



Lisa Pytlík/Daily Nebraskan

Drake, Mary return to center

Search begins for eight others involved in telepathy experiment

It made sense, a lot of sense, and I wished I had thought of it. Mary and I were already on our way to the Regional Center, watching pedestrians fight an autumn wind from the safety of the aging bus we rode.

Bus service had really improved back when single occupant vehicles were banned, but the buses themselves had to be 30 years old.

We were packed on there with all kinds of people and a little reluctant to talk to each other. We were, after all, going to the Reg to seek out other people "like ourselves."

That was the way we talked about it around strangers, which was everyone. Who was going to believe us and our story about making telepathic contact with each other? Who would buy a story about being kidnapped and having boosters put in our heads which resulted in hallucinations and voices and other stuff?

We knew there were eight others like us. The company told us all about the whole program, secure in their prominent position and certain no one would ever listen to us.

And we figured the others would be thinking like we were and trying to reach the other people they sometimes felt in their heads. What better place than the 'Reg to look for people everyone else would call crazy?

We couldn't get in. I don't know what we expected. We got off the bus and walked to the closest building, left without any further steps in the plan.

A guard drone picked us up. We followed it to the front desk and waited for someone to show up. After about 20 minutes, three big guys stalked into the waiting area.

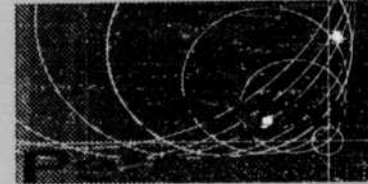
"Visiting hours are over for the

day," one of them announced in a tired, challenging tone.

Mary and I waited for each other to speak, and my impatience broke through.

"We were wondering if you might have had any new admissions in the past few days. Past few weeks, maybe."

"No one comes in without a court order. Voluntaries have to have the money, and if they've got



it, they all go to the private hospitals. Looking for a friend of yours?"

"Sort of." That was Mary. "Several of them, actually. Lots of hallucinations, maybe some voices. Schizo types."

One of the men called the first one over and whispered to him, then returned to face us.

"Joe here heard about a couple people come looking around like you last week. You wanna tell me what's going on?"

I started to answer but Mary shook her head and started for the door. One of the three moved toward me and I hurried after Mary.

"That was just weird!"

We both laughed, feeling secure again on another bus. It might have been the same one as before — all the people looked the same.

"It was just weird. Those three guys. It was too much."

We were headed back downtown, out of ideas and just a little shaken.

"Let's get a drink," I offered.

"Your best idea yet, Drake."

We settled into a booth in the darkest corner of a very dark bar with a large draw in front of us both. There were a dozen bars like it on O Street, and they all lasted about a year before getting shut down, usually for selling drugs without a permit.

Between the blaring band and the men and women yelling at the holostripper, there was no chance of us talking. It took a few moments, but Mary and I made contact.

To anyone watching, we would have looked like any other bored, reticent couple in for a last drink before drifting apart, heads hung and drinks untouched.

Together again. Uphere, I mean. Don't fool around. What are we going to do? You know those other eight have to be out there somewhere.

What about the zoo?

The zoo? What are you talking about?

That's where I like to go to sort things out. It's the safest place to take a walk these days.

HEY! Hey! You're there. Listen to me.

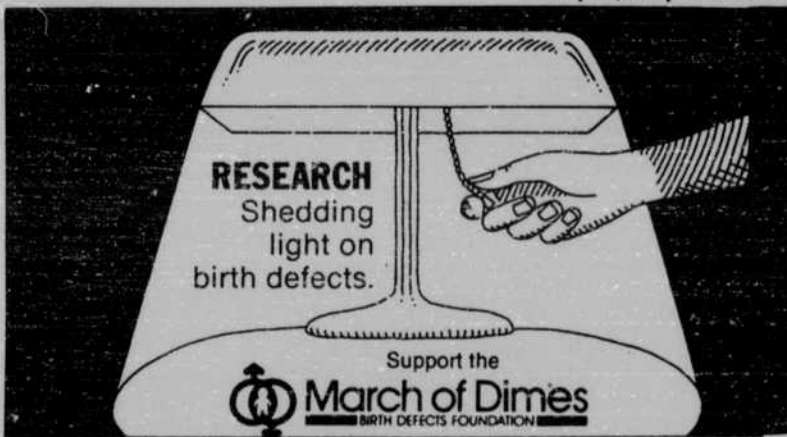
Mary and I looked up.

"Who was that?" she mouthed through the noise.

"She's got to be in here," I mouthed back. We stood up and looked around. We saw her at the same time, and there was no question.

Spilling her own drink, the woman pointed to one of the unisex bathrooms and we followed, sure that things had begun to fall together.

Peterson is a senior psychology and philosophy major and a Daily Nebraskan reporter and columnist. This is the eighth in a continuing series.



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