

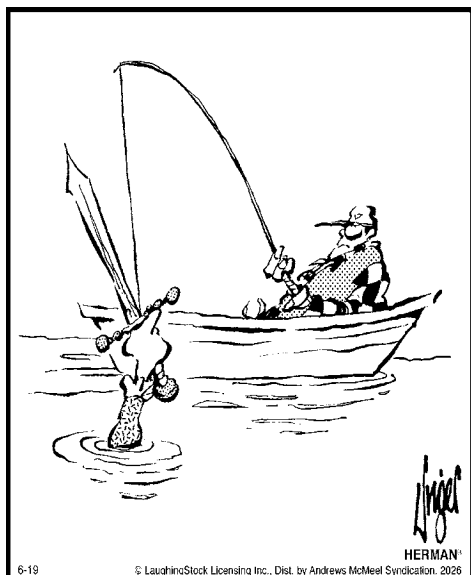
COMICS

MARMADUKE



"Forget it, Dad. Marmaduke is a fan of the Great Indoors."

HERMAN



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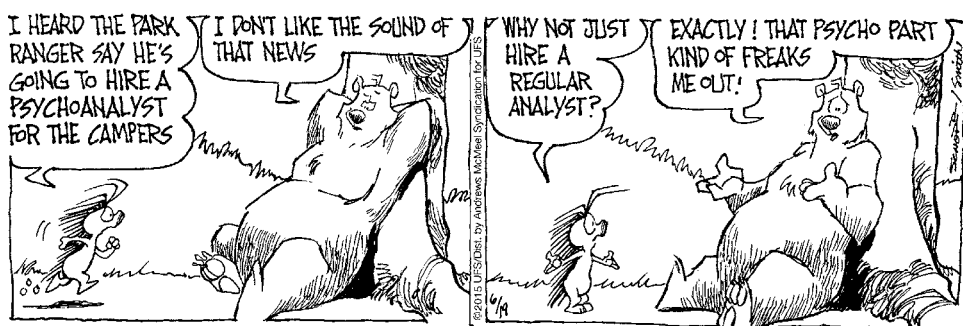
REALITY CHECK



FRANK & ERNEST



THE GRIZZWELLS



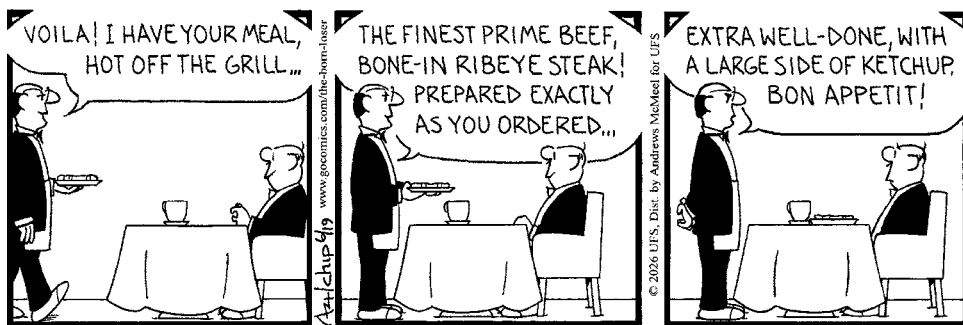
PICKLES



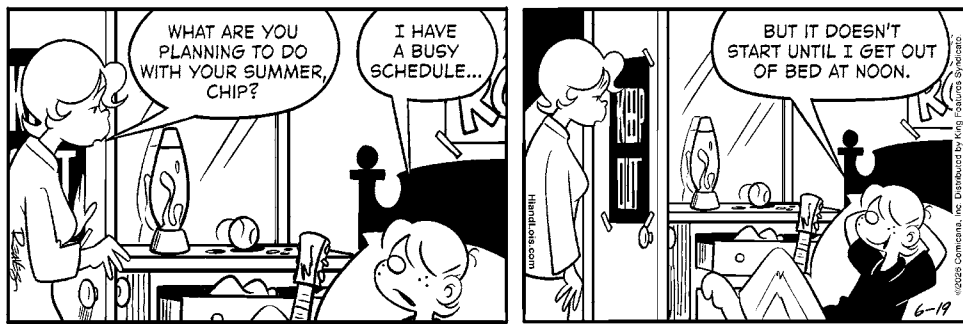
BLONDIE



BORN LOSER



HI AND LOIS



CRABGRASS



Flustered by Funeral Flowers



ANNIE LANE

Dear Annie

Dear Annie: I've been friends with "Jessie" for several years, but lately, I've been feeling like the friendship is one-sided. I'm always the one reaching out, making plans and putting in the effort. Jessie has been responding to my texts with one-word answers, if at all.

I value our friendship a lot, but I'm starting to question whether she feels the same way. How can I address this issue without seeming needy? Should I confront her or let it go and just hope it changes back to what it was like before? Any guidance would be appreciated. — Friendship on Uneven Ground

Dear Uneven Ground: Friendships are not transactional. There are naturally times when one friend gives more than the other. Perhaps Jessie is going through a difficult season of life and simply doesn't have the capacity to initiate contact.

Reach out to her; tell her that she has felt distant recently and that you miss her; and gently ask how she is doing.

If she brushes you off, and if the blatant imbalance in your relationship continues, then perhaps your friendship has run its course. Not everyone who comes into your life is meant to stay forever; that doesn't mean you can't treasure your friendship for what it was.

Dear Annie: My sister passed away last week at the young age of 63. She was cremated and had served in the military. We had a small military service for her, and at her service, there were a few bunches of flowers sent to the funeral home, only three to be exact. Two were sent to the funeral home from my nephew's company that he works for, and one was sent from an aunt and uncle. After the services, my aunt and uncle asked if they could have their flowers back!

I was appalled and caught off guard. My question is, was it OK for them to ask for their flowers back?! I always thought when you sent flowers to a funeral home, it was supposed to be a gift to the family. I'm just lost for words. How should I address this? Or should I just let it go? I have never asked for flowers back from any funeral I have sent flowers to. — Sincerely Appalled

Dear Appalled: You're not alone; I, too, am surprised by your aunt and uncle's request. Sending flowers to

loved ones who are grieving is a standard way to express sympathy and offer comfort after experiencing a loss. To ask for them back following the service seems insincere and, frankly, tacky.

While I can't imagine a particularly good reason for them to ask this of you, I'd advise that the path of least resistance is your best way forward. I hope you took one of the other two flower arrangements home with you, as a token of your sister's service instead. If she were still with us, I think she'd probably agree it's not worth fighting over either.

I am so sorry for your loss. Wishing you nothing but peace as you heal during this most difficult time.

"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

Happy Birthday: You're in a better position than you realize. Keep your emotions to yourself. Choose words that are bold, direct and factual, and you will cut through any negativity that comes your way. The cleaner and clearer your message and actions, the quicker the results.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20) — Put your energy where it counts, and forge ahead. Domestic improvements require attention to avoid emotional interference. Choose your battles wisely. Embrace what's yours to discover.

CANCER (June 21-July 22) — Be realistic about what you can and cannot do before you make promises. Being precise and finding out what others want from you will help you negotiate your way forward.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) — Let your imagination run wild, and you'll discover something about yourself and your capabilities that will point you in an interesting direction. A person you encounter today will play a role in helping you shape what's to come.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) — An unexpected turn of events will lead to an emotional challenge. Don't act in haste. Size up situations, consider options and put your energy into taking care of your responsibilities first.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23) — Keep a close watch over your investments, possessions and reputation. Not everyone will be on Team Libra. Hold your cards close to your chest, and fact-check every piece of information that comes your way.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 22) — Staying

power, along with vision and being able to reach your goals, will lead to satisfaction and gratitude. Look for unique outlets to disperse anxiety and anger.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23-Dec. 21) — A change is heading your way that may not be to your liking, but hindsight will make you think otherwise once the dust settles. Go with the flow, stick close to home and protect what matters most to you.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) — Search for opportunities, and speak passionately about how you feel, what you care about most and how you intend to proceed. Refuse to let your emotions lead to financial or personal loss.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 19) — Shift your attention to what's necessary before you make a move. Getting things right the first time is essential if you want to make the most of a volatile situation.

PISCES (Feb. 20-March 20) — Conversations with those with common goals will offer insight into how you can expand your interests and create a sustainable lifestyle that satisfies your needs and intellectual growth.

ARIES (March 21-April 19) — Take advantage of an opportunity to mingle with industry people who can help you further your professional journey or explore the possibilities of using your skills to generate extra income.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) — Persistence and good ideas will get you where you want to go, but not without emotional issues tagging along. Separate personal and professional dealings. Know your target.

- ACROSS**
- 1 A —, skip and a jump
 - 4 Charity
 - 8 Speedy steed
 - 12 "To — is human ..."
 - 13 Watery trench
 - 14 Judge's garment
 - 15 "Norma —"
 - 16 Skirt for a ballet dancer
 - 17 Strong wind
 - 18 Concludes
 - 20 Tummy
 - 22 "The — With the Dragon Tattoo"
 - 24 Trash can
 - 25 Stout horse
 - 26 Small dog
 - 27 Honest —
 - 30 Toward the stern
 - 32 Mark from injury
 - 34 Holiday drink
 - 35 Shelter
- DOWN**
- 1 "Present!"
 - 2 Long-armed ape
 - 3 Foretold
 - 4 Qty.
 - 5 Bodybuilder — Ferrigno
 - 6 — Hari
 - 7 Mulish
 - 8 Noble gas

Answer to this puzzle

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