

ALAN PHELPS

Water bandits nothing to fear

The water bandits finally sent my roommates and me the FINAL notice, specifying exactly what time of day Thursday our water would be shut off.

I guess five months and 11 days is about the longest a person can go in this town without paying the water bill.

It wasn't exactly the first "final" notice we received. That arrived sometime back in November or so. Another final notice appeared in the ol' mailbox last December, and we might have gotten something in January.

I think that last notice probably was lost to one of the ferocious dust rhinos wandering about the house, though.

But this final, final notice seemed to be the most final of them all.

"Avoid the inconvenience of being without water," the letter intoned.

My roommate, Greg, decided that having no water would be something of an inconvenience, so he was forced to get up early to personally pay off the water bandits before 9 a.m. in their hideout at the County-City Building.

I don't know if having our own water is worth all that trouble, myself. The only thing the water company does for me is keep my bathroom floor squishy wet because of some mysterious leak none of us have been able to locate.

I thank the wonderful water bandits every time I have to swim through that mess, my own personal Lake Edna. Perhaps you have one in your neck of the woods as well.

Maybe I should have stopped Greg this morning from going kowtow before those slimy water sprites. After all, I can drink all the free water I want on campus. No one would really mind if I just sucked on one of these drinking fountains all day long, and I could take showers at the Rec Center or some dorm.

For a time this summer when I had nowhere to live in Lincoln, a friend and I considered buying a van and a parking permit and hunkering down in the Area 20 lot. No water bandits



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would ever find me there.

The water bandits, by themselves, wouldn't be so bad. However, the cable bandits, phone bandits, gas bandits and power bandits all want a piece of the action. Every time the mail arrives, it's always "This will be disconnected, that will be disconnected," whine, whine, whine.

Gosh, I wonder what those nasty bandits are going to do to me? I hope they aren't planning to SEND ME ANOTHER LETTER. I'm so nervous I feel like locking myself in the bathroom and passing out.

But then I'd probably drown in Lake Edna.

Oh, they're all the same, dem bandits — whole lotta bark and not much bite. Minnegasco is the only one we've paid in at least two months, and yet I enjoy the same modern comforts as anyone.

Sometimes I run through my commute, turning on lights, jacking up the thermostat up to 80 or 90 and laughing at the bills piled up in the living room.

"Laugh, laugh," I cry, sweat pouring off my body from all the lights and

heat. "Laugh, laugh, laugh." I turn our major appliances, flush the toilet 500 times and throw open the windows to drafts.

Then, for a moment or two, I think of Neil Diamond and smile — no reason for that, really, just something I do.

One utility I do not consider a bandit is the helpful garbage service. I think we've only paid the garbage people once since August, and every week. THERE THEY ARE AT THE CURB. Our trash disappears for NO reason.

Apparently, all one has to do to rid yourself of rubbish is ask politely. It is quite nice of them, in my opinion, to empty out Bruiser, our garbage barrel, so many times for so little.

Even the other, far more sinister agencies have a few good points. For instance, the cable and phone bandits not only let us get away with awfully late payments, but actually beg us to sign up for OTHER services we forget to pay for, such as Showtime or Caller ID.

C'mon you bandits! Mail all the "final" notices you fancy — we'll throw you a couple scraps and send ya packin'.

Hell, all the bills are in Greg's name, anyhow.

Even when we do occasionally decide to pay off one monopoly or another, they resist. The last time I paid the phone bill, an operator-type lady called me up and claimed Lincoln Telephone and Telegraph wouldn't be able to cash my check made out to "phone bandits."

"You cashed the one made out to 'phone phreaks' last time," I countered. But there is no arguing with a bureaucracy.

At least we don't have to worry about the water bandits again until July.

Phelps is a junior news-editorial major, the Daily Nebraskan managing editor and a columnist.

RAINBOW ROWELL

TV sets high standard for love

Valentine's Day is coming up. I know because my boyfriended roommate told me.

She knows because she's in love. Many of my friends are in love, actually. They whine and they coo and they change their voices when they answer the phone.

They take conversation hearts personally and get sappy when they listen to Air Supply. And they constantly find new and exciting ways to use words like "Dan" and "Kevin" in every sentence.

Yup, they're in Love. So Valentine's Day is a big deal. It's an excuse to crank up the schmooze and eat lots of chocolate.

Even when they're not in love, Valentine's Day is a big deal. They cry and reassure each other that there are millions of fish in the sea.

Or they wax poetic about the freedom of being single. The wonderful times spent with friends.

I play along. I know all the lines and when to use them.

"He's great. I'm so happy for you."

"Don't worry, your Mr. Right is out there somewhere."

"Men, who needs them?"

But, the truth is, I have no idea what I'm saying. I don't have a problem with love and hearts and stuff — I just don't understand it all.

I think I missed out on something during my formative years. Maybe I was gone the day they discussed "Why You Want to Spend the Rest of Your Life With Someone" in junior high health class. That was probably the same day they made us run the mile.

Or, like my many other innumerable character flaws, it could be the result of poor role models. When in doubt, blame it on your parents, I always say.

While all of my boyfriend-monger friends were watching their parents relate and bond as parents do, I was



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watching "The Love Boat."

When their subconsciouses were hard at work developing "happy-ever-after with the one I love" goals, I was parked in front of the tube thinking how great it would be to smooch with Scott Baio on the Promenade Deck.

When I heard "Come aboard, we're expecting you," I knew that velvety voice was singing for me.

Marriage? Children? Split-level house and picket fence? Not when I can take exciting jaunts to sunny Acapulco with an out-of-work sitcom casanova every week.

Why do dinner and a movie when I could party with Charo 'til the cows come home? Oochie-coochie!

Forget a lifetime partnership. "The Love Boat" gang taught me that the best relationships last about 50 minutes, except during Christmas specials.

About 14, when "The Love Boat" was long gone, I realized I would never eat at the captain's table, but it was too late. The damage was done.

In my Love Boat daydreams, I'd

already met the man for me. There's no turning back now.

How can I learn to love an ordinary mortal man when HE lurks somewhere in the back of my heart?

I don't know his name. I can't even make out his face, really. Just his white shorts, long socks and blinding smile.

Maybe it's Gopher or Isaac, I don't know.

Maybe my mystery man is Captain Stubing himself. Say what you like about Jean-Luc Picard — we all know which sexy, bald captain came first.

I don't care who he is — as long as he's not Doc. Even at age 7, I saw through that womanizer.

My love's name isn't important. It's the way he treats me: "Come, my Pacific Princess," he whispers, "moonlight is just right for shuffleboard."

He buys me sweets from the gift shop, and every time I leave his side, he throws streamers.

I know I'll never meet him or anyone like him, especially if I stay in Nebraska. Maybe I would if I moved to a coastal state.

No. The best thing for me to do is let go of my sailor Snufflupagus. He's not real and he never will be.

Probably, I should adjust my expectations. If I try, I could learn to love a man who never wears deck shoes.

I can do it. There must be a 12-step program out there to help me, and probably a book, too. "Women Who Love Love Boat Too Much."

And then love . . . won't hurt anymore. There'll be open smiles and friendly shores . . . The Love Boat soon will be making another run.

Drat, I'm doing it again. This might be harder than I thought.

Rowell is a junior news-editorial, advertising and English major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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