

Unpleasant conversation

Dear Annie: A couple with whom I have a very close relationship have recently become friends with their new neighbors. These neighbors are retired from successful careers, have been U.S. residents for at least 50 years and are financially comfortable. I am grateful to be included in invitations with my close friends and the neighbors, and I have often invited the neighbors to join my close friends and me at my house. The problem is that the neighbors always want to turn the conversation around to what a horrible early life they had when they were children in Germany during World War II. It seems they have no end to their horrific stories of such things as frozen babies lying dead on the road. I find this subject of conversation extremely upsetting and feel it is inappropriate in a social gathering.

neighbors experienced some very difficult times, and I don't want to be unsympathetic or unkind. However, I do not discuss my traumatic life issues over cocktails. The most recent time the neighbors started going on and on about their tragic childhood, I asked to be excused before dinner because I was "not feeling well." And truth be told, after hearing about such graphic things, I was really not feeling well. In the future, would it be appropriate for me to interrupt these lengthy tales of woe by saying, "I am so sorry that you had to endure all that, but could we talk about something more pleasant?" No one else ever feels free to change the subject. I am not close with this couple, so I am not in a position to speak with them privately about this. — *Dinner Table Talk*

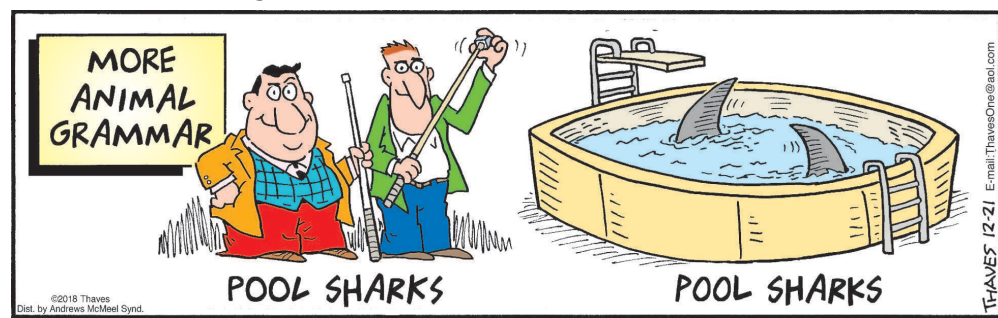
Talk: If dinner parties were kept to pleasant and safe conversations, they could get pretty boring very fast. Sometimes, hearing about people's hardships can bring you closer. Maybe you yourself could feel more open or vulnerable enough to share some of your hardships with them and your friends. Being human is about being kind and trying to give people the benefit of the doubt. Strive to be more sympathetic. But when the conversation becomes far too dark for too long, you can just try to subtly change the subject. No need to call attention to the previous topic's unpleasantness. If they never get the hint and the conversation is constant despair, then speak with your friends. Tell them how much you care about them, but let them know that their neighbors are just not your cup of tea. Not every person in the world is meant to be our friend. There is nothing wrong with not caring much for your friends' friends.



ANNIE LANE
Creators
Syndicate Inc.

Dear Dinner Table

FRANK AND ERNEST



THATABABY



PHOEBE AND HER UNICORN



LOLA



SIX CHIX



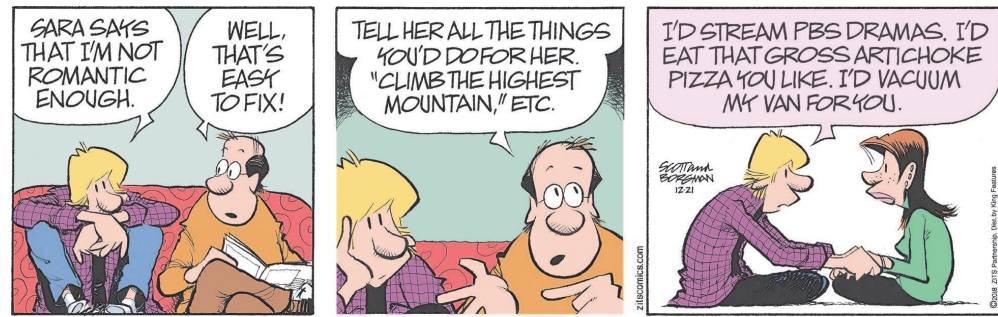
MUTTS



BABY BLUES



ZITS



TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). You're energized by human interaction. You forget that sometimes because life in public is rife with lines, traffic, constant negotiations over minor territorial issues ... bottom line, it's worth it.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). When you can see the best and worst in a thing and love the whole range, that's a good relationship. You have it with yourself, and with your closest people, this is peace.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). In many ways, you feel you're in the middle of nowhere, distant from the main action, fields and forests and deserts away from what you meant to be doing. But the important thing is that you're not lost. You'll get back on track tomorrow.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Reward systems will work particularly well today. Whether you're dealing with yourself or others, the rules are the same, for every right move, give a treat.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Simple measures keep you organized, for instance a hook for your keys or keeping your wallet in the same place every time. It bears repeating. Keep close tabs on personal items this afternoon.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). The calm before the storm is an exciting, anticipatory moment in weather, and in relationships, but only those who have been through a storm are keen enough to recognize the moment.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). What's needed is a fresh take on things. Build on what's been established, and then put a twist in it. This will work with recipes, small talk, projects, and almost anything you en-

counter today.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Feel like you're trying to impress someone? Good noticing, and you should stop yourself before you go too far with this. What's most impressive, of course, is someone who doesn't need to.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). The truth is an excellent starting place. If someone is treating the truth like it's the plan B or C — the stunt to pull when all else fails — that should be a major warning sign.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). It's said that persistence wins out, but much depends on the what's being persisted. Of course repetitive action will eventually make progress, but is it working? Is it smart?

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). The framing of things has impact on their appreciation and understanding. This will be true of art and more true of your view of people and interpersonal dynamics of the day.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Consider taking the same people to a new environment. You'll see an other side, learn of hidden strengths and have fun in a way you wouldn't have in your typical setting.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (Dec. 22). Among the purest delights — freedom! It's uncommon for one as responsible as you to experience stretches of time without rules and expectations keeping you in check, but temporary measures of relief from duty are in store. Take full advantage! It will blissfully grow your spirit. You'll return to the routine with fresh vigor. Scorpio and Aries adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 4, 20, 11, 18 and 42.

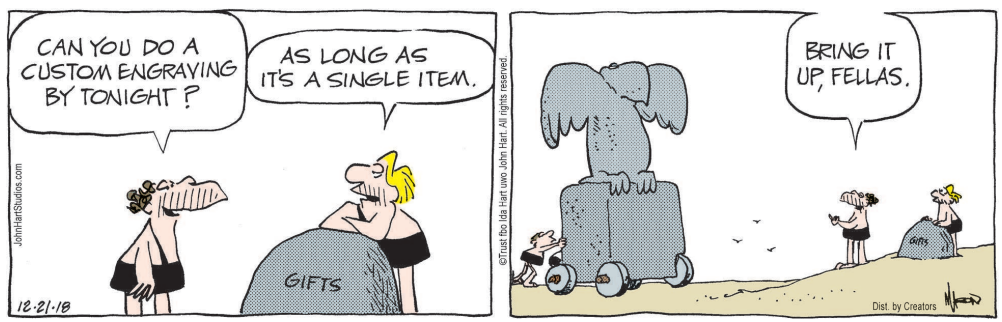
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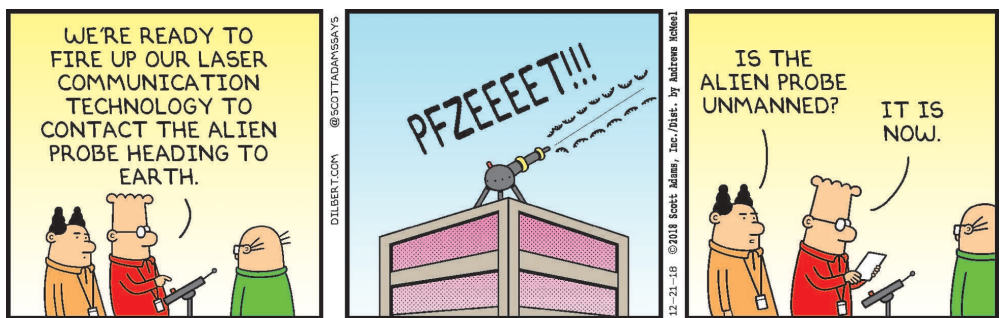
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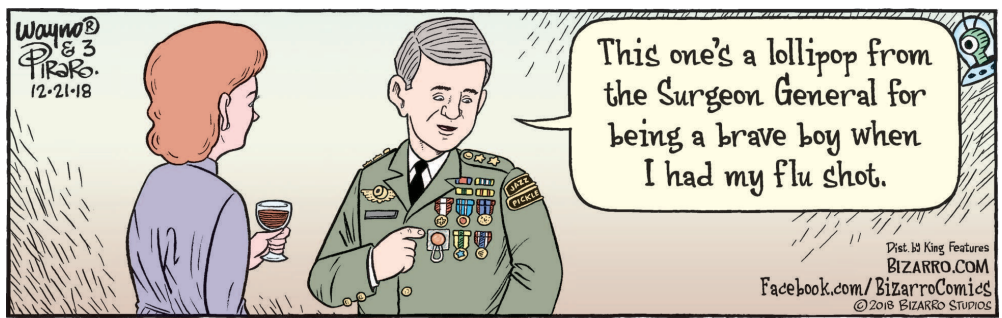
B.C.



DILBERT



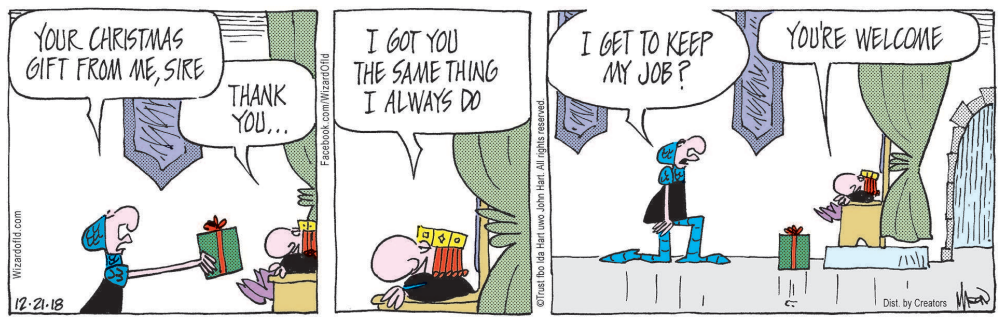
BIZARRO



NON SEQUITUR



WIZARD OF ID



ROSE IS ROSE

