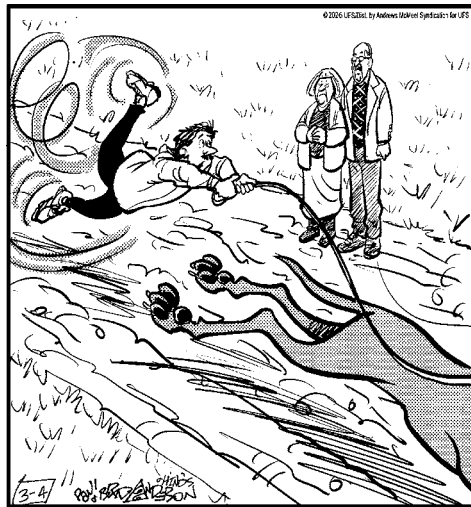


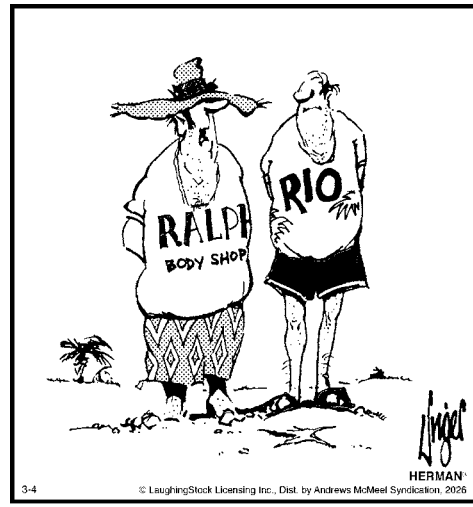
COMICS

MARMADUKE



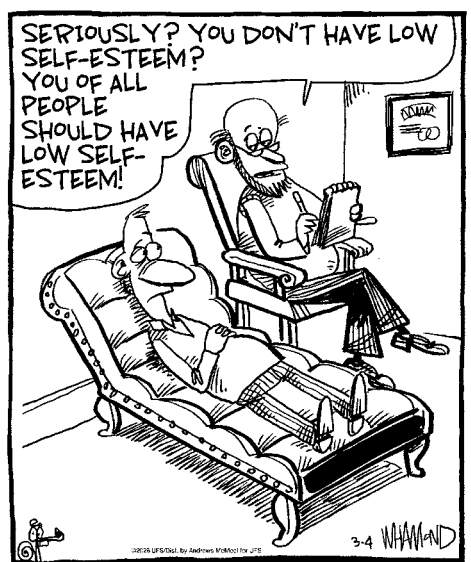
"We're off to see the world - the hard way."

HERMAN

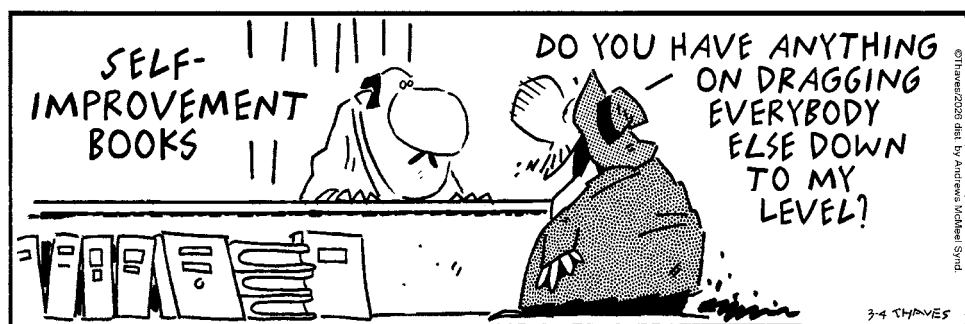


"Have you ever been to Ralph's Body Shop?"

REALITY CHECK



FRANK & ERNEST



THE GRIZZLELLS



PICKLES



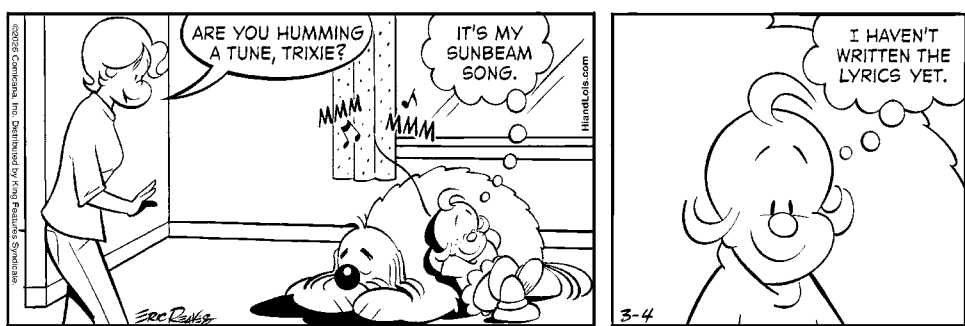
BLONDIE



BORN LOSER



HI AND LOIS



CRABGRASS



Choosing My Next Chapter



ANNIE LANE

Dear Annie

Dear Annie: My children are trying to move me into assisted living, and I feel like I'm being slowly erased. I am in my early 80s, and I still live in the home where I raised my kids. It is not fancy, but it is mine. I know every creaky stair. I know which window sticks in the winter. I have neighbors who check in on me, a routine that keeps me grounded and a life that feels familiar and dignified.

Here is the part that makes me feel misunderstood. Last Sunday, I hosted what I have hosted for years, coffee and banana bread after church. Nothing glamorous. Just a few neighbors at my kitchen table, laughing about the weather and trading leftovers like it is currency. My granddaughter came by later and sat on the same stool she used to climb onto as a little girl, swinging her feet and telling me about her life. When she left, she hugged me and said, "Grandma, your house smells like you." I cried after she drove away, not because I was sad but because I felt rich in the only way that matters.

My kids see it differently. They say they are worried about my safety, and they point to things like a small fall I had last year, my driving at night and the fact that I sometimes forget where I put my keys. They have started sending me links to places, calling them

"communities," and talking about "the next chapter." They make it sound like a spa. I hear the end of my independence.

They also keep bringing up how much easier it would be on them. That part hurts. I love my children, but I do not want to make decisions out of guilt. I have told them I am not ready, and they respond by getting more insistent. One of them even suggested they could step in if I refuse, which made me feel panicked and furious.

I am not denying that I am aging. I am just saying I want a voice in how I do it. How do I stand my ground without blowing up my family, and how do I make them understand that keeping my home is not stubbornness, it is my life? -- Not Ready to Be Put Away

Dear Not Ready: Your children are speaking the language of fear, and you are speaking the language of home. Both are real.

Meet them in the middle with a plan that protects your independence instead of surrendering it. Tell them

that you are willing to address safety right now. Offer specific steps: a medical checkup, a driving evaluation, a fall prevention plan, grab bars and better lighting, a daily check-in system, and a hired helper for errands or housekeeping, if that would ease everyone's mind. Put it in writing with clear benchmarks, such as, "If I fall again," or "If my doctor says I cannot safely live alone," then you will revisit assisted living.

Also, be direct. Say, "I want your support, not a campaign." They can worry without taking the steering wheel.

Independence is not proved by refusing help. It is proved by choosing the right help at the right time. Make choices. Do not make promises under pressure.

"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

Interacting, socializing, participating and doing your part will lead to interesting encounters. Commitments can be put into action to ease your mind and give you hope for a brighter future. Focus on precision, not spontaneity. Time is on your side; call the shots.

PISCES (Feb. 20-March 20) -- Let kind gestures be your calling card. How you treat others will set the stage for what you receive in return. A positive lifestyle change will promote unique encounters and unexpected offers.

ARIES (March 21-April 19) -- Give yourself time to rejuvenate. Delve into something you find relaxing and enjoyable. Use your creative imagination and put your talents to work for you.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) -- Take care of small but essential details. Your patience and willingness to go the extra mile will win you well-deserved praise. Be honest with yourself about your happiness.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20) -- Take charge, initiate change and focus on friendships, helping others and walking away from toxic situations. Take the plunge and do something that restores your faith.

CANCER (June 21-July 22) -- Express yourself openly and make suggestions that help you gain recognition. A chance to expand your skills, interests and possibilities is heading your way.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) -- Put your energy where it brings the highest return. Learn something new, travel, communicate and make

special plans with those who inspire you to try new things and challenge you to grow intellectually.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) -- How you deal with people and respond to requests will influence your position and reputation among your peers. Step up and lead the way, and rewards will follow.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23) -- Consider some of the suggestions you receive and offer your input to those you feel comfortable working with. If you mix business with pleasure, positive options and an acceptable offer will unfold.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 22) -- Attend functions that allow you to further your interests. Communication and learning are on the rise and will help you fine-tune your skills to fill fast-growing needs.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23-Dec. 21) -- Be careful what you share with whom. Someone will be eager to twist your words and put you in a precarious position. Strive for better health, less worry and a simpler lifestyle.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) -- You've got more going for you than you realize. Speak up, share your intentions and make plans that point you toward greater security. Home and self-improvements will give your life a positive spin.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 19) -- Size up your situation, budget and the changes necessary to relinquish any doubt you have about your lifestyle and prospects. Invest in yourself, your health and your wealth.

- ACROSS**
- 1 Cape — Massachusetts
  - 4 Hold
  - 8 Radar image
  - 12 Copy
  - 13 Valentine flower
  - 14 Memory method
  - 15 One curl or squat
  - 16 Ready, willing and —
  - 17 Move carefully
  - 18 Refuse
  - 20 Stock of weapons
  - 22 Legless creature
  - 23 Succor
  - 24 Rage
  - 26 Mil. rank
  - 27 B'way sold-out sign
  - 30 Mythical man-goat
  - 32 Favorite
  - 33 Outdo
  - 34 For
  - 35 Actress Issa —
  - 37 Decree
  - 39 Melody
  - 40 Local law (Abbr.)
  - 41 Cup's edge
  - 42 Rainbow shape
  - 43 Actor's stage signal
  - 45 Ostentatious
  - 49 Hits repeatedly
  - 51 Den
  - 52 The best (Hyph.)
  - 54 "Gotcha!"
  - 55 "The Sun — Rises"
  - 56 Brainstorming result
  - 57 Half score
  - 58 Noggin
  - 59 Cries like a crow
  - 60 Unit of work
- DOWN**
- 1 "Cash or —?"
  - 2 Musical drama
  - 3 Bank customer
  - 4 Mardi —
  - 5 Steal from
  - 6 "La — Bonita"
  - 7 The aristocracy
  - 8 Engender
  - 9 Money given at interest
  - 10 "— long story"
  - 11 Rind
  - 19 Nimble
  - 21 Child minder
  - 25 Blunders
  - 26 Went too fast
  - 27 Kick start
  - 28 Legendary bird
  - 29 Choose
  - 30 Town in Belgium
  - 31 Singer Grande, to fans
  - 36 Long outdated
  - 38 Chop
  - 42 Baseball great Hank —
  - 44 Old anesthetic
  - 45 Thick slice
  - 46 Wan
  - 47 "Simpsons" sister
  - 48 Jedi guru
  - 49 Green veggies
  - 50 Crooned
  - 53 Modern

Answer to this puzzle

G	R	E	S	M	V	C	N	V	E	B
N	E	T	V	I	D	E	O	S	T	A
V	H	V	E	N	O	V	A	R	I	V
S	T	L	E	P	E	A	H	S	V	A
E	U	C	A	R	C	A	R	A	V	A
M	I	R	D	O	R	I	A	I	R	A
L	C	I	D	E	E	R	O	R	A	P
P	O	T	P	E	T	R	A	T	O	R
S	R	O	S	G	T	S	I	R	E	A
D	I	V	A	S	P	A	S	P	A	S
L	V	N	E	S	A	S	S	O	S	O
E	E	R	O	S	E	A	B	A	R	E
A	P	E	R	O	S	E	A	B	A	R
B	L	I	P	G	R	I	P	G	R	O

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58					59				60		