

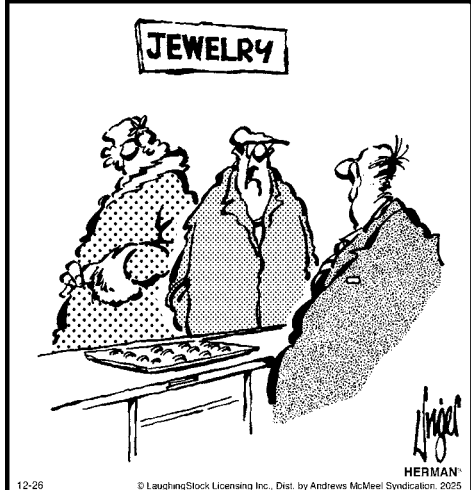
COMICS

MARMADUKE



"If we did let him volunteer, I bet he wouldn't let anybody leave without adopting a pet."

HERMAN



"She's got that diamond ring stuck on her finger. Got an ax?"

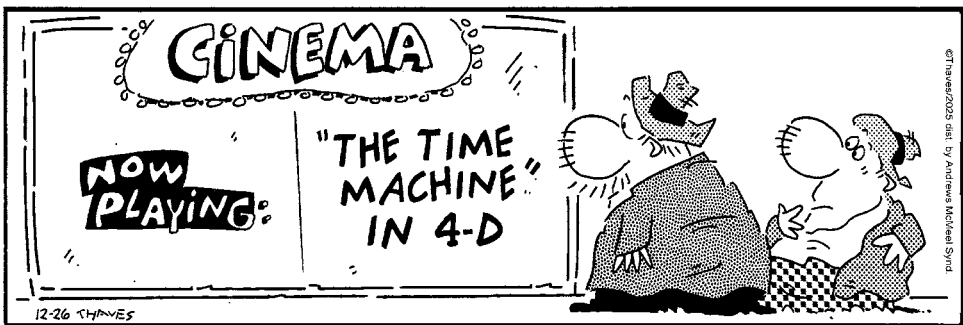
REALITY CHECK



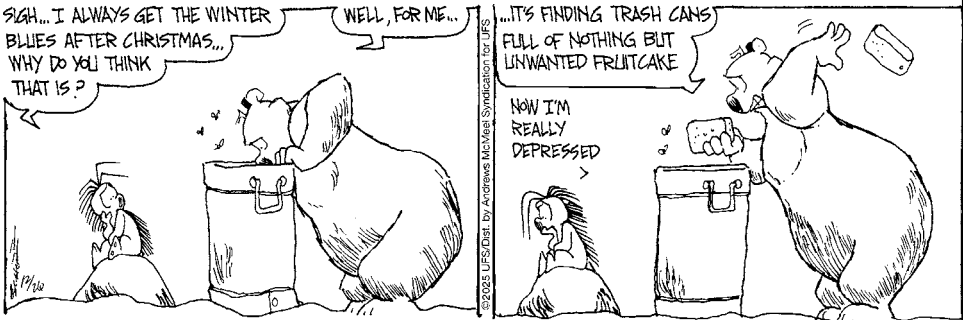
MODERATELY CONFUSED



FRANK & ERNEST



THE GRIZZWELLS



PICKLES



BLONDIE



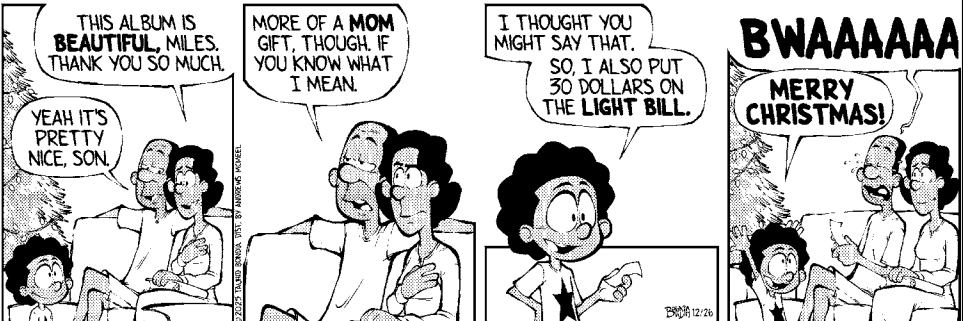
BORN LOSER



HI AND LOIS



CRABGRASS



Losing My Nephew to Family Politics

Dear Annie: My sister-in-law has disliked me for as long as I can remember. I've never fully understood why, but over the years she's made her feelings clear in a hundred small ways -- cold shoulders at family gatherings, pointed comments and a general effort to keep me at arm's length. I've always tried to rise above it for the sake of the family, especially because I was close to her children while they were growing up.

Her oldest son recently got married, and somehow she has managed to turn his new wife against me as well. Practically overnight, my nephew -- now a newly married man -- has cooled toward me. It's as if he's forgotten the years of support I gave him. I always showed up for him, driving three and a half hours to his football games, sitting in the bleachers in the rain and supporting him through the rough patches. I never expected anything in return, but I did think our bond meant something.

Now I feel like an outsider looking in on a family I once felt very much part of. I'm not interested in choosing sides. I just want to know if there's any hope of salvaging these relationships or if I should step back and accept that his mother's opinion of me has become the family party line.

Is there anything I can do to rebuild a connection with my nephew? -- Hurt and Hoping  
Dear Hurt and Hoping: It sounds as though your sister-in-law has been steering this ship for years, and now your nephew and his wife are drifting in her



ANNIE LANE

Dear Annie

wake. That stings, especially after all the miles you logged to support him growing up.

You can't rewrite whatever story she's telling. What you can do is stay gracious and above the fray. A simple, friendly note to your nephew -- "Wishing you both well, my door is always open" -- keeps the lines of communication intact without guilt or drama. Then let the ball sit in his court.

People often lean toward the loudest voice in the family, but time has a way of revealing who treated them well.

Dear Annie: Several months ago, I wrote as "Concerned Nephew" about a brief bathroom moment -- I didn't wash my hands and fibbed to my aunt -- that led to embarrassment and a misunderstanding I'd let weigh on me for years. I just wanted to take a minute to thank you for not only publishing my letter but for your invaluable reply and how much it's helped me.

I have PTSD which has led to OCD that can be a little overwhelming at times. I tend to be very hard on myself for minor mishaps. In your reply, you stated I had made "a small,

human mistake" with my aunt. I've used this in several ways to forgive and not be so hard on myself -- and to give others more grace, too. It's also helped me from getting caught up on things that, in the grand scheme, are quite unimportant.

I can't thank you enough. I appreciate your help, kind words and advice that help so many of us just trying to get by and live a healthy, meaningful life. -- Finding More Joy

Dear Finding More Joy: I can't thank (SET ITAL) you (END ITAL) enough for your letter! It makes me so happy that the advice not only helped with this situation but also brought more peace into other parts of your life. We're so often our own harshest critics, but we're all living life for the first time. We do the best we can, and we deserve grace, especially in the moments when we don't get it right.

"Out of Bounds: Estrangement, Boundaries and the Search for Forgiveness" is out now! Annie Lane's third anthology is for anyone who has lived with anger, estrangement or the deep ache of being wronged -- because forgiveness isn't for them. It's for you. Visit <http://www.creatorspublishing.com> for more information. Follow Annie Lane on Instagram at @dearannieofficial. Send your questions for Annie Lane to [dearannie@creators.com](mailto:dearannie@creators.com).

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ASTROGRAPH BY EUGENIA LAST

Plan your actions. Change is overdue, but it will require guidance if you want to reach your destination of choice. Uncertainty is the enemy this year, and patience is your virtue. Put your energy into self-improvement and independence.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) -- Emotions will be prevalent. Think twice before you agree to something that can cost you financially, physically or emotionally. A deal is only good if it's something you need.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 19) -- Be reluctant to agree to anything without looking at every angle. Haste makes waste, and choices can bury you in debt and regret. Avoid people who get your dander up.

PISCES (Feb. 20-March 20) -- Say little but do a lot. Set the pace and the scenario by your actions, not your promises. If you want to fulfill your dreams, you'll find taking the lead to be your best bet. Put yourself first.

ARIES (March 21-April 19) -- Rejuvenate and enjoy some downtime. Give some thought to days gone by and to days you look forward to. It's a great day to figure out how you want to proceed.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) -- Stick to your plans, and everything will be alright. Focus on timing, travel and maintaining a dialogue that keeps everyone on point, and you'll stay energized and achieve whatever you set out to do.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20) -- Offer only what you can. Set boundaries with those asking for too much. Stick up for your

rights and do what's best for you. Set high standards and pay attention to your needs.

CANCER (June 21-July 22) -- Be open to invitations and opportunities, and spend time with someone you love to share information with. Enjoy your day. Positive change is heading your way.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) -- Be reluctant to make a hasty decision. Make your position clear and your timeframe known, and go about your business. Socializing will be fun, but don't take what others say as gospel.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) -- If change is what you need, start putting it in motion. Initiate what your heart suggests, and you'll feel good about the outcome. Live, love and be happy, and everything will fall into place.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23) -- Slow down but think standing up. Putting everything in place and getting your plans finalized early will pave the way for a quieter day, offering time to hit the reset button and prepare for year-end festivities.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 22) -- A change is within reach, and it's up to you to pick and choose what's next. Take your time; weigh the pros and cons, and you'll gain insight into what's best for you.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23-Dec. 21) -- Avoid anyone who tends to annoy you. Arguments will ruin your day and put you in a foul mood. Do something that requires energy and stamina and that makes you feel good about yourself.

ACROSS

- 1 Worthington or Clafin
- 4 Poles
- 8 Vaulted area in a church
- 12 "Roses — red ..."
- 13 Actor — Stonestreet
- 14 — ex machina
- 15 Sports org.
- 16 Recipe amount
- 17 Candid
- 18 Ordered amounts
- 20 Cooked fruit dessert
- 22 Floor covering
- 23 Destiny
- 24 Kid
- 26 Cave-dwelling creature
- 27 Food fish
- 30 "— Boots Are Made for Walkin'"
- 32 Scrap
- 33 Lofty poem
- 34 Old French money
- 35 Wildebeest
- 37 Furnishes
- 39 Get-up-and-go
- 40 Understand
- 41 Magical helper
- 42 Vise part
- 43 Do wrong
- 45 Takes in
- 49 Darken
- 51 Arrange a hotel stay
- 52 — podrida
- 54 Actress — Gabor
- 55 Cipher
- 56 Film spool
- 57 What remains after expenses
- 58 Nova
- 59 State near Minn.
- 60 Make lace

DOWN

- 1 Rub smooth
- 2 Ann —, Michigan
- 3 Pass muster (2 wds.)
- 4 Ohio team
- 5 Singer Rita —
- 6 Platter
- 7 Learned one
- 8 Take as one's own
- 9 Hard-rind fruit
- 10 Fat
- 11 Laborer in times gone by
- 19 Sponsorship
- 21 Mark with blotches
- 25 Panhandler
- 26 Boxing event
- 27 Self-assured
- 28 Unusual
- 29 — Moines, Iowa
- 30 Cookbook measure (Abbr.)
- 31 Farm tool
- 36 Infant
- 38 Word in a threat
- 42 Wisecracking guy
- 44 Skin cream brand
- 45 The basics
- 46 Italy's shape
- 47 — water
- 48 Winter glider
- 49 Pitcher's goof
- 50 Damon or Dillon
- 53 Grazing area

Answer to this puzzle

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