

(Exposition for Dogs)

by
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(Based on, If Any)

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EXT. COMMUNITY AREA (STAGE) - DAY

The participants say the Pledge of Allegiance, with some of them skipping the "UNDER GOD" words, that come out light on the loafers. The NARRATOR steps forward.

NARRATOR

"Do Ask, Do Tell" is about learning how others think about issues. So, what follows is some debate, and some role playing, and I hope the Mass sequence will build up a good argument.

INT. BILL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Bill pulls up his credit score (700) and citizenship score (400). The citizenship score screen also reads "ONE STV BELOW MEDIAN"

BILL

That's what I get for being a hero worshipper.

INT. FERN BAR - NIGHT

BILL, 60, sips a Budweiser and looks at SCOTT, 24, as LORRAINE, 30 and African American, walks up to Bill. SEAN, 26, holds hands with ERICH, 24.

LORRAINE

Hey, bud, when is your birthday.

BILL

July 10. Cancer.

LORRAINE

Which birthday?

BILL

Oh, 60.

LORRAINE

You like Erich, don't you.

BILL

I met him when I did my speech on Bill of Rights 2. He attended.

LORRAINE

Erich's boy friend thinks that you like him.

(MORE)

LORRAINE(cont'd)

And that is creating a problem. So,
be a good guy and keep your
distance.

Bill leaves the bar immediately.

EXT. PLAIN STAGE, WITH ONLY A COMPUTER

BILL demonstrates the different kinds of rights from slides.

BILL

Animals are free, too.

MONTAGE

Wildlife pictures, including a cat marking Bill.

BILL

But humans are supposed to be free
to define themselves, as
individuals before their families
and communities. Or are they?

Finally, he displays "FREEDOM OF SPEECH."

INT. SMALL OFFICE - DAY

Bill sits in front of ANTHONY, 26, who presides from a simple
desk.

ANTHONY

Bill, our stakeholders have a bone
to pick with you. Guess what.

BILL

My domain.

ANTHONY

They think the books are OK. But if
you can sell them, why do you
attract attention to yourself with
the domain?

BILL

They don't sell.

ANTHONY

It's just as well. Your opinions
would distract our customers.

BILL

You're a libertarian. You believe in self-promotion. I worship your authority.

ANTHONY

But, Bill, we're the hand that feeds you.

EXT. EMPTY STAGE - DAY

Bill holds up a poster that reads "FREEDOM FROM DISCRIMINATION."

BILL

No, that's not spelled out in the Constitution. But it's probably implied by the Fourteenth Amendment, which guarantees everyone the right to life, liberty, and property. But does that include remedial action for past discrimination? If so, others must pitch in to help pay for it, so it becomes a social right.

EXT. EMPTY STAGE - DAY

Bill, Lorraine, and Sean walk behind three lecterns on the empty stage.

BILL

Lorraine, since your grade on the law-school aptitude test and your undergraduate grades were lower, do you think you should have gotten into law school as you did instead of Sean.

LORRAINE

[Gives her answer.] It is only fair because I started behind in line.

BILL

And Sean, if you had gotten in, would you have been able to serve minority communities as Lorraine wants to do?

SEAN
[Gives his answer.] This is a form
of segregation.

EXT. EMPTY STAGE

Bill holds up a poster, "THE FREEDOM TO SAY WHO YOU ARE."

EXT. SUBMARINE DOCK CONSTRUCTED ON STAGE - DAY

Bill walks up a metal staircase into the submarine, and then down a metal staircase into the living quarters. Off to one side he sees the Northhampton bunks. SAILOR 1 (African American) and SAILOR 2 (white) are lying in the bunks in their skivvies.

Bill walks up to a simple table, pours some Bosco into a glass and makes himself some chocolate milk. He watches the sailors.

SAILOR 1
Hey, dude, I read your profile on
AOL.

SAILOR 2
You like it?

SAILOR 1
I'm not your type.

SAILOR 2
You can say that again. I have my
own tastes.

SAILOR 1
What's wrong with me that I'm not
good enough for you.

SAILOR 2
It's just for me, not for everybody
else.

SAILOR 1
But the whole world has read it.
Even those sheiks in Saudi Arabia,
where we're heading.

INT. BILL'S APARTMENT

Bill's phone rings. Bill stumbles around to answer it. Coworker Celeste is on the line.

BILL
Celeste?

CELESTE
Look, my kids are sick tonight. Can you stay around and take the production support this weekend for me?

INT. OFFICE CUBICLE - DAY

Bill is on the phone talking to a user when his computer screen (enlarge) reads "ACCOUNT DISABLED: PLEASE LOG OFF." A MANAGER, 50, stands at his cubicle.

MANAGER
Bill, we have a meeting.

Bill walks over to a corner office, where a DIRECTOR, 55, stands up and offers a handshake.

EXT. EMPTY STAGE

Bill holds up a poster that reads "FREEDOM FROM SERVITUDE."

There follows a montage of a number of still shots based on September 11, 2001.

INT. PERSONNEL OFFICE PEACE CORPS - DAY

Bill signs a form and gives it to the INTERVIEWER, 30, female, African American.

INTERVIEWER.
Okay, Mr. Bill, you put down French, German, and a short course in Spanish. I want to hear you converse in at least one of these.

BILL
I've never had a reason to.

INTERVIEWER.

Okay, what's the last time you
volunteered for anything?

BILL

I was a baby buddy.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Bill backs away from a bed while another BUDDY turns a PERSON
WITH AIDS over in bed.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Bill stands back, as another MALE TEACHER, 30, in shorts,
points out a young African American CHILD, 6, sitting and
trying ineffectively to scribble in a coloring book.

MALE TEACHER

It's your job to bond with him this
morning, help him color, help him
with his behavior.

INT. TESTING CENTER - DAY

Bill sits at a computer terminal with images of luggage
changing every ten seconds, and he presses a box marked TRUE
OR FALSE below.

INT. ARMY RECRUITING OFFICE - DAY

YOUNG BILL, 24, sits in front of a red-haired Army
recruiter, 37.

ARMY RECRUITER

95%. That is, a 95% chance that
you'll get 1-1-Bravo if you let
yourself get drafted.

INT. ARMY BASIC PERSONNEL CENTER

An ARMY SERGEANT picks up Young Bill's paperwork and hands it
to another ARMY SERGEANT 2.

ARMY SERGEANT

Hey, you missed a college grad.

EXT. EMPTY STAGE - DAY

Bill walks ahead, and there are two chairs seated by POLITICIANS.

BILL
So, should we have universal
military service?

[Both Politicians respond.]

BILL
Would gays serve openly in a
military with universal service?

[Both Politicians respond.]

BILL
Should women be subject to
universal military service?

[Both Politicians respond.]

BILL
Should we have universal national
service instead of universal
military service.

[Both Politicians respond.]

BILL
Would gays serve in other areas
besides the armed forces in such an
environment?

[Both Politicians respond.]

INT. BILL'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Bill is surfing on his computer when a notice comes up on the computer screen, "THIS DOMAIN HAS BEEN CLOSED." Bill picks up his cell phone and dials a number.

HELP DESK ASSISTANT
Internet Services.

BILL
Hppub.com has been closed. What has
happened. Is there some kind of
abuse complaint?

HELP DESK ASSISTANT

I see here that we found spam sent from your account.

BILL

But that's just spoofing. I can't stop that.

HELP DESK ASSISTANT

No, maybe someone broke in. We're working with the FBI on that. But someone logged on to your account and started sending child pornography spam.

INT. NAVY QUONSET - DAY

Sailor #1 is standing before his commander.

COMMANDER

You know the policy. Don't ask don't tell. By creating your gay profile on AOL, you're telling the whole world. By golly, they didn't even need a search engine.

SAILOR 1

I thought it was my free speech.

COMMANDER

Not when you're in the military.

INT. GAY BAR - NIGHT

Bill approaches ERICH, 24 and very tall, dancing on the podium. Erich beckons him up. Bill unbuttons Erich's shirt.

INT. EMPLOYMENT OFFICE - DAY

Erich hands an EMPLOYMENT OFFICER a transparent vial with a few black hair follicles inside.

INT. EMPLOYMENT OFFICE - LATER

Erich stands over the EMPLOYMENT OFFICER.

EMPLOYMENT OFFICER

You know the agreement. If you work here, you are to stay out establishments that would present a risk of second-hand marijuana smoke. We can let you retest in 30 days, but you are suspended in the meantime.

EXT. EMPTY STAGE - DAY

Erich and Bill walk out on stage, with the Narrator.

NARRATOR

Now, listen up. Bill and Erich have to make the story work, so there are some twists.

INT. BILL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Bill's MOTHER, 88, lies on the sofa. The phone rings, and Bill stumbles over cords on the carpet to get to the tangled phone.

ERICH

Hello, Bill, you were right. But maybe I have time to help you clear your own name now.

BILL

My mother should meet you.

ERICH

I'll be easier for us when her visit is over. But you could probably get my job, while I clear my own name.

INT. BILL'S APARTMENT - LATER

MOTHER

You spend so much time on all this.

BILL

Might be a job.

MOTHER

How old is he?

BILL

24.

MOTHER

Isn't he a little young for you?

BILL

He's a friend.

MOTHER

Even to be a friend. How can you have real life?

BILL

Maybe a job, and freedom.

INT. BILL'S APARTMENT - DAY

Erich is pounding away on Bill's computer when there is a knock on the door. A PLAINCLOTHESMAN walks in.

PLAINCLOTHESMAN

Mr. Bill.

BILL

Look. We can explain everything. Somebody broke into my server.

PLAINCLOTHESMAN

You can remain silent.

Erich stands up.

ERICH

He did not send these images. I can prove it.

INT. BILL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bill and Erich lie together, fully clothed.

ERICH

I know what you really want.

BILL

A job. Just a W-2. Until you get yours back.

ERICH

That's not what I mean.

Erich rolls over Bill and unbuttons his shirt.

ERICH
This is what you really want.

Erich sprays cream on Bill's chest.

INT. BILL'S APARTMENT - DAY

Bill steps out of the shower as the phone rings. Bill stumbles over and picks up the cradle, almost dropping it.

WOMAN ON PHONE
Bill, your mother was taken to The State-of-the-Art Medical Center last night. I thought you should know.

INT. BILL'S APARTMENT - LATER

Bill is talking to his Mother's SURGEON on the phone.

SURGEON
I can take this before the medical board. But they might not do the bypass unless you come home.

INT. RESTAURANT - LATER

Bill and Erich are having lunch outside.

ERICH
But Bill, she's your mother.

BILL
They're not ready to take you back.

ERICH
The test has to wait again. You know, this is the hair test. I have to be committed to it.

BILL
I'm not. Look, that's why I'm a contractor. Thanks to your rescue, I can put the website back up. And as long as I'm just a contractor, there's no conflict of interest. But, I can't take off.

ERICH
And you want me.

INT. BILL'S APARTMENT - LATER

SURGEON
They agreed to do the operation
now. But they feel very concerned
about the skilled nursing facility
stay to come.

INT. NURSING HOME - NIGHT

Mother is lying on a typical bed, and the NURSE'S AIDE, 30,
stands aloof.

NURSE'S AIDE
No, you get yourself up.

MOTHER
But, I'm not supposed to.

NURSE'S AIDE
Where's your son.

MOTHER
Working.

NURSE'S AIDE
If he isn't here to help his own
kin, then I'm not gonna do nuttin.

The nurse's aide leaves the room. Alone, the mother gets up,
forcing herself up by her arms, then screams and falls to the
floor. But she gets up again, slowly, stands upright, and
enters the bathroom.

BILL
It's horrible, I know. The
disloyalty. I'll explain it to a
social worker soon.

INT. BILL'S APARTMENT

Movers are packing up Bill's stuff in boxes and carting them
out into the hallway, marking them. Erich helps.

BILL
It's a sad day.

ERICH

Yeah, Bill, you finally got to sleep. With me.

BILL

And now I have to give it all up.

INT. HOSPITAL OFFICE

Bill talks to the SOCIAL WORKER.

BILL

I gave up my rights to that old job when I published the book on gays in the military. I could never move back here and work with the military division.

SOCIAL WORKER

You're making this up. You can't get your employer to help you with your own family. What kind of a man won't do that?

BILL

Other, younger men will be better off. Maybe better men.

SOCIAL WORKER

There are anti-discrimination laws to help you. Family and Medical Leave act. Why won't you take advantage of them? Everybody else does for their kin.

BILL

That's the trouble. Everybody else does. Look. I don't make anybody do things, even for ... I give you the truth, the information, but I can't manipulate you. You have to do the right thing of your own volition, or face consequences. I don't make people do things. I just give them access to the information. They have to do the right thing on their own. Without emotional access to having my own children with courtship and marriage first, I can't take on the responsibility for protecting others, even my own blood, from neglect.

(MORE)

BILL(cont'd)

I do have to count on the system of law and a credible infrastructure behind it. The potential wrongdoing of others can't generate my first priority. Yet, that's why there is a military and why there was and could be a draft again.

INT. EMPTY STAGE

Bill walks back on.

NARRATOR

The juicy question in recent weeks is gay marriage.

BILL

The moralists say it is about moms, dads, and babies, and faith in a public institution that raises the next generation and takes care of people. Or does the family just perpetuate tribalism, segregation, and unearned wealth.

POLITICIAN 1

Answer

POLITICIAN 2

Answer

BILL

But then if you buy the argument that marriage is a public good (and I buy it), you have to admit that it marginalizes people like me who don't get socialized by it.

INT. DEAN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Young Bill sits in front of the Dean of Men.

YOUNG BILL

Well, I'd have to admit to you that I see myself as a latent homosexual.

EXT. WILLIAMSBURG STREET - DAY

Bill climbs into his father's Ford Galaxie 500.

BILL'S FATHER

This is going to come as a blow to you, Bill, but we have to take you out of school.

INT. DORM STAIRWAY - DAY

Bill and his father carry a twin-sized mattress down the vertigo staircase.

BILL'S FATHER

Look at this, and you will see why you are not a homo.

EXT. EMPTY STAGE

Bill stands in front of the seated politicians.

BILL

It's not just about marriage. The politicians used to claim, before Lawrence, that my freedom to choose partners by my own standards threatens families. That justified sodomy laws.

INT. DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Young Bill and ROOMMATE, 18, lie on bunk beds, the roommate above.

ROOMMATE

And finally, there was a horrible shriek throughout the camp, and the boy was ruined.

BILL

But maybe the camp counselor

ROOMMATE

You see, that's what homosexuals do, in their sleep. They take on this super strength.

BILL

Like in the quest for male (production).

ROOMMATE

So they're not stuck with their own.

EXT. EMPTY STAGE

BILL

See, that's the logic of it. Why get sexually excited about propagating your own genes and protecting them, when you know someone's else's is better. Why not just affiliate with someone in royalty. Ah, though, that eventually is a common good, it is communism, or fascism, the worship of the abstract hero, the denial of the meaning of the ordinary man.

NARRATOR

So, Bill, your desires are evil.

BILL

A touch of evil. No, I am free to pursue my own idea of beauty. So are you. I am civilized. I do not harm anyone.

NARRATOR

But, like a terrorist, your life needs meaning.

BILL

I just shouldn't get out of it. Spending a life away from the kids until the geek jobs go overseas and the best jobs left are teaching disabled kids. I shouldn't get away with it, move away when I am the only child. So here's the deal. Propose gay marriage, and filial responsibility.

POLITICIAN 1

It may not be freedom any more.

POLITICIAN 2

You need to support your family willingly.

BILL

Even when I don't choose it.

NARRATOR

It makes sense, Bill says.

BILL

After all, I got away with it,
taking until age 31 to take care of
my own needs.

INT. BATHS, ORGY ROOM - NIGHT

Bill walks into a dark room, with many sound effects, and suddenly he goes down with a smile on his face.

EXT. EMPTY STAGE - CONTINUOUS

BILL

I was happy with my separate peace,
to live as a kind of alien,
watching, writing, recording the
fantasy of the perfect man. For a
smidgen he would be Erich. But, I
got away with something. Other
people have to sacrifice for family
responsibility.

EXT. GAS STATION WITH LINE - DAY - ESTABLISHING SHOT

NARRATOR

Bill abstracts from here, about
global warming, oil, maybe even
gasoline rationing some day. If you
can't do what you decide you want,
you have only family.

BILL

So it makes sense. Put some family
responsibility back into the
system, but offer the equal right
to marry a consenting adult of your
choice.

NARRATOR

But it seems that Bill wants to
winnow down, be with only the best
people, and let the rest die off
from neglect. Where does that lead?
Bill change into your shorts.

BILL
That's immodest. I didn't bring my
garters.

A male model, dressed in a formal suit, walks across the stage and shows his garters.

NARRATOR
Don't be prudish.

Erich comes out and begins to gently undress Bill. Bill looks genuinely embarrassed as he is revealed to the public.

NARRATOR
Some religious people cleanse themselves. The shedding of shame is a form of godliness. Then, the freedom of others, if they know about it, becomes a threat to their way of life.

BILL
It becomes don't ask, don't tell.
It's a lot like the same policy in our own country.

Bill parades around on the stage in his skivvies.

NARRATOR
Make your last confession.

BILL
Like a lot of guys, I have gone bald in the legs.

Bill displays The Four Freedoms.

INT. HR OFFICE COLLECTION AGENCY - DAY

Bill sits in front of a smallbone power desk. The HRGUY, 30, interviews him.

HRGUY
So tell me, Mr. ... what is the last time you made anyone do anything?

BILL
When I was on nightcall, when we were doing an implementation...

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Bill is giving his fingerprints to the SHERIFF, who manipulates him on the ink boards.

SHERIFF
Old fashioned ways are best.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Bill is standing before a class of highschoolers.

Bill displays quickly his own fundamental rights slides.

BILL
But remember, about freedom of speech, the more people who speak because they have a message, and write to promote themselves, the less writing is a profession, the less it is a way to make a living. Like computers.

The bell rings, and only one student, Student, 17, very tall, stays.

BILL
Thanks for not taking advantage of the fact that I'm a substitute.

STUDENT
Well, I get it. But I want to know something. Are you a hypocrite?

BILL
I know what people think.

STUDENT
Teach me.

BILL
They think I'm committing a crime if I promote my own ideas without working through my family first. Or maybe some alternate family. Because I am affiliating with someone superior, which I myself was inferior. I didn't learn to play the sports of pay my dues.

(MORE)

BILL(cont'd)

But I am saying things that would show contempt for others in need. I'm getting out by playing power behind the throne.

INT. NATATORIUM - DAY

Student holds Bill up as Bill swims towards his chest.

STUDENT

Arch your back.

A policeman walks into the pool area.

EXT. FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATION - NIGHT

Fireworks and national anthem. A Jumbotron reads "NATIONAL CITIZENSHIP GOAL: 700000

INT. JAIL CELL - NIGHT

The celebration shows on a television, in black and white, with Bill in an orange jump suit. There is a steel bench and toilet. Bill lies down. The light stays on all the time.

A preacher, dressed in a black suit, approaches the cell.

PREACHER

Bill.

Bill turns himself over, with effort.

PREACHER

I can still do a deal if you become somebody else. Get born again. Don't you want to find out what's out there?

BILL

I just can't as myself, can I.

PREACHER

You'd have to dedicate yourself to forming empathy to people you know to be less fortunate than you. You earn your keep that way. It's the way of the New Testament. It's all about community, not you. To get saved, you give yourself up as your sins are forgiven.

(MORE)

PREACHER(cont'd)

You become part of the group. You
share everything in common.

The preacher unlocks the jail cell. Bill gets up. An
artists's rendition of Heaven, complete with condominiums and
tropical gardens, fills the screen.

THE END