

Big cash demands

Dear Annie: My ex-wife, "Daisy," has custody of our two children. She makes several times my salary, lives in a home where the mortgage and taxes are sky-high, and has an expensive lifestyle. I live frugally, always pay child support and have visitation rights. Often, my children stand me up when I show up to get them. I'll get to a birthday party or wedding with just my son and have to tell everyone, "My daughter has a migraine." The real answer is, "she is lazy and doesn't want to miss movie night with her friend." Her mother is spineless. My son also has a fluctuating weight problem because he eats too much junk food. At a recent luncheon, he refused to eat but then demanded a piece of chocolate cake and shoved it down his throat.

the kids about our financial arrangement, which we'd agreed she wouldn't do. She wants to throw our daughter a lavish bat mitzvah for her 13th birthday. The total cost would be five figures. I've refused to pay it because she doesn't need it and it would be a financial hardship for me. Also, given her lack of effort at school and refusal to attend family functions, I don't think her behavior merits a huge reward.

Should I do what my wife wants and cough up the cash, or should I go to the party and get tossed out the door? I'm saving money religiously, because given Daisy's lack of control over my daughter, I'm afraid my daughter will get in trouble. If I have to pay for a lawyer, I'd better be ready financially. — *Stingy Dad and Proud of It*



ANNIE LANE
Creators
Syndicate Inc.

Dear Stingy Dad: You

should do what is in the best interest of your children, and you and your ex-wife should make every effort to be as amicable to each other as possible. Yes, you should pay a customary and reasonable amount for your only daughter's bat mitzvah. It is not her fault that her parents are fighting over money and parenting philosophies. Whoever's right or wrong is beside the point. Now is the time to wave the white flag and make peace.

Your daughter will never turn 13 again. Make it special for her and leave your baggage and negative feelings at the door. As for the constant headaches from your daughter and her blowing you off, remember that you are the parent and she is the child. Ask yourself why she doesn't want to see you. It may have something to do with the fact that you are so critical about your son's weight.

Being embarrassed by your son's behavior might propel you to seek help for him. Let's hope.

TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). This issue you're dealing with will be solved with a new frame of mind. Finding the frame of mind can be as easy as finding a picture frame. You simply experiment. What looks good to you? What works for the space you have?

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). You can tell that someone is dangling a carrot to get you to move forward in the direction of their choosing. But as long as they actually give you the carrot, and it's a direction that's OK with you, all will be well.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). As a leader, your role will be to make sure everyone else has a role. You'll be in a position to check in with each person, informing and course, correcting where necessary.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). The mental exercise that will help you make a decision will include posing hypothetical questions, for instance, "What would someone who's madly in love with you suggest you do in this scenario?"

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). You know yourself and so it's not necessary to ruminate over which way to go. There will be no hesitation, no waiting. It's like you look forward to a straight road of green lights as far as the eye can see.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). As cool as it would be to wake up one morning with the capability of observing, understanding and experiencing the world on a whole different level, these things happen gradually. Awareness takes practice. You'll get plenty today.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). While some claim free speech as their right, others regard it as a continual obligation. As for you, talking takes more energy than you think it should today, so you'll process silently and chime in only when necessary.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). You could do the job without help, but it would take longer and be harder, and not half as fun. Make sure the others know how much you appreciate being part of an excellent team.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You're compassionate and you see beyond your own situation into the heart of the world. And yet, some compartmentalization is appropriate. Knowing what is and is not your problem will help you live well today.

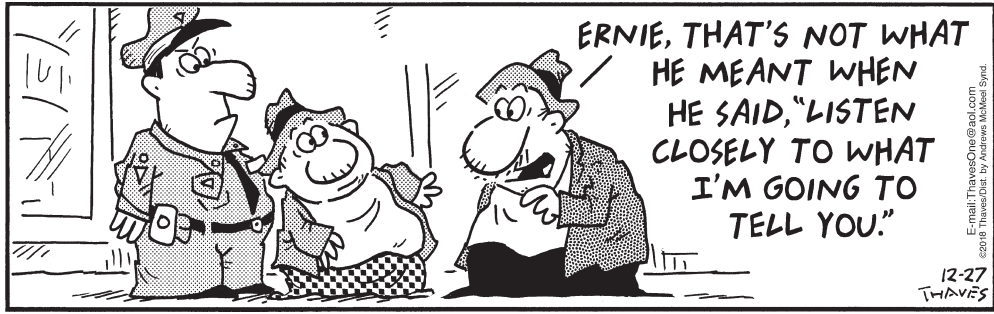
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Most people think to ask for spiritual guidance when things aren't going well. But why not seek spiritual guidance when things are going just fine? It will make a good time even better.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Achieving more success is never the answer. Before long, expectations and desires will rise in tandem. Do what it takes to be happy now. An attitude shift might be all that's necessary.

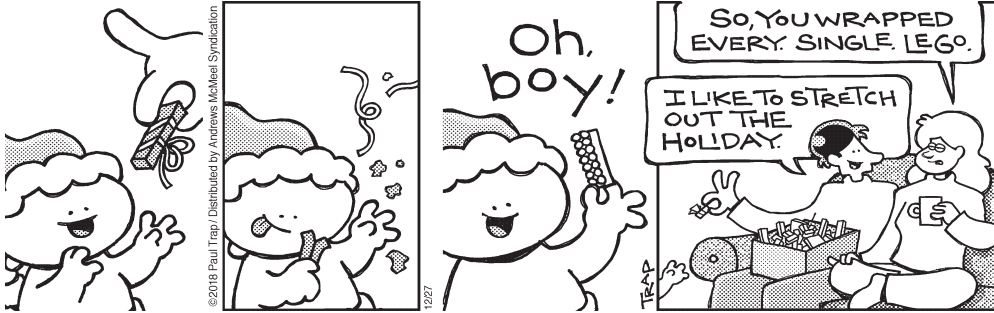
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). We organize our lives around the meaning of things, and yet what a thing means isn't a fixed fact. Rather, it's either an agreement you make with yourself or one you come to with others. Just know that meanings can change.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (Dec. 28). You know what you want, but what do you do to get there? Simple. Do what it takes. Through determination and tenacity, your life moves in the direction of your vision. Highlights of the solar return include: a beautiful love letter, a trip by boat and the receipt of a check of which you'll want to take a picture. Cancer and Taurus adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 9, 30, 33, 31 and 16.

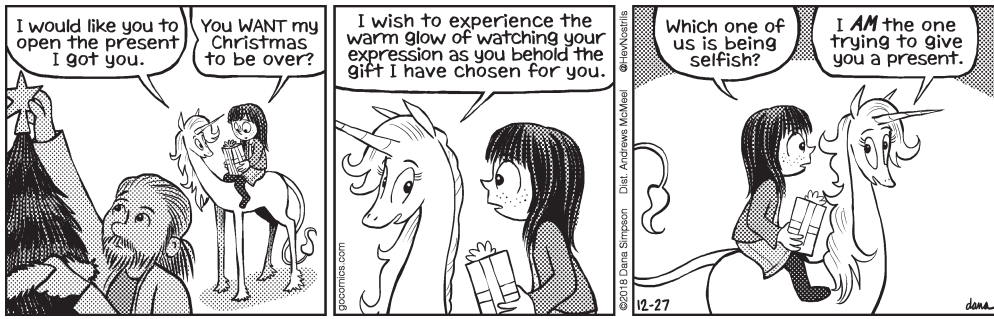
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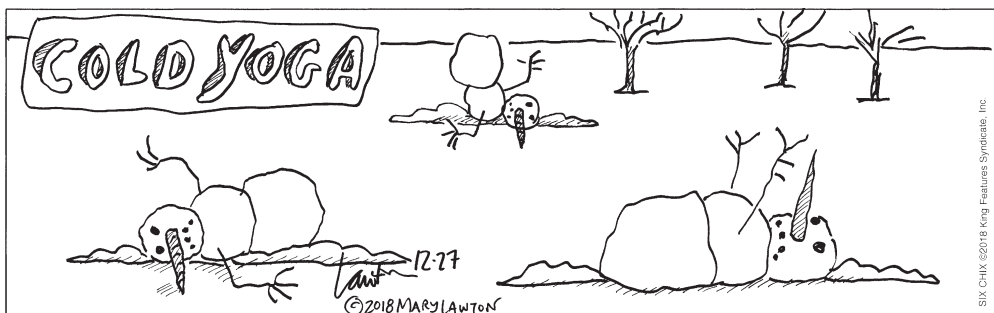
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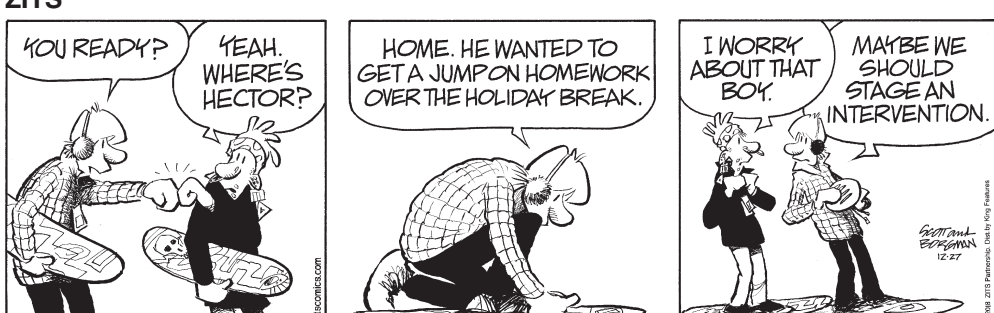
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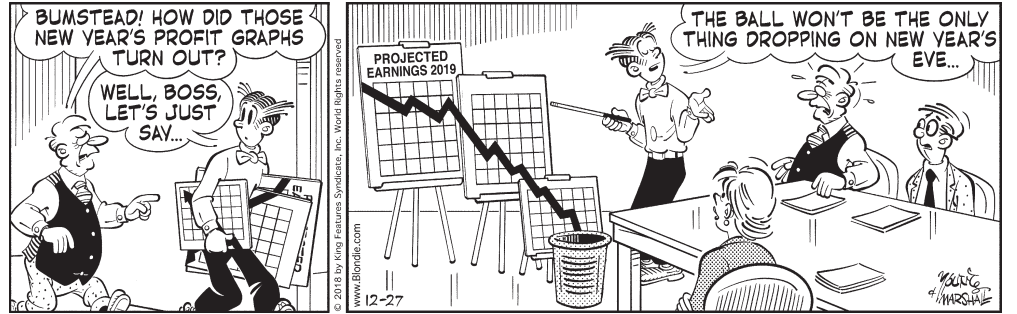
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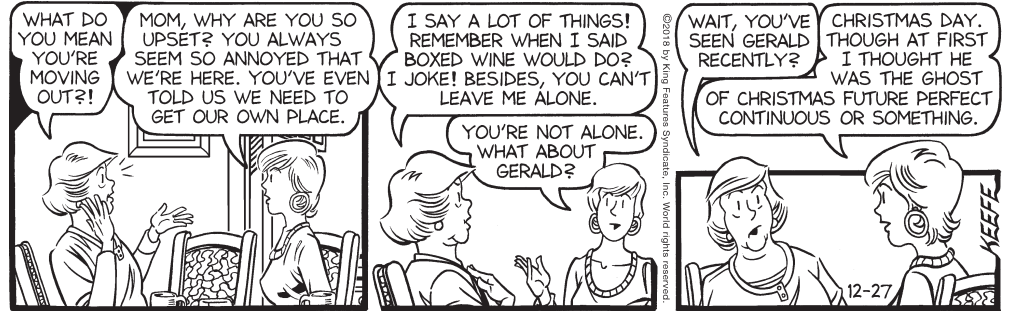
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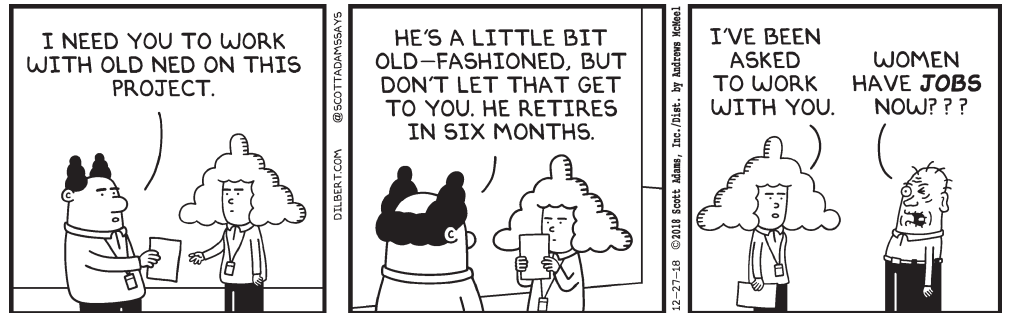
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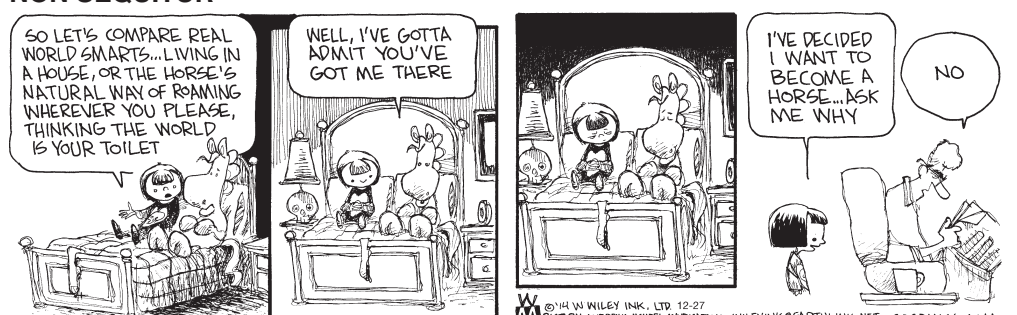
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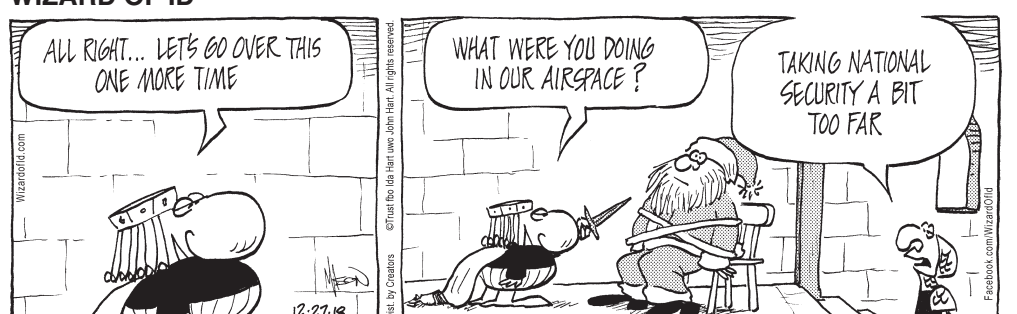
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