

COMICS

MARMADUKE



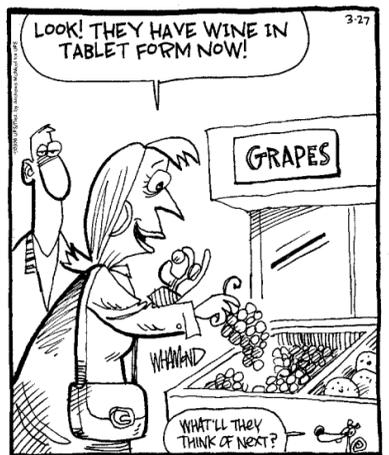
"I don't know how he does it. It just happens."

HERMAN



"I'm not dancing! I hit my hand."

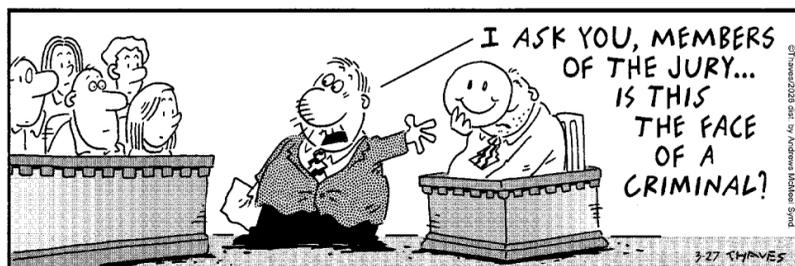
REALITY CHECK



MODERATELY CONFUSED



FRANK & ERNEST



THE GRIZZWELLS



PICKLES



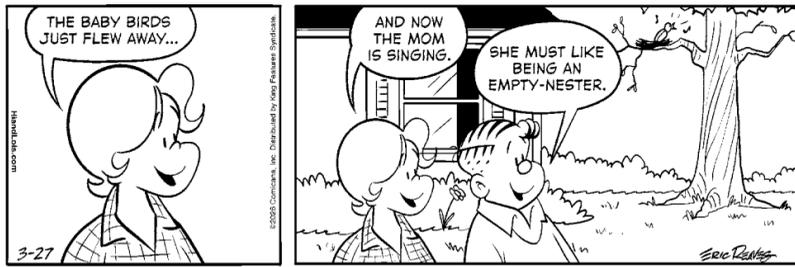
BLONDIE



BORN LOSER



HI AND LOIS



CRABGRASS



Waiting for a Commitment That May Never Come



ANNIE LANE

Dear Annie

Dear Annie: My best friend of 22 years recently started dating a man who "doesn't believe in marriage." She's 41, has always wanted children and froze her eggs at 38. He's 45, divorced twice and says labels are "a social construct."

They've been together eight months. She sold her condo and moved into his house -- which is solely in his name -- and now refers to his teenage sons as "our boys." Last week, she told me she's sure he'll "come around" on having a baby.

I'm skeptical she'll get everything she wants out of this relationship -- and the scary thing is that by the time she realizes that, it might be too late for her to have a healthy pregnancy.

Do I keep quiet and hope for the best, or say what I really think? -- Watching the Clock

Dear Watching the Clock: If you say nothing and things fall apart, you'll wish you had. If you say too much, she may stop listening altogether.

The middle ground is this: speak once -- calmly, lovingly and without accusation. Don't attack him or predict disaster. Just ask her whether this relationship truly aligns with the dreams she has for her life -- assuming her boyfriend does not change.

You cannot protect her from disappointment, but you can protect the friendship by being honest.

Dear Annie: I have fallen under the spell of high-end escorts. I wish I could explain it. I sort of stumbled into it because I didn't believe it was real, but the providers are unbelievable. Their care and attention are spectacular. I've never considered myself a sex addict, but I'm pretty sure I'm steering that way now.

I can't believe I'm in this position, and I can't believe such beautiful creatures exist. Everything is civil and consensual, so I don't feel like it is reckless behavior. And I'm having trouble resisting.

Is this something that requires self-discipline to conquer, or is it more common than I realize and there are resources to help? -- Helpless in ATL

Dear Helpless: A habit becomes a problem when it begins to control your time, money or emotional life.

Escorts are professionals whose job is to create an experience that feels attentive and intoxicating, which you've clearly felt. That doesn't make the experience

any less enjoyable, but it does mean the interaction is built around payment, not a real connection.

If you find yourself unable to resist returning or spending more than you intended, it's time to step back and ask what need this is filling. Self-discipline may help, but many people benefit from speaking with a doctor or therapist who specializes in compulsive behaviors to help work through it.

Pleasure isn't the problem. Losing control is. The goal is to make sure you're still the one in charge.

"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.

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ASTROGRAPH BY EUGENIA LAST

It's time to step outside your comfort zone and test the possibilities. Explore what you enjoy doing and consider how to take what brings you to the next level. Develop your skills and reach out to people in positions you see yourself pursuing. Life is about choices, and it's time to make some positive moves.

ARIES (March 21-April 19) -- Divvy up your time according to importance first and preference second. A professional change will encourage greater socialization and encounters with those who enrich your life.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) -- Change begins with you. Consider what makes life easier for you and start by altering your routine and surroundings. Fine-tune your life to ensure that you excel.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20) -- Initiate an exciting project. Call an old friend and catch up, attend a reunion or sign up for something that can enrich your mind, body or soul. Refuse to let what others do or say stand in your way.

CANCER (June 21-July 22) -- Avoid situations and people that make you feel vulnerable. Look for the good and the positive in everyone and follow your heart. Make your intentions and your feelings clear and explore what's possible.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) -- Do whatever it takes to reach your dreams. Doing some research or making plans with someone you want to get to know better will lift your spirits and give you hope. Take advantage of an opportunity.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) -- Use your skills,

experience, fortitude and a proactive approach, and rewards will follow. Raise your awareness, and you'll find the happiness that comes from doing something that benefits others.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23) -- Stick close to home and unwind and reconsider your priorities. The drive to combine the old with the new will help you piece together a timely and doable plan.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 22) -- Think big, muster up some energy and take physical action to ensure you reach your goal. Someone will push an emotional button. Don't ignore the message you receive.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23-Dec. 21) -- Focus on home and the people and pastimes that bring you joy. An investment or purchase may pique your interest, but you should be wary. Your best return will come from home improvements that save you money.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) -- Keep your eye on what's happening around you. Someone will get in your way or lead you astray if you give them the chance. You can have fun if you don't overdo it and know when to stop.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 19) -- You are in a better position than you realize. A healthy lifestyle change will motivate you to update your look, express your feelings and follow your dreams.

PISCES (Feb. 20-March 20) -- Sign up for something you enjoy doing and explore the possibilities. Size up situations quickly and move on until you connect with someone who feels like a good fit.

- ACROSS**
- 1 "I — your pardon?"
- 4 Persona — grata
- 7 Oodles
- 11 Stein filler
- 12 Skin opening
- 13 Margarine
- 14 — Luis Obispo, California
- 15 Rudiments
- 16 Ship of 1492
- 17 Full-arm tattoo
- 19 Quake
- 21 Bark
- 23 "— Ventura: Pet Detective"
- 24 Hurried
- 27 Totality
- 29 Water barrier
- 32 Singer Tori —
- 33 Worry
- 34 Brazilian city, familiarly
- 35 Swamp
- 36 Dreadful
- 37 Pedestal part
- 38 Explosive letters
- 39 — ideal
- 40 Not at all tipsy
- 41 Farm denizen
- 43 Tex-Mex order
- 45 Greek Muse
- 48 Employee
- 52 Mound
- 53 Imperfection
- 55 Wide way (Abbr.)
- 56 "— the Wild"
- 57 Banister
- 58 — Vegas
- 59 Put away
- 60 Halloween mo.
- 61 Loan charge (Abbr.)

- DOWN**
- 1 Singing voice
- 2 Israel's airline
- 3 Actor/dancer — Kelly
- 4 Peace prize name
- 5 Tolkien being
- 6 Promontory
- 7 Bar mixer
- 8 Green shade (2 wds.)
- 9 Island goose
- 10 Skyrocket
- 12 Macadamized
- 18 Spud buds
- 20 Stop
- 22 Talking bird
- 24 White water craft
- 25 "So be it!"
- 26 Singing voice
- 28 Jerry — Lewis
- 30 — -de-camp
- 31 Tether a boat
- 33 — Newton cookie
- 36 Actress — Moore
- 37 Portal
- 40 Sullen look
- 42 Give permission
- 44 Be in store
- 45 "— Is Spinal Tap"
- 46 Clue
- 47 Frizzy hairdo
- 49 Hindu goddess
- 50 Actress — Rachel Wood
- 51 Remainder
- 54 Fond du —, Wisconsin

