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Al Leeds, Sales Manager
Washington Post Writers Group
1150 15th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20071

Dear Mr. Leeds,

I am a 33 year old free-lance cartoonist. I have been successfully writing comic strips and illustrating articles for magazines, newspapers, and books for the last twelve years. If you have not heard of me it is probably because most of my work has appeared in Christian publications.

Thank you for taking the time to review my comic strip. There are many ways to describe DIPSTIK. On one hand, it is about the misadventures of a loveable high school nerd named Dipstik. He has two friends. Ralph is stable, encouraging, and somewhat of a zealot, who tries to draw Dipstik up out of his nerdness. And Chad, who would never really admit to being Dipstik's friend, is a popular ladies man who likes to keep Dipstik in his place for his own ego's sake.

On the other hand, DIPSTIK is about a lot of the loneliness and insecurity we all sometimes feel. Dipstik merely does all the embarrassing things and thinks all the stupid thoughts that we all do. He reveals the Dipstik in each of us. I chose the characters to be of high school age, not just to reach out to that age bracket, but because in adolescence, these traumatic events are most likely to occur with greater intensity and frequency.

Thirdly, DIPSTIK can be described as a Christian strip. Being an evangelical Christian myself, it is more natural for me to write a comic strip that has some characters who are Christian and for Christian values to be reflected. I do not mean reflecting these values in a reckless, offensive, imposing way, nor do I mean reflecting these values in a nauseating sugar-coated cutesy way either. My desire is to confront the tough issues head-on in this strip and provoke thought and laughter at the tension they create.

Since 1980 I have specialized in writing this way. I have created and maintained around a dozen comic strips for various Christian publications of varying denominations, ranging from a quarterly single panel strip to a weekly 14 panel strip. I have learned to humorously communicate the serious without being sacrilegious. For the secular audience, I have developed a full line of religious cartoon tracts which have sold nearly five million in the last four years. Here I have learned to humorously and effectively communicate a tough message without being offensive or without sacrificing the seriousness of the message. I have enclosed a folder of samples so you can see for yourself my qualifications to handle this subject matter.

Now for the big question . . . WHY WOULD A NEWSPAPER WANT TO BUY THIS COMIC STRIP?

- 1) First of all, the strip is funny, well drawn, and universally relatable.
- 2) There is a huge untapped market for a strip from the Christian viewpoint. According to a 1983 Gallup poll, 78% of

the respondents believed Jesus to be divine, of which 40 million claim to be part of the evangelical perspective. A recent Times Mirror Gallup poll found that newspaper readers preferred the old-fashioned qualities not found in many of today's new strips. A recent Hartford Seminary study showed a resurgence of religious interest as "the result of baby boomers returning to churches and synagogues as they enter middle age, raise families and confront questions about life, death and meaning that have confronted every generation (Kansas City Star, Feb. 8, 1987)." Clearly, there is a growing trend toward basic Christian values in this country.

3) Newspapers today are battling an image problem with the conservative Christian community. They perceive the news media as being very liberal biased and anti-Christian. My comic strip could help dispel that notion. Newspapers could use this strip to help recruit and maintain readership from the conservative Christian segment of the population.

Now to answer the question. . . WHY SHOULD YOUR SYNDICATE CONTRACT FOR THIS STRIP?

1) The above reasons should make it an easy sale. Plus, there are over 100,000 avid fans of mine from the various strips and tracts I produce who, when presented with the DIPSTIK concept, I am sure would love to write a letter to their local newspaper requesting DIPSTIK's subscription.

2) The licensing market alone could easily surpass revenue from the sale of the strip. There are around 400 different publication members of the Evangelical Press Association that might be interested in the second rights usage of the comic strip. Also, clip-art is a fast growing business in Christian circles. In fact, I have a 200 page clip-art book being released right now by Baker Book House that is expected to do well. DIPSTIK clip-art could do extremely well in servicing the 165,000 U.S. churches. But the largest licensing market could come from the Christian bookstores, one of the fastest growing retail industries. Right now, about half of the average store space is given to the sale of religious trinkets and paraphernalia. There is not much done in the way of Christian cartoon posters, calendars, comic books, dolls, etc. Most of what the stores carry along these lines are from the secular arena. There is not an identifiable character that these bookstores and the Christian community could truly call their own.

3) Finally, there is rabid fan support. Rabid fan support is young single women who read CATHY, or natural science people who follow the FAR SIDE. If I am allowed write this strip from the perspective I portray here, and not have to water it down into some harmless mush, you will have rabid fan support from the Christian community with missionary zeal. With rabid fan support, once a strip is sold to a newspaper it will stay sold. That makes it easier for you, the syndicate.

Thank you for taking the time to study this lengthy cover letter. I am confident you will enjoy my strip. I have plenty more strips sitting here waiting to be read, including some heavy hitting ones on Christian issues and a 22 strip series on "Dipstik falls in love". Let me know if you want to see them.

Sincerely,


Ron Wheeler

Enclosures