

Choir director lacks hygiene

Dear Annie: I am a member of a small Midwestern church and in the choir. There are about 10 of us, and we all have a good time together. The problem is the organist and choir director, who has held these positions for nearly 50 years. As she is getting older, she is neglecting to either shower or change her clothes, which I can often smell in our small practice room.

DEAR ANNIE



ANNIE LANE
Creators
Syndicate Inc.

She also is losing her hearing and doesn't hear us when we ask questions about the music during practice. Thus, she drowns us out when playing on Sunday or when made angry. I believe that our pastor is afraid to say anything to her, and I don't believe that any other choir members will say anything, either. She can take offense easily. Any suggestions? Sadly, I don't believe she reads a newspaper, so she won't see herself here. — *Afraid to Offend*

Dear Afraid to Offend: Sometimes, having a direct and honest conversation is the best way not to offend someone in the long run. It may hurt her

feelings for a minute, but having other choir members and the pastor talk about her behind her back is much more hurtful. If you decide to be the brave lion out of the group, make sure you come from a loving and caring place and not a judgmental one. Speak with her in private about your concerns. Begin the conversation by asking her whether anything different has been going on in her life before you dive right into the subject matter of the stench. My hunch is that there has been a change in her life. Sometimes depression, loneliness or other forms of mental illness can lead to not bathing and bad hygiene. If that is the case, it is important for her to get help and know she is supported and loved.

Dear Annie: I like my job except for one thing: The office has a toxic gossiping culture. I regularly hear my immediate boss saying unsavory things about many of my co-workers to other members of middle management. The co-workers being gossiped about are people I respect and enjoy working with.

These members of middle management know that I can hear the terrible things they're saying. Though they may be talking in the next room, they've often looked over to me to "include" me in the conversation. This has put me in a really awkward position. I have no desire to join in their bad-mouthing. And frankly, I think it's unprofessional of them to be saying such things in the workplace — especially in earshot of employees who are lower on the totem pole. I don't like this culture, and I want no part in it — but I want to keep this job. Help! — *Involuntary Confidante*

Dear Confidante: You are very wise to ignore the gossiping. There is an old Turkish proverb that states, "Who gossips to you will gossip of you." You could try to turn the gossip back on the gossipers with a positive thing to say about the person they are speaking about. Also, you should report this to upper management. Gossip is toxic, and I'm sure that if those in upper management knew about what is going on, they would want to put an end to it. Some companies have zero-tolerance gossip policies.

TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Unselfconsciousness can be very attractive until it happens to offend (and it will, because its very nature is a lack of concern for each person's individual opinions and rules.) But usually by then it's already won people over.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). When you can't think of anything to make the situation better, the best thing to say is nothing at all. Let your compassionate heart lead you. If it leads you away from the drama, you won't be running, you'll just be staying out of it.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). You stand by your people even when you know that they have behaved in ways that are less than ideal. Because they trust you, they won't be so defensive. Together you'll work toward solutions.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Today's theme: managing expectations. Your performance will set the bar. Better to make a credible attempt and fail than to nail every contest like a superhero, setting an unsustainable standard.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). You were convinced of the truth and now you're starting to see things a little differently. It's not that you were lied to, it's just that the situation is more complex and nuanced than you were able to understand back then.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Take the attitude that "this is it" instead of expecting life to get better, which of course isn't how it works. Attitudes get better. Moods, other things too. But life — life is the landscape. Take it on, and then you're the one who gets better.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). You've been known to give care when people need it, so they gravitate to you for this time and again. You may think it's

fine, as long as they also come to you when they're strong and ready to give back.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). When you clearly see how a thing is wrong, you'll speak to it. When you don't, why rush into a statement? You'll align with the qualities of stellar leadership by taking time to form a thoughtful response.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You've handed off a responsibility, necessarily so, and now you may be having second thoughts. But if the stakes aren't too high, the best thing will be to let people do what they can and learn from it.

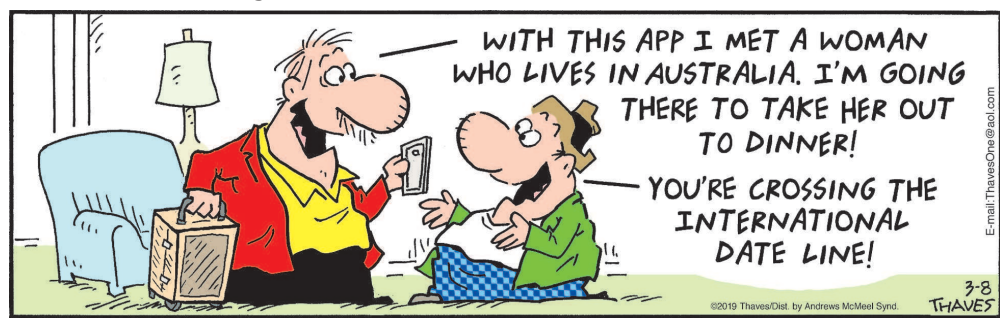
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Your hobbies and entertainments are well within your budget, so enjoy! As Henry David Thoreau said, "That man is the richest whose pleasures are the cheapest."

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Even the events that seem to belong comfortably in a timeline with a beginning and an end are actually part of an endless continuum of actions and consequences. You'll like how this section of the circle plays out.

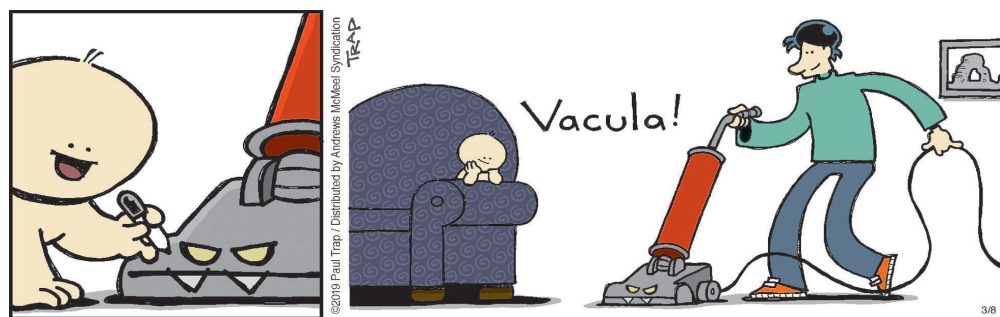
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Ward against interruptions before they happen. The little distractions may not seem like too much trouble to handle, but the adjustments you have to make to get back into your flow will take more time and energy than you think.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (March 9). Love isn't the aim of your plan, but it's what will make pursuing your plan quite wonderful. The way you click with a certain person makes a whole lot else go smoothly. You'll push yourself physically and/or intellectually toward a difficult achievement. Play the long game on this one. Good fortune will be tied to ancestral guidance. Gemini and Sagittarius adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 29, 34, 11, 38 and 15.

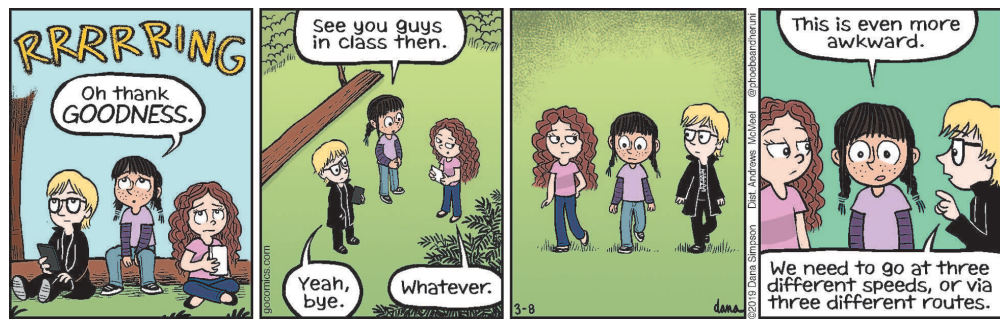
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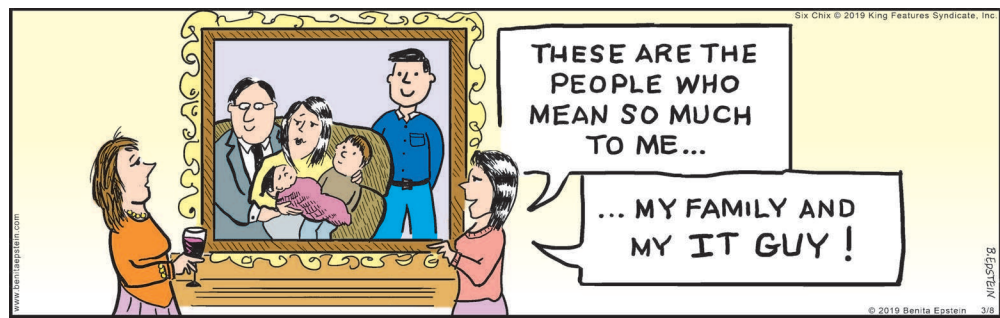
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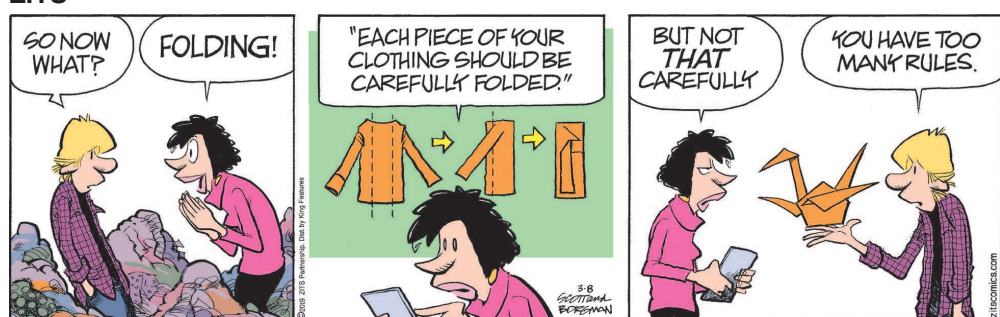
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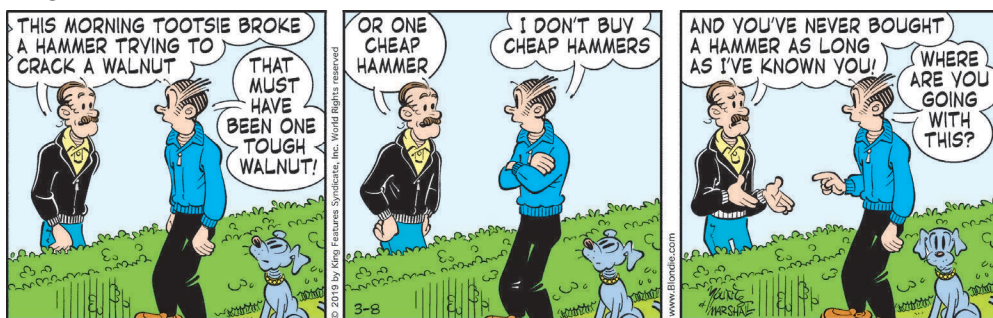
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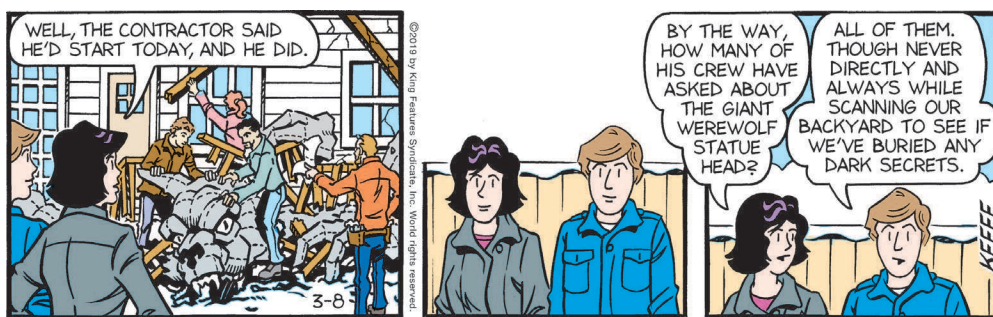
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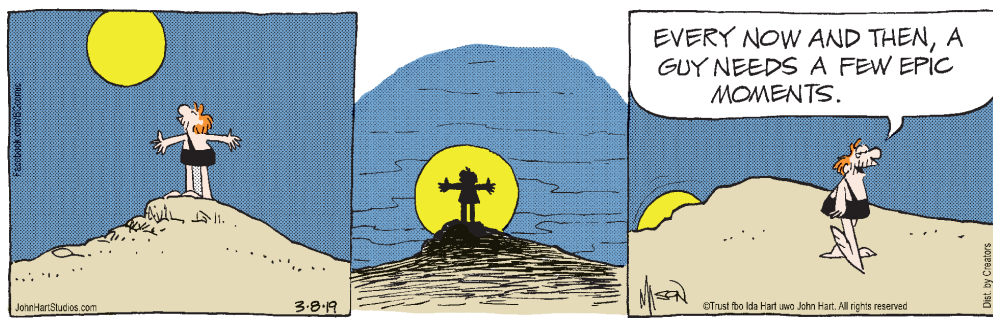
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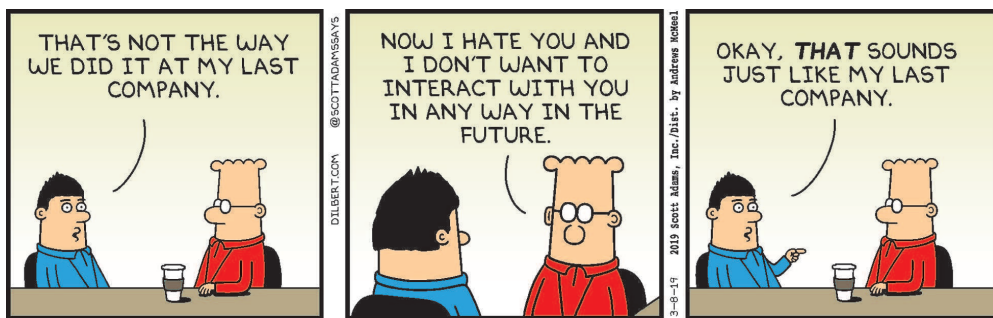
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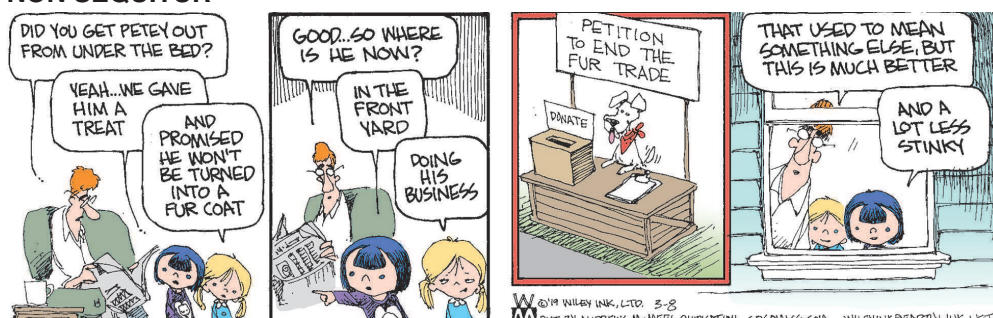
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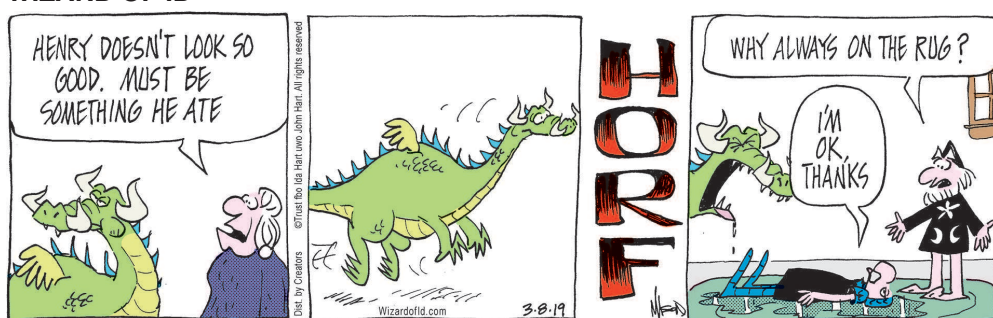
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