

CLOSE TO HOME by John McPherson

Tyrannosaurus Ex.

Widow's companion generous to a fault

Dear Abby: I'm a widow and have been seeing someone for two years. He often stays at my home. He treats me well, but we have different tastes in furnishings. He brings me trinkets and tacky accessories from his home that I do not display. My spare bedroom closet is filled with these unwanted items. He knows I can afford to buy the things I like.

Recently he gave me two gifts — both new — neither of which I feel are appropriate for me. I appreciate the thought, but why would he continue to do this? He can clearly see they are not on display in my home, which would indicate I don't like or want them.

This man is not a cheapskate. He takes me for nice dinners, movies, brings flowers and chocolates as well. I don't want to hurt his feelings.

Should I continue to accept the gifts and pretend I'm thrilled? I don't want to appear to be ungrateful or spoiled, because he is kind and generous. — Jane Doe in the South

JEANNE PHILLIPS
DEAR ABBY

Dear Jane: Before this man spends any more money on gifts you put in a closet, have a talk with him. Explain that while you appreciate the thought behind the trinkets, you have different tastes, and suggest that the next time he wants to give you something that you pick it out "together." It doesn't take a crystal ball to see a yard sale in your future.

Dear Abby: My 85-year-old mother is in a dysfunctional relationship with my 50-year-old, alcoholic brother. He lives with her rent-free and abuses her emotionally and verbally. It has gotten physical at times, although she says he has never hit her.

He was recently arrested for domestic violence against his girlfriend, who is a drug addict. Mom has dialed 911 more than once, but the last time she told the officers it was a "mistake" because he's on probation, and she didn't want him to go to jail.

I'm at a loss about what to do because if I have social services look into it, I risk ruining my relationship with my mom, and she's not in the best of health. Should my siblings and I take a stand, step in and do something about it? — Wants To Help Mom

Dear Wants To Help: By all means! A report should be made to adult protective services in your state because elder abuse can involve emotional and financial exploitation of a vulnerable adult, as well as physical abuse.

Dear Abby: I am a Southern girl born in Virginia, now living in Florida. I have an accent. Why is it that people make fun of your accent when you are from the South, but not from up North? — Pondering in Florida

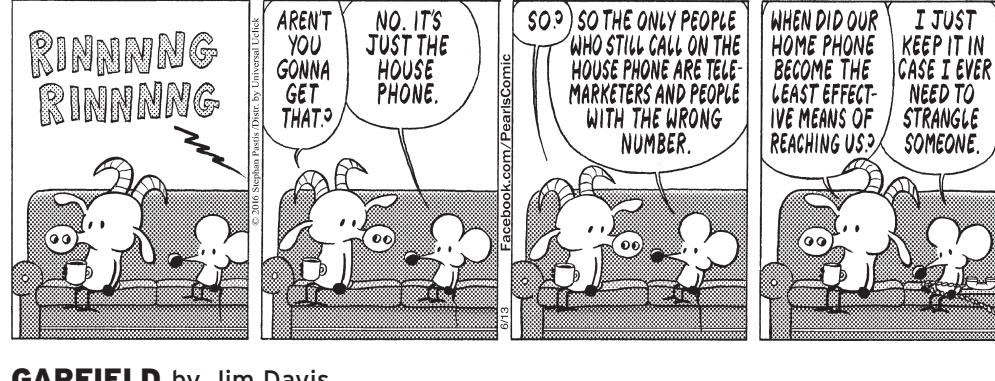
Dear Pondering: I'm not sure your assumption is correct. I have heard people imitate Boston and New York accents as well as Southern accents. Years ago, an Australian gentleman used his "American accent" on me, and had me fooled for about 15 minutes. I assume people do this because they think it's funny and not out of a desire to hurt anyone's feelings.

P.S. Isn't imitation the sincerest form of flattery?

Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

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