

(Pay Your Dues)

by
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(Based on, If Any)

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FADE IN:

INT. BILL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

BILL, 60, sits in his messy living room working on the newest of his three computers. He is paying his bills, and then updates his own domain with political information about employment discrimination.

His cell phone buzzes, and antenna blinks. He accepts a job. He jots down some numbers, goes to the parking lot. He has trouble with his car's security system. He reaches under and turns a knob and starts the car.

He arrives at a high school. He enters an administrator's office, fills out some paper work, and then is seen entering a big classroom. There are brightly colored pictures and computers around, a scene that might be more appropriate for a grade school.

One student, back showing only, works slowly on a computer.

KYLE, 23, tall and youthful but apparently bald, and wearing a flesh-colored cap, approaches.

BILL

Oh. So this is the class today. The kids--the students.

KYLE

We can call them kids. They really are. That disturbs you.

BILL

Well, this is high school.

KYLE

You understand what this class is. And this is a vacancy. Until we find a permanent aide.

BILL

Oh.

KYLE

It has to be a male.

Bill looks toward the student on the computer.

KYLE

Okay, higher functioning. Most of them aren't.

Kyle walks toward his desk and sits down. On his desk there is various literature about special education, and some literature in a separate pile about testicular cancer.

KYLE

Look, Bill, I see where this is headed. We're going to the swimming pool today.

BILL

The natatorium.

KYLE

A swimming-a-torium.

BILL

I went to one meet at SMU. As a spectator. I listened to the students scream when they saw that the swimmers had peaked.

KYLE

Cut to the chase. I need you to watch them at the deep end. You probably didn't bring any trunks, but we can find a pair. And I need a little help in the locker room. Think you handle that. Child's play.

Bill looks outside the window, at spring azaleas, and then turns around.

BILL

I didn't know. They don't tell us about this at orientation.

KYLE

I'll bet.

BILL

I can do the locker room today only, but I couldn't come back. There's this legal thing about don't ask don't tell...

KYLE

No, if you don't think you can be here, I'll excuse you now.

BILL

You wouldn't allow me to do this for a female student.

KYLE

Of course not, the legal stuff. I think I get where you're coming from.

BILL

You read Clay Aiken's book about this?

KYLE

No, haven't had time.

BILL

You don't know about the YMCA situation. The parents have to provide their own caregivers for the kids before they can come.

KYLE

I'm no parent either.

INT. ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Bill is filling out some paper work and hours recorded are being reduced.

INT. BILL'S APARTMENT - DAY

Bill picks up his mail, and sees a letter from the school district. He sees another note from his landlord.

He goes up the elevator to his cluttered apartment.

He is updating his websites when there is a knock on the door. The SUPER, female and 38, walks in.

SUPER

Hi, Mister... We have to check you out for a zoning complaint.

BILL

What? I just write.

SUPER

Well, we found that you registered your business with the state at this address. So we have to make sure that you don't use more than 25% of the floor space for your business.

BILL
Well, the books are POD.

SUPER
I beg your pardon.

BILL
Print on demand. They fit in one box. So that's just two square feet. You know, they stack in three dimensions. Call it string theory.

SUPER
No book-smarts with me. The problem is the office.

BILL
Well, the computers take up what, maybe ten square feet.

SUPER
They'd make us count the room. Don't you think you could rent a telecommuting cubicle in one of our commercial buildings?

EXT. SUBURBAN OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

With summer foliage around, Bill carries a box of books and supplies into a one-story strip mall office, and sets himself up in a small cubicle, with Windows 2000 instead of XP. He looks at the rental bill.

INT. SCHOOL DISTRICT OFFICE - DAY

Bill sits in front of a power desk and administrator Lorraine, 38, African-American.

CUT TO:

INT. BAR - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Bill stands at a bar as Lorraine talks to him.

LORRAINE
When's your birthday?

BILL
July 10. Cancer.

LORRAINE
Which birthday?

BILL
OK, Sixty.

LORRAINE
You like Kyle.

BILL
Maybe. I have to check him out.

LORRAINE
Kyle's boyfriend thinks you like
him, and that is a problem.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. SCHOOL DISTRICT OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Bill imagines Kyle, going through a transformation from a handsome man, to peaking for a swim meet, to lying in a hospital bed getting an i.v. drip.

BILL
Um hmm. Oh.

LORRAINE
I beg your pardon. Oh. Before.
Well, let me get to the point at
hand. I'll be a talking dog.

Bill notices the pictures of pets on her office wall.

BILL
So, this is a kind of performance
appraisal? I welcome the chance for
feedback.

LORRAINE
As I said in the letter, you have
to understand what we need from you
to make this work.

BILL
You say I can't turn down the spec
ed. I'm sorry about backing out of
that assignment. I don't take them
now.

LORRAINE

It's like this. You don't have a license. It would take you a lot of time and money to get one. So to make this work, we have to give you a chance to pay your dues. You get my drift?

BILL

Well, you understand the legal point.

Bill gets out a copy of his book, "Do Ask Do Tell."

BILL

I promoted myself. I bragged to the public for commercial gain.

LORRAINE

That you're queer.

BILL

You remember. I remember now.

LORRAINE

Yes... Well.

BILL

So if I helped these kids do potty, it would violate their privacy rights. They can't give consent.

LORRAINE

That's not the real problem, though. It's more that you've never been a parent. You're just not comfortable around little kids, or immature kids.

BILL

But are you.

LORRAINE

Pardon.

BILL

You do remember.

LORRAINE

But I've got kids. I'm a single parent. I've already been down the pike.

She props up a picture, and puts it in view on her desk. It is a small child of mixed race.

BILL
So you keep this out of sight.

LORRAINE
His father is very attentive.

BILL
But you keep it private.

LORRAINE
And you are very, very public.

INT. SUBURBAN OFFICE - DAY

Bill looks at a spread sheet that shows his books sales. They seem to be increasing. Then he starts writing his essay on the internet. "A qualified teacher in front of every classroom, every day."

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Bill is standing in front of a classroom in civics with a copy of his own book on his desk.

BILL
That's right. If a soldier tells anyone, even a family member, that he is gay, that's grounds for discharge. They presume that he engages in homosexual acts. That's what they call rebuttable presumption.

Bill writes the term "rebuttable presumption" on the board in a stencil pen. An African American female SYUDENT, 16, raises her hand.

STUDENT
You can't use that pen. It doesn't erase.

Bill starts writing over it with a wide tip pen, erasing and rewriting the word. The kids laugh.

STUDENT
Does the same rule apply with lesbian soldiers?

BILL

Yeth!

INT. BILL'S APARTMENT - DAY

Bill is dialing into the sub system on his cell phone. He goes through password verification and then gets the rude message, "Your account has been suspended. Please call the office."

INT. SCHOOL DISTRICT OFFICE - DAY

Bill knocks and enters the office, and looks surprised when he sees Kyle, with no skull cap and a buzz cut of hair that is growing back unevenly.

BILL

So.

KYLE

Yes, Bill. They promoted me. I'm rising in the world. You'll be proud of me.

BILL

So why...

KYLE

Bill, do you make money with your books and website.

BILL

Not yet. But I'll have to. I'm paying commercial rent now.

KYLE

So you do them just to get attention. Or that's how you started.

BILL

Is that a problem? It's a cultural infringement, not a legal one.

KYLE

You're not supposed to criticize us in a public space.

BILL

I won't call it freedom of speech. I'll just say that I'm just a sub.

(MORE)

BILL(cont'd)

I don't give grades. I don't make decisions about students' futures.

Bill flashes back to where he initials probation forms.

KYLE

Bill, if you want to work, you just have to do what we say. You would have before, wouldn't you.

Bill stands, makes eye contact with Kyle

CUT TO:

INT. STADIUM CONCESSION STAND - EVENING (FLASHBACK)

Bill, dressed in a uniform, works a hot dog machine at a concession stand. Lorraine tags at him.

LORRAINE

Bill, you'd better balance tonight when you go to the register.

BILL

I know. I've gotta pay my dues one last time.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. SCHOOL DISTRICT OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Now I can still make a good deal.

BILL

I bet..

KYLE

I still have the swimming trunks.

BILL

And I'm ashamed to appear in front of the kids in one.

KYLE

You'd appear in front of me.

BILL

But not the kids. I'm sixty years old. I have a right to be ashamed.

KYLE

Of your gams.

BILL

Of my legs. Yes. I have a right to
be ashamed.

KYLE

We'll see about that.

INT. NATATORIUM - DAY

Bill slowly slips into the water on the metal staircase. The camera focuses on his balding legs as they disappear into the water, almost dissolving. Bill shivers, but adjusts.

Kyle walks in, now with a full head of hair and a swimmer's body. Bill grimaces but then smiles. Kyle swims over and yanks Bill off the staircase, and hurls him into the water.

KYLE

Come on, arch your back.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Bill is suiting up in a swimming shirt. He looks at his legs with chagrin but smiles. In the background, the din of the kids increases.

FADE OUT.