

DEB McADAMS

Boyfriend gets seal of approval

I took my boyfriend home to meet my folks. I don't make a habit of mixing boyfriends and folks. There's always the danger that they'll end up on speaking terms. And guess what they'll talk about?

I decided to take that chance after Stephen and I had spent a grimy evening throwing sandbags at the Mississippi. I told him I might go home over Labor Day, and I asked if he'd like to go with me.

He said, "Sure." And there it was, with a life of its own. A commitment I'd made by opening my mouth and letting a thought escape.

"You're nervous as hell, aren't you?" Stephen asked as we headed west on I-80.

"Look, there's the glass-bottom-boat ride that dad took us on when we were kids," I said, communicating my need for him to shut up.

We pulled off at the Cozad exit and checked into the Circle S Motel. The desk clerk was a short, round woman with a gray ponytail. She giggled and said it was none of her business but still asked if we were married.

Stephen got that look on his face that people use when they're waiting to license their car.

A taller woman stood behind the short, snoopy one. She asked if I was Debbie Berryman. I hadn't used that name since it went from a Class B high school byline to the Dawson County Court Report. A plummet from grace sells a lot of coffee in a small town. Yes, I was Debbie Berryman. My, how you've changed, she said. Well, I thought, a gal can't be a suicidally depressed teen-ager forever.

They checked us into the bridal suite.

I called my mother to tell her we had arrived. She said my dad was at the pool hall. My dad had been going to the pool hall from 4 to 6 for almost every afternoon of my lifetime.

A handful of regulars lined the bar at the pool hall. They all turned around when we walked in. Stephen is a smart-looking Italian with perfect hair.



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He doesn't appear to be a man whose friends have been known to pec on car tires.

My dad bought us beers and started talking about my ex-husband, Spike. Spike had bought a new pickup, and he had just been out to show it to my folks. I looked at Stephen. I thought he might be getting ready to give me bus fare. My dad left to shoot.

One of the regulars came over and introduced himself to Stephen. He wanted to know if Stephen was in the mob. Stephen told him no, he wasn't in the mob. That's what all the mob guys say.

I, a woman shackled up in the local bridal suite with a Mafioso while her ex-husband was driving around town in his new pickup, left the pool hall. Stranger things have been known to happen, but not very often.

We drove out to the farm to see my mom. Her home is an unrivaled showcase of individualistic decorating. The entire color spectrum is represented in her house. I didn't worry about Stephen's reaction. Italians put orange and green together, and they carpet walls.

My mother had added a lamp to her living room. What had been a typical floor lamp now supported, in mid-air, a 30-year-old toy spring-pony. He was yellow with a painted, black mane, eyebrows and hooves. He had a red bow on his tail, a string of pearls for reins and a sock monkey riding on his back.

Some men meet their girlfriends' mother and realize that the family's

women gain weight as they age. Stephen realized that our family's women practice the Elvis Presley style of decorating.

After dinner, we drove to the cemetery. None of my boyfriends has ever taken me to his cemetery, and I'm beginning to think that some people don't visit cemeteries. Five generations of my father's family are laid to rest at Walnut Grove. We walked around, and I told Stephen about dead people.

The next day was Sunday so the men watched football. It's a great equalizer among American men. They can all agree that football players get paid too much money.

My mother watches football because she loves to bet. She and dad have been pathologically frugal for most of their lives. Now they are both pushing 70 and living dangerously. My mom had just lost \$40 on the tables at Fort Randall, S.D. She told us that she wanted to go to dealer school and open a casino near the interstate. It's nice to know what to do with mom if anything ever happens to dad.

Stephen and I had to leave after a couple of football games. Mom loaded us down with fresh potatoes, cookies and homemade plum jelly. She squeezed the daylight out of Stephen. He had passed. If she continues her precipitous gambling habits, she may need a friend in the mob.

McAdams is a sophomore news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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RAINBOW ROWELL

A life 'Destroyed by the Bell'

My name is Rainbow. —Hello, Rainbow.— And I have been watching "Saved by the Bell" for three years.

Oh, it all started innocently enough. In the beginning, I never watched alone. I'd "just happen" to wander into the living room when my 12-year-old sister was tuned in.

"I can't believe you're watching this," I'd gripe and make like I just might turn it to CNN if she wasn't careful. I'd sulk behind a National Geographic during commercials.

Before long, concerned friends started asking too many questions, but I pushed them away.

"Leave me alone. I don't have a problem. Sure, I was in the room, but I didn't watch."

One thing led to another. What was just a social habit became more personal. I started watching alone.

At first, I'd just steal a minute or two in between "60 Minutes" and the "MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour." A pause when switching channels. Just a taste, really.

I'd come home from class and zip through the cable fare. "Headline News," "Yo! MTV Raps," "The Jeffersons" reruns. Everything else was so bland. Nothing else gave me that "Saved By The Bell" buzz, that lift to keep me going.

From seconds to minutes, from minutes to hours. By the end of this summer, I found myself watching as many as three episodes a day.

It was so easy. I didn't have to plan my schedule around "Saved by the Bell." It was always there for me. On KPTM and WTBS. On the Superstation and Saturday mornings on NBC.

When I reached out, it was there. In the mornings, the evenings. And in the afternoons, when most half-hour



Eventually, my friends stopped calling. Even "90210" watchers don't want to be seen with a Bell-head.

shows wore off and the craving was almost too much to bear, "SBTB" came through for me with back-to-back episodes.

I knew it was wrong. I was warned. I'd heard the rumors, seen the public service announcements.

"This is your brain. This is your brain on 'Saved by the Bell.'" —

But once I started, I couldn't stop. Laugh if you will, but "Saved by the Bell" filled a void in my life. Suddenly I was happier than I'd been since they canceled "Kids Incorporated."

But it still wasn't enough. Even after two hours of classics — like the time Zach and Skreetch used subliminal messages to win Kelly and Lisa's hearts — I felt empty inside.

I found myself watching the hard stuff — "Saved by the Bell, the New Class" and "The College Years." Even cheap "Saved by the Bell" imitators.

As "The Bell" consumed more and more of my waking hours, I could hardly function anymore.

"Class? I can't go to class. Mid-term, schmidterm. Today Slater and Jessie get trapped in the basement and he asks her to the prom. What are you thinking?"

Eventually, my friends stopped calling. Even "90210" watchers don't want to be seen with a Bell-head.

And I can't blame them. I don't like the show either. The acting is horrible. The characters are neither believable nor likable.

They are walking, talking stereotypes. A jock, a nerd, a brain, a bimbo, another bimbo and a smarty-pants. They wear clothes that I never see real people wear. They say things that no one with any pride would say.

Yet, to my shame and disgust, if the nation went to war, I'd probably find a station — and believe me, there would be at least one — that was showing three consecutive episodes of "The Bell" before I'd watch the news, even MTV news.

Maybe secretly, deep down in the darkest part of my soul — the same part where I sometimes resent my parents and want to be a pharmacist — I wish my life was more like the show. Maybe I want to be more like Kelly or Jesse.

Probably not. So why do I watch? The theme song is catchy, but is that enough?

Maybe it doesn't matter. All that counts now is that I know I have a problem and I'm going to turn my life around.

I'm going to return to the land of the living. I'm going to watch more than just "Saved by the Bell." I'm going to watch "Blossom," too.

After awhile, I might even get back to class. But I don't want to bite off more than I can chew.

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