

RAINBOW ROWELL

Student discovers parking plot

I've got a problem with parking on this university. (Whine, whine, whine, where are my violins?)



Don't these parking planners watch television? Every decent action adventure has someone being stalked in a parking garage.

Everyone at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln has a problem with parking.

My woes started at the end of my freshman year when I bought my first car. I spent most of my time thereafter circling the lot outside my residence hall. I never found a space there. Usually I parked in another lot in a galaxy far, far away, affectionately nicknamed "rape lot."

This year I invested in a reserved space, so my parking hassles have been reasonably limited. Sometimes, I consider moving off campus, but the thought of trying to find a parking place every day gives me "Falling Down" nightmares.

So I've never been too angry with the parking gods at UNL — even when they gave me a \$50 ticket because my parking permit fell off my rearview mirror. I took care of it by talking to a not-so-very-nice person in the office who not-so-graciously lowered my ticket to \$5.

Until yesterday ... when I got a letter from the parking people telling me my old, expensive parking permit now costs twice as much. TWICE as much. Not just a few dollars, or even \$10 more, but \$150 more.

I can't understand what on earth could motivate a 100 percent increase, a doubling of parking fees.

Oh, I suppose maybe I do know. I've read about plans for a parking garage and some other stuff, but I didn't think they meant it. And I didn't think they would take my money to help build it.

I keep waiting for someone from the parking staff to call me wailing, "Sike."

I can understand an increase to pay for paving and lighting lots. That seems decent. If you park in the Abel/Sandoz lot on a wet night, you must trudge ankle-deep in the dark through mutant gray mud that will soon cover

everything you own.

But a parking garage? I won't use a parking garage. Those things scare me. Don't these parking planners watch television? Every decent action adventure has someone being stalked in a parking garage. It would take a lot of those K-Mart blue-light special phones to get me into a parking garage.

I can't believe they — the nameless university parking bad guys — want my money, any of my money, to build a parking garage. I refuse to. There must be another answer. Perhaps they're really using it to feed starving children or to buy lots of cocktail wienies for their meetings. I'd sleep better tonight if that were the case.

Besides, you can't double prices from one year to the next. This isn't post-World War I Germany. I'm enough of a mindless consumer that a \$20 — or even a \$50 — increase probably wouldn't have discouraged me. But a \$150 increase yanks me out of my usual trance, screaming "Whoa!"

Perhaps the parking schemers are just being trendy. "But Golly, Mr. Spanier, all the other departments are raising prices. How come the athletic department gets to do it, huh? Huh? You love them more, don't you? Waaaaaaa."

Most of the other permit prices are going up, too, but not to the same degree. It almost makes me think somebody doesn't want anyone to have a reserved stall. That somebody wants

me to walk three blocks in the dark, by myself — or ride some stupid shuttle bus, like I live at Worlds of Fun or something.

Wait 'til I tell my mom. I'll probably end up buying a ridiculously over-priced permit just because I know they don't want me to. Oh, I'm on to them now.

I'll have to sell my vital organs on the black market or become a chimney sweep to afford it, but I understand the price of spite, and I'm willing to pay it.

All of my problems would be over if I never left campus. Then I wouldn't need one of their stupid spaces, or even a car.

My car's been nothing but trouble anyway. Half the time, it's sitting in my dad's garage awaiting repairs. (For the record, he doesn't charge me anything.)

And I don't like driving it. Everytime I get into that machine my potential to do damage shoots sky-high.

If I stop paying attention for one tiny second, to read a billboard or dig for change in my front seat, I could lose control and take out three or four other cars, easy. I'm endangering lives every time I go to Super Saver.

This would keep me home, but I know that when I get to Super Saver, they have a huge parking lot and they'll let me park for free. Too bad they don't have a football team.

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E. HUGHES SHANKS

Aliens are in eye of beholder

I've always wondered, how different could aliens from outer space be if they are basically humanoid in form and speak the same languages as us? Then again, where would the "Federation" be if Captain Kirk had not been physically capable of having sex with all of those alien females?



Are we so limited in our abilities to see differences that even our fictional alien creations have to be basically like us?

Why is it that aliens on television and in film usually speak English? Only the most astute science fiction buffs would be able to name the few movies that have had non-English speaking aliens. Aliens that don't speak English usually die.

It seems the best filmmakers can do to create an alien is apply latex masks, skin blemishes and strange-looking heads and change skin color.

I don't consider myself an expert, but as far as I can tell, "Dune" is the only recent major film I can think of that had basically civilized non-English speaking aliens.

But then again, where would we be without Spock's raised eyebrow? What would life be like without the subtle heave of a Klingon's chest while he's lying through his jagged teeth?

There are other films that have had aliens who didn't speak at all — the "Alien" trilogy, for example, and "The Brother From Another Planet." The implications from those films are that if you don't speak English, it's kill or be killed.

It seems to be a recurring theme from my childhood, when Greeks and Romans always spoke with British or American accents. It was just like today, when our images of foreign beings turn out to be just like us.

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I didn't trust the British filmmakers of the '60s who seemed determined to tell us that aliens were like us. Nor did I fall for the idea that Greeks and Romans were British. I believe the Western Europeans were

living in caves during Greek and Roman times anyway.

"What are aliens really like?" I wondered. I can not with clear conscience trust Hollywood's version of aliens any more than I could the Romans with British accents or the American-accented Greeks.

I've always wanted aliens to speak their own language. I would have liked to see closed-captioning for the alien-impaired, just for those of us who didn't believe Aliens used English syntax.

I would also have liked to see aliens who looked more alien. If you think about it, most aliens have had two arms, a neck, elbows and knuckles.

I mean really. How alien is it to have eyes, ears, a nose and two feet? What is the message we're getting? It sounds awfully fishy to me, that we may be so limited in our thinking that we can't perceive physical differences.

If you think about it, the basic description of most aliens is the same as the basic human description. What would happen if a visitor from another planet did not walk at all? What if they didn't stand or sit the way we do?

What if aliens didn't have arms or could not fit through our doors or climb stairs? Then again, are these really alien characteristics? Something's wrong here.

I suddenly realized that I was going too far to escape reality. I see people every day who would have fit my sickening limited view of what a

alien could be like.

Don't we have people among us who are challenged by their physical characteristics? Don't we have people among us who are thought of as different because they look different?

I think it is insensitive to proclaim what constitutes alien attributes. Especially when I share the world with people with those very features every day.

I began to realize that what really makes someone or something alien is in me. Not "on" them.

Most of us can describe our favorite movie alien. Few of us could describe a day in a wheelchair. Not many of us can imagine a walk across campus on crutches. How many of us can describe the feeling when someone crosses to the other side of the street to be avoided?

I can't know what aliens are like. Maybe I don't need to know. I can't even deal with what's "normal." But I realize there are people I pass every day who are alien to me. By experiencing them, I can discover that what is alien today can be familiar tomorrow.

From now on, I'll remember that a physical characteristic doesn't make someone alien. And so what if Quark (from "Star Trek: Deep Space Nine") looks and sounds an awful lot like my sister.

Shanks is a graduate student and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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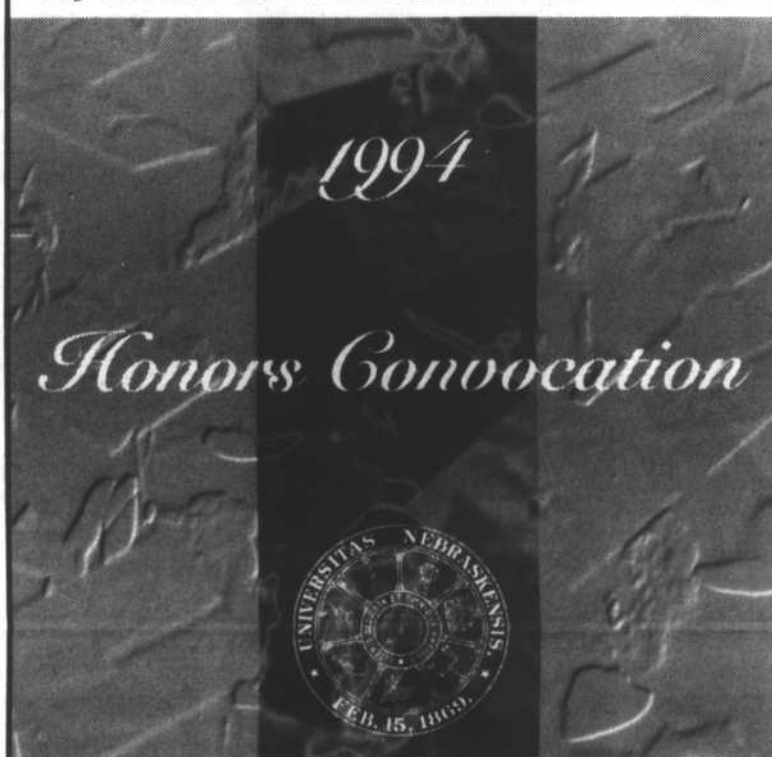
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