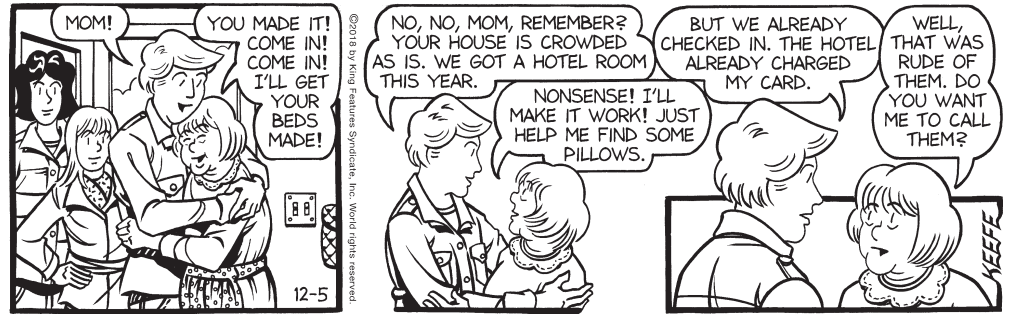
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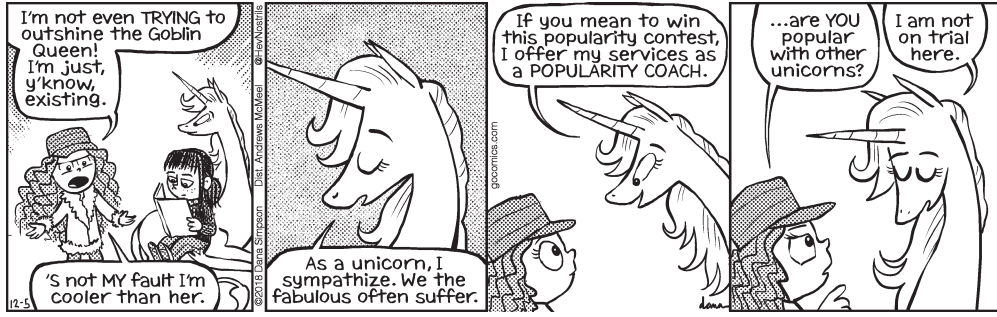
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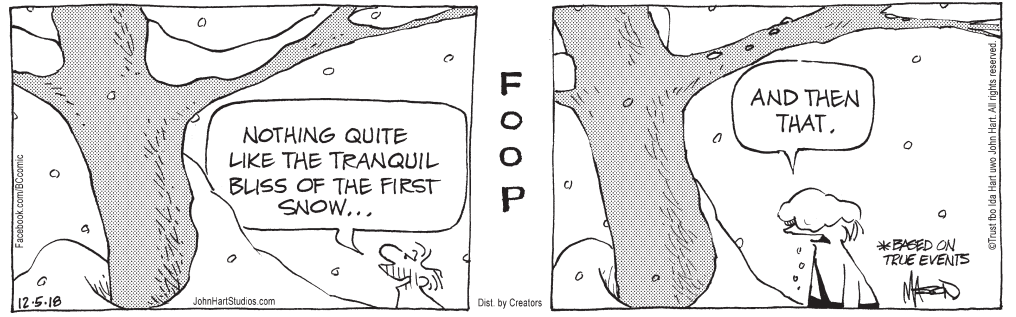
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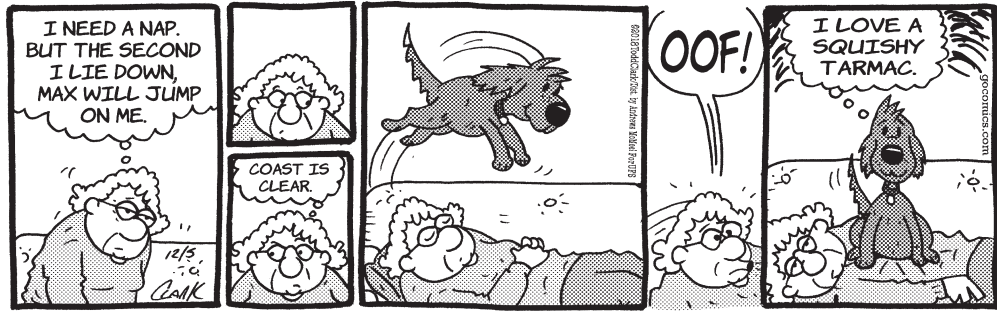
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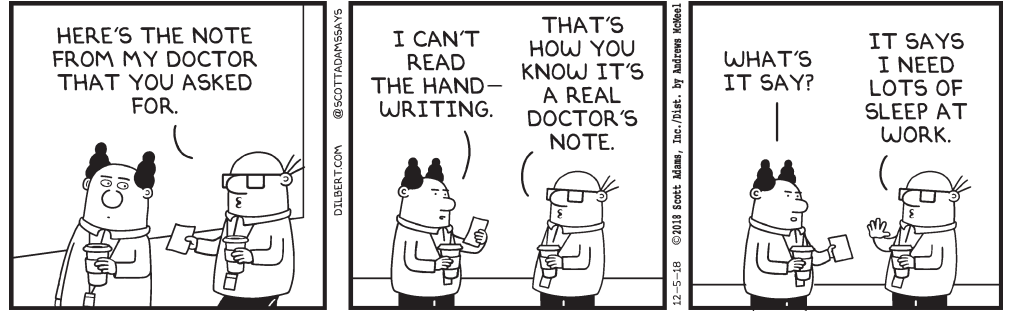
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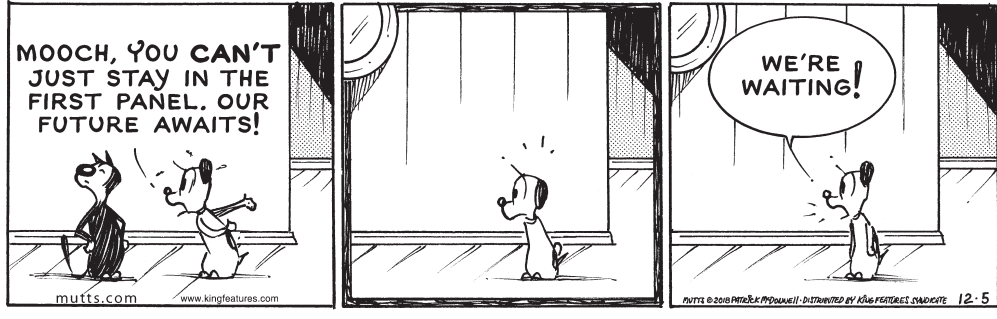
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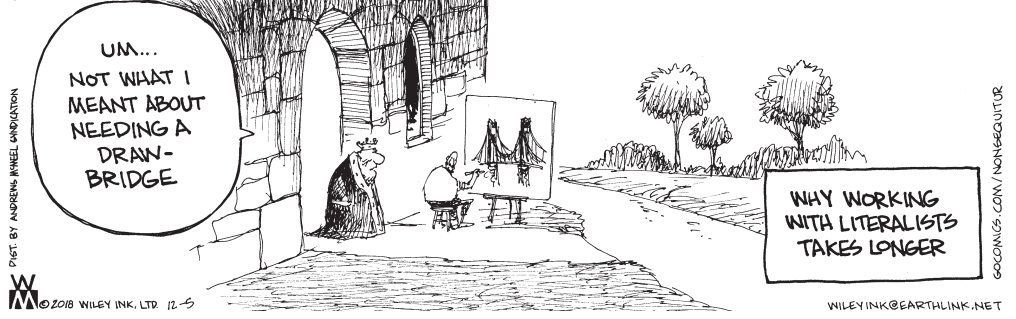
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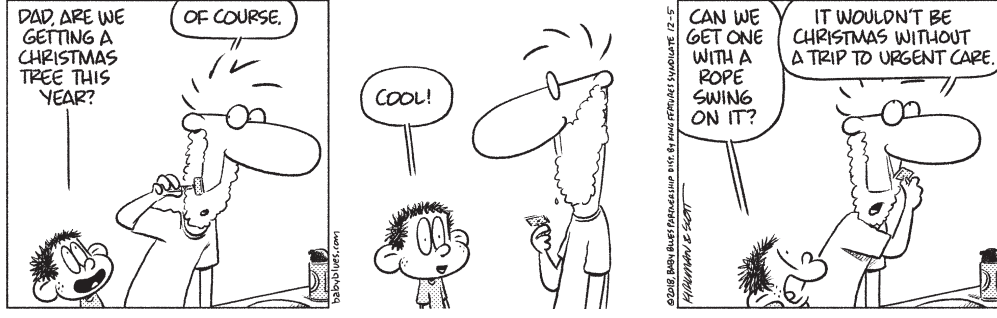
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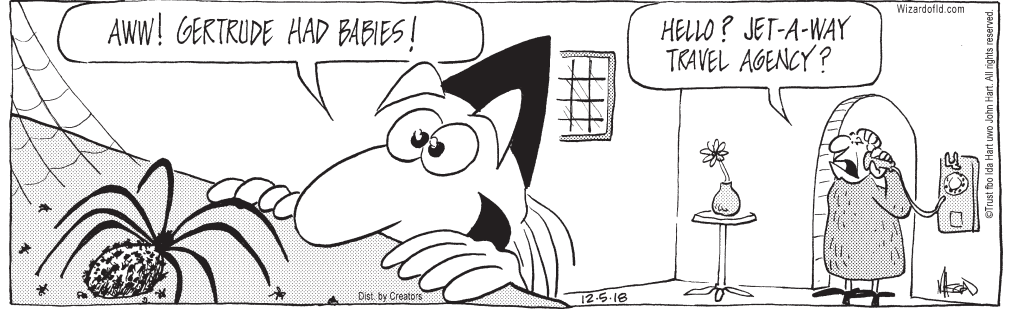
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