

## Dreaming of sleeping alone

For the first time in 23 years, I will be living on my own. No parents, no siblings and, most importantly, no roommates.

It's not that I haven't tried to have my own place. I've been trying for the last five years.

I came to the university all ready to move into my single room that had been paid for and validated and everything.

I found some big New Jersey track star named Bob lounging in the room that should have been my own.

There must have been some mistake, I thought. The university wouldn't just shove somebody else into my room without telling me first.

Hee hee hee. (Forgive me, I had to pause and laugh at my freshman ignorance.)

Now, don't get me wrong. Bob and I had some great times together, and I really liked the big lug, but I was a chemical engineering major at the time (hee hee hee — that ignorance again) and his evening activities made it hard to study and sleep.

I don't have a problem with roommates who drink, but Bob came stumbling into the room drunk every night, singing the words to Queensryche songs at the top of his javelin-throwing lungs.

If that wasn't enough, Bob had made it his goal to impregnate at least 48 percent of the women on campus — five feet away from where I uselessly attempted to sleep.

After my fruitless efforts to live alone in the dorms, I admitted defeat for a while and moved into a house with some "friends."

I put "friends" in quotes because



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of the weird phenomena that I call the Friend Jekyll and Roommate Hyde syndrome that inevitably occurs when you live with someone you used to get along with.

You may think you'll be able to tolerate their childish habits and lack of responsibility, but after about three weeks of raking away dirty laundry to get to the washing machine and chipping food off of plates in order to eat, you'll probably change your tune.

The next year, I thought I had it made. Two of the roommates (the ones who paid their bills) and I rented a really cheap house, right close to campus.

It should have been perfect. It was the Isle Broddick.

Some of you may have heard rumors of this den of iniquity that I called home for two years. Others of you (perhaps the more fortunate ones) have not.

Suffice it to say, the riffraff that had plagued us at our old abode slinked over to our new house and resumed the games of milking free rent, free food and free rides to the plasma center.

But last May I became a free man (or so I thought in my bewildered little mind). I rented a one-bedroom apartment.

One bedroom.

One. There was no room for anyone else but me.

Wrong. Immediately after I moved in, my good friend Kevin lugged over his grocery sacks of belongings and settled himself on my couch.

I love the little guy, but the only thing he's been able to call a serious job in his life has been a 30-day stint at Harris labs.

Harris pays well, but it's not the most steady career in the world.

But luckily Kevin found something much more important than a free place to crash.

God. Kevin is currently enjoying a yearlong Christian drug and alcohol rehabilitation at Teen Challenge in sunny South Dakota.

Kevin found God and I found myself alone in my apartment — for about two days.

An uncle of mine who had been living in Lincoln was kicked out of his house by his schizophrenic wife and took up residence in my one bedroom.

At least Kevin had broken in the couch for me.

But at long last, after months of legal battles and sore backs from sleeping on the sofa, my uncle has been granted his house in the settlement.

In less than two weeks, I will have my apartment all to myself.

It will be quiet.

It will be enjoyable.

It will be lonely.

At least until Kevin gets out of South Dakota.

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## Capital punishment simply 'just deserts'

Surrounded by relatives of murder victims, Gov. George Pataki, fulfilling a campaign pledge, used the pen of a slain police officer Tuesday and signed legislation making New York the 38th state to restore the death penalty since the Supreme Court allowed executions to resume after banning them in the early 1970s.

There were the usual American Civil Liberties Union vows to continue the fight, and last-minute speeches from liberal members of the state legislature. State Sen. Richard Dollinger of Rochester took a syringe from his desk and said: "What we're going to do today is we are going to fill this with what I think is the greatest venom present in our society today: pure and simple revenge. That is what this is all about."

This legislation isn't about revenge. It is about justice, or just deserts. And the greatest venom in our society isn't executing murderous criminals, but the loss of respect for human life that has led to the current crime wave. The legislation is a response to liberals' devaluation of the dignity of man to the level of a head of lettuce. This view says that humankind may be more complex than plants and animals, but ultimately we are all products of a grand evolutionary process made up of material and energy that has been shaped by pure chance in a random universe.

Isn't that what they have been teaching in our schools and culture? Doesn't Carl Sagan believe that the "cosmos" is all there is? Hasn't Darwin's "survival of the fittest" become the secular gospel?

Why then do the liberals mourn for those who are about to die for committing acts that in previous times would have brought them to the gallows for their and society's own good? Capital punishment is not about revenge or deterrence. It is about retribution. It even has great benefit for the criminal, because it forces him to confront the serious nature of his act and his place of residence in the next life.

In his brilliant essay "The Humanitarian View of Punishment," C.S. Lewis attacks the moral squishiness that has caused society to erase distinctions between good and evil: "It appears at first sight that we



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have passed from the harsh and self-righteous notion of giving the wicked their deserts to the charitable and enlightened one of tending the psychologically sick. What could be more amicable?"

"The humanitarian theory," continued Lewis, "removes from punishment the concept of desert. But the concept of desert is the only connecting link between punishment and justice. It is only as deserved or undeserved that a sentence can be just or unjust."

Finally, said Lewis, "The humanitarian theory ... removes sentences from the hands of jurists whom the public conscience is entitled to criticize and places them in the hands of technical experts whose special sciences do not even employ such categories as rights or justice."

This has been the central flaw in our modern criminal justice system. Murderers, once thought to be deserving of death because they killed a fellow human being made in the image of God, are now just misunderstood, abused, dysfunctional victims of an unjust and uncaring society. No one, from murderers to those who commit less serious crimes, is personally accountable for his actions anymore. There is always an explanation, an excuse, a defense for one's behavior, from football injuries to shrunken brains to child molestation to chemical dependency. While in some cases these may be valid explanations, they can never absolve a person of his actions.

New York state, which invented the electric chair and will now employ the more "humane" method of lethal injection, must now reform the legal system that allows endless appeals at a cost of millions to taxpayers. Gov. Pataki should be congratulated for following through on a promise to do what his two predecessors refused to do: return a sense of justice and "just deserts" to the state criminal justice system.

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## English workshop is unjust

Hey folks, cheer up! Summer is around the corner! It's a cheerful thought, even though it is very hard to believe, considering the recent sub-zero days and all the slush outside. But it's time to plan for the summer.

What would people like to do this summer? Tons of fun things — roller blade, bike ride, picnic in the park, go skinny-dipping, bask in the sun, snooze in the shade ...

Some people might choose to be totally hedonistic, and others might want to combine some work with the inherent pleasure that summer brings along. But whatever anyone wants to do, they have the choice to do so, and no one is going to prevent them from doing so.

Well, last summer I was prevented from doing any of the many things that I wanted to do! In the second five-week session last summer, I had to attend a three-week 8 a.m.-to-4 p.m. workshop for international teaching assistants — the voiceless and often-mistreated bunch of people who are referred to as ITAs. ITAs are forced to attend this workshop and, later on, pass a panel presentation to be able to teach a University of Nebraska-Lincoln class.

The ITA institute is a bundle of contradictions. It is funny that this institute, which aims to "prepare an international graduate student to teach American students," does not require English-speaking international students — those of British or Australian nationality — to take the class. How can a British or an Australian student know how to teach American students?

It is also funny that the university requires only international students to take teaching classes and prove their "teaching skills" at a panel presentation. Meanwhile, American TAs are not required to go through any such "teaching



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skills" testing or preparation.

So the bottom line depends on whether or not you were born into an English-speaking family. If your native tongue is English, then you are "capable" of teaching in a UNL class. And you don't have to spoil three weeks of prime summertime sitting inside a basement classroom mouthing the word "mechanism" repeatedly with no accent on the second syllable, instead of doing some research that might benefit humankind.

Don't get me wrong, I have nothing against being taught to speak English the Nebraskan way (if my British-Indian English accent is not sufficient), but all I want is for the university to "correct" the British cockney accent, the Aussie twang, the Texas drawl and Alabama accent as well.

Since the whole problem hinges on one's English-speaking capability, what about those students who have proven English proficiency by taking innumerable tests conducted by the Educational-Testing Service?

They won't benefit from those tests, because the law states that they still have to go through three weeks of torture!

It is funny how the test results of ETS — the same agency that conducts the SAT, GRE, GMAT and others, and whose tests are accepted by U.S. universities as a de facto standard — bear little importance here.

It would make this institute a little more bearable if they spent some time sprucing up the program. They could get rid of the total disorganization, the last-minute changes and the lack of professionalism that seem to symbolize it.

Also, the program is against all that the university is working to achieve; that is, to accommodate in its teachings the diversity that is found in American classrooms.

International students come into the United States in all shapes and colors, and with varying degrees of proficiency in spoken and written English. To some students, this workshop is very beneficial, I am sure. But there are others who come with excellent English capabilities; they should be treated accordingly.

The university and the Nebraska Legislature need to set things right and take a closer look at the ITA workshop, which favors some and discriminates against others.

By doing so, the university can gain by not only eliminating the double standard, but by attracting better students who otherwise might opt for any of the many schools that would have them without forcing them to waste their time in some poorly designed workshop.

Many other U.S. schools make similar workshops an option for the students and not a compulsion. This enables students do what they want to do.

Like taking classes to improve their academic standings. Like working on campus to improve their financial standings. Like working on their theses. Or spending time seeing this beautiful and diverse country before they return to their homes.

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