

Service

By

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FADE IN ON:

INT. KEYHOLE - DAY

An eye widens, pressed against glass. From curiosity or fear, who knows?

INT. KEYHOLE - VIEW INTO DORM HALLWAY

Distorted by the fisheye lens, a YOUNG SOLDIER in camo lingers on the other side. His name patch reads: "B. Spelling". A rifle dangles off his back...

He fidgets with a RED ENVELOPE, bored.

Without warning, his other hand shoots out towards the keyhole. Which blocks out the view. A blanket of flesh envelops all.

INT. DORM ROOM

KYLE (17) - the owner of that eye - staggers back.

And smacks into roommate DERRICK (17). Clearly a mismatched pair, Derrick's khakis and designer shirt clash with Kyle's "Question Authority" tee - big time.

DERRICK
(hisses under his breath)
Ow!

The doorbell SINGS, jarring both. An oldies pop-music tune. Derrick shoots Kyle a super-annoyed look.

DERRICK
You gonna get that? He's not going
anywhere.

KYLE
(panicked)
Shhhh!

DERRICK
Newsflash: Hiding just makes us look like
pussies. Our keycards are trackable.
Sergeant Pimples may look dumb, but he
sure as shit knows we're here.

Another blast of TUNEZ from the doorbell.

Derrick snatches a Heat-It-Yourself HOT-POCKET off a dresser. Presses a circled logo on its wrapper.

The snack glows intensely for a second. Derrick takes a whiff. Smiles. Chows down.

KYLE

You're in the mood to eat - now?

DERRICK

(mouth full, chewing)

Don't bust my chops, Kyle. If anyone should be pissed, it's me. You programmed *Billie Ellish* for the doorbell. Without a room vote. What gives?

KYLE

It was my turn. You got a problem with that, Mr. Broadway Tunes?

DERRICK

God-dammit. Cut the shit. Whoever Catch-22's out there for, I'm writing a stern letter to the Dorm Authority tomorrow. 'Cause whoever ran the Roommate Compatibility Algorithm when they hooked us up screwed the pooch. Big time!

Another music-ring. Derrick reaches for the door.

KYLE

Derrick, don't. Please?

DERRICK

Get a tampon, bro. I got this.

Derrick flings the door open. Reactions follow - fast.

The soldier's head snaps up. Attention laser focused on the boys.

Kyle cringes, tries to duck behind Derrick. Fails.

Derrick flashes a smooth smile at the soldier. Wiggles fingers at him.

DERRICK

Hey. Hi.

SOLDIER

Good afternoon, Mr. -

DERRICK

Derrick Anderson, at your service.

KYLE

Like you're at ours, of course?

DERRICK

(to the soldier)

And you are?

SOLDIER

Corporal Spelling of the 53rd -

DERRICK

Wait! You're Brian Spelling from my Diffi-Q class, right? Didn't know you were ROTC!!

SOLDIER

Well...

(nods down at his camo pants)

I don't wear these ALL the time.

DERRICK

You sit behind Rachel. That hottie who transferred from Caltech last month?

The soldier blushes. Underneath his uniform, he's as young as they are.

SOLDIER

Really? I never noticed.

DERRICK

That she's smokin'? No-one with eyes misses that. C'mon!

Grabbing another Hot Pocket, Derrick extends it to the soldier.

DERRICK

How you juggle both school *and* service is beyond me. Do you even get time to eat? Here, have this on us. It's better than any MRE. Hot right from the wrapper: auto-warm!

The soldier shuffles, shakes his head 'no'.

He thrusts the Red Envelope out at Derrick, past the Hot Pocket; an oddly contrasting counter-move.

SOLDIER

Thanks, but I'm here strictly on business. To deliver - this.

Derrick stares at the envelope. Doesn't touch it, though.

DERRICK

To me? You sure you've got the right address?

SOLDIER

No. And... yes. It's for a Mr. Kyle Burgis.

The soldier whips out a cell, scrolls through pictures. A STUDENT ID of Kyle glows on-screen (mug shot style).

Kyle cringes behind his roommate. The soldier cranes his neck past Derrick, locks eyes.

SOLDIER

Your roommate. That's you, right?

Busted. Kyle groans, steps forward.

KYLE

Yeah. Kyle. That's me. In the flesh, bro.

He takes the envelope gingerly. Winces, as if he fears it'll bite.

KYLE

This what I think it is?

SOLDIER

I'm no psychic, Mr. Burgis. I can't assume what you... uh, assume.

KYLE

I'm *betting* it's a draft notice. Is that a fair description, or no?

The soldier shrugs, relieved he's not the one to break bad news.

SOLDIER

Yeah. Just routine stuff. I wouldn't sweat things, if I were you. Now delivery's confirmed....

He holds out his cell phone and a stylus.

SOLDIER

Sign here?

Kyle signs, rolls his eyes at Derrick. Finishing with a flourish, he returns the pen and cell.

SOLDIER

Any last questions, Mr. Burgis?

DERRICK
Gee, *that* sounds dire.

KYLE
Yeah. Shitloads.
(to the soldier)
The big one being: what next?

SOLDIER
You'll find directions on the letter.
Check yourself into the student rec
center as soon as possible. A service
draft counselor will walk you through the
process from there.

The soldier turns to leave. Derrick waves.

DERRICK
Safe travels, Spelling! Tell Rachel us
boys say hi!

Eyes down, the soldier ignores him - walks on. Derrick
swings towards Kyle with a disapproving frown.

DERRICK
Cowardly dipshit.

KYLE
Me or him?

DERRICK
Duh. You.

KYLE
Insult on top of injury? That's harsh.

DERRICK
I saw the look on your face. You *knew*
that envelope was yours all along!

Kyle slouches. Guilty as charged.

KYLE
Yeah. Those email notifications were a
clue.

EXT. COLLEGE NATURE TRAIL - LATER

A winding path. Kyle and Derrick trudge through fall
leaves.

In the distance, COLLEGE STUDENTS play virtual reality
lacrosse with a holo ball.

Beyond, dignified halls of academia loom. A very collegial, idyllic view.

A spring in his step, Derrick waves to CUTE GIRLS. For him, this is a fun stroll.

Kyle walks slowly. Every inch of his body screams he'd rather stay home.

DERRICK

You sure you're really seventeen? You're walking like you're sixty.

KYLE

(grumbles)

Why rush? You're the outdoors buff. Enjoy.

DERRICK

Don't you want to get this over with?

KYLE

That's easy for you to say. You didn't just get drafted, dude.

DERRICK

The student rec center closes at 5PM! Either that bandaid gets ripped off now, or Monday. You worrying about "what if" would make both our weekends suck!

Kyle's face darkens. He trudges along, kicks leaves.

KYLE

Worrying... I mean, waiting's good. That gives me time to think.

DERRICK

Think about what? Service is a no-brainer. Just like homework, a fact of life!

Kyle stops, gazes across the panoramic campus lawn. Tons of people having fun. Most without a care in the world.

KYLE

Service isn't a law.

DERRICK

That's *exactly* what it is!

KYLE

I mean it's not a universal fact of reality, like Physics. It's more an artificial construct, a human rule.

DERRICK

Homework's a rule, too. A pain in the ass short term. But that doesn't mean it's not good.

KYLE

But the draft? Seriously? Why do we need that at all?

Derrick drops back, alongside Kyle. Breathes in fresh air - sighs.

DERRICK

You're the poly-sci major.

KYLE

Your point, Math-Astronomy Dude?

DERRICK

You think societies build themselves organically? All of this - everything you see - has a price. Either you pay your fair share of it. Or you don't.

KYLE

But this price *isn't* fair. That's my point. It's too much!

Suddenly impatient, Derrick grabs Kyle - drags him along.

DERRICK

Your questions are too much. C'mon, Random-Roommate. It's 4:20. We're almost out of time!

INT. STUDENT REC CENTER - LATE AFTERNOON

A small bureaucratic nook, equally stuffed with inspirational posters and ergonomic high tech gear.

A PROJECTION MONITOR covers half the wall.

Derrick and Kyle sit obediently at the "visitors" side of a desk, while...

DRAFT COUNSELLOR ALYSSA KRAVITZ (bespectacled 50s, going on 200) scrolls through a tablet. Hums 90's tunes.

She point-stabs a stylus at Kyle.

ALYSSA

Let's get this data straight from the get-go. You're the student who received the draft notice?

KYLE

Um, yeah. I'm Kyle Burgis. Class of '34, hopefully?

(leans forward, points)

My name's right there. Line 5B?

He places his palm on a SENSOR, which BEEPS. Alyssa blinks at her tablet.

ALYSSA

Ah, it's all in the system. Good to see.

She lifts a quizzical eyebrow at Derrick next.

ALYSSA

And your role in today's meeting, Mr...

DERRICK

Derrick Anderson. Class of... well, same.

ALYSSA

But what's your purpose here?

Derrick spreads his arms, a bemused grin on his face.

DERRICK

Long term? To explore eternal truths of the universe itself. To crack the quantum code, making Einstein and Heisenberg proud -

ALYSSA

(snaps)

I mean, your purpose - here and now?

Derrick drops the act, shrugs.

DERRICK

Doing what any proper roommate does. Providing moral support for my bud.

ALYSSA

Hmmm. What's *your* current draft status?

Derrick's eyes flicker for a second. Is it... fear?

DERRICK

A pretty boring story, really. I got a heritage deferment last year. My dad had chicken pox. Thus, family time served.

Alyssa sighs. Pushes tablet and paperwork towards Kyle.

ALYSSA

Enough small talk. You... choose.

Kyle picks up the material, reads.

KYLE

"Preferred mortality rate?"
 "Incapacitation preferences"? What in Mengele's name IS this stuff?

Alyssa tabs a button on her desk. The projection monitor flares "on" - displays multiple choice options:

"Mortality Rate: 90%, 60%, 40%, 20% 1%"

Kyle reads the percentages again, stares.

KYLE

What exactly am I supposed to do with this?

ALYSSA

Rank the risks and affected bodily systems you prefer. Service is superior when it's voluntarily assumed, of course.

Kyle slides a shaking finger past the 90% option... down towards 1%. Lingers there.

KYLE

Volunteering for medical tests. Where's my choice to NOT sign up at all?

ALYSSA

Now's not the time for jokes, young man. Society *has* to test new vaccines and medicines in controlled experiments. Rolling them out without clinical trials won't be safe. And rushing them in a pandemic wouldn't be wise.

(bemused)

Clearly, you're not a med student, Mr. Burgis?

KYLE

Nope. Mom wanted me to be a doctor. But I disappointed her, choose Poly Sci.

With a minor in Philosophy. Sure, it's harder to find jobs. But that sorta thinking's more my style.

ALYSSA

Well *philosophically*, surely you understand the concept of "Public Good"? Sacrificing a little here and there is the responsibility of all good citizens.

KYLE

Yeah, sure. But health isn't a "little" - it's all we've got. What if I'm the one who dies from a side effect?

ALYSSA

Don't be so doom and gloom! All life is risk. But if you want to partake in opportunities while you're here, paying a few teeny tiny dues is the minimum one can do.

Alyssa taps the tablet, thinly penciled eyebrow raised.

ALYSSA

So let's finalize this process. Then we can ALL move on with our lives. And whatever glorious experience lies in store!

Kyle crosses his arms, pouts. Unconvinced.

KYLE

"We"? What service options did you choose, Ms. Kravitz?

ALYSSA

(terse)

We're all friends here.

DERRICK

Well, roommates actually.

ALYSSA

Call me "Alyssa". Please.

KYLE

OK, Alyssa. Where'd YOU serve?

ALYSSA

In the '24 Alzheimer vaccine trials.

KYLE

And how'd that "experience" go for you?

ALYSSA

It... was a personal, intense time. I'd rather not discuss that now.

Derrick raises a hand, waves it around.

DERRICK

Math wonk here. And a bit confused.
What's with these menu categories? Why wouldn't everyone choose 1%?

KYLE

I was gonna ask that. Alyssa, clue us in?

ALYSSA

(as if speaking to a child)
At least for Mr. Anderson, the trade-off should be obvious. The more risk one undertakes, the shorter the enlistment duration to be fulfilled.

Derrick nods at Kyle. That makes sense.

DERRICK

Ok, so if my pal here signs up for a trial with the new Ebola vaccine...

KYLE

(panics)
Don't go there. Not in a million years!

ALYSSA

Then his service would be short, and secure him citizen benefits for twenty years! That's if...

KYLE

I survive. I may not be a math guy. But from where I'm sitting, those odds suck.
(beat)
What if I sign up for a booster trial for Zika Flu?

Alyssa beams. That's an answer she's pleased to supply.

ALYSSA

We grant you six whole months of tuition. If you sign the standard liability waiver on side effects, of course!

Kyle's face darkens.

KYLE

I'll pass on both, thank you very much.

ALYSSA
You can't do that!

KYLE
Why the heck not?!?

DERRICK
'Cause that'd make you a selfish dickwad.
Why should Alyssa let you cut the line?

KYLE
Says you, Mr. Dad-Got-Chicken-Pox-And-I'm-
Stupid-Rich-So-It's-All-Good!

ALYSSA
What that would *mean*, young man, is you'd
no longer be available for enrollment at
this fine institution. Or public medical
insurance. As for outside employment
opportunities...

KYLE
Lemme guess. Except for \$2 an hour at
Starbucks, my career options would be
screwed.

ALYSSA
(sighs)
It's your life. You're free to choose.

KYLE
You'd think, but now I'm not so sure.

ALYSSA
But whatever you decide, you should
accept the consequences like an adult.

Kyle leaps to his feet. Points at paperwork, scowls.

KYLE
Wanna explain this section: "venereal"?

ALYSSA
(shrugs)
Another trial option. Isn't that good?

KYLE
So, if I keep my lungs free of COVID, but
my dick drops off from Neo-Syphilis - in
the name of "public service" - that's
cool?!? Don't I have a right to not get
sick at all?

ALYSSA

Living in society has its costs, Mr. Burgis. There's no such thing as a free lunch.

KYLE

Free Netflix, no. But lunch and other fundamental stuff - why not?!?

DERRICK

Hey, the *Squid Games* Disney Reboot was epic. Don't hate on Netflix, dude.

KYLE

Forget Netflix. I'm talking basics.

DERRICK

Basic cable?

KYLE

No, basic *needs*. Like... like food. Housing. Education. Stuff we need to live and thrive. And what good's any "society", if risking my health's the price? Isn't there *some* line which can't be crossed?

Derrick stares up at his roommate, shocked.

DERRICK

Kyle, man - a Philosophy minor's fun for getting chicks and all, but don't you think you're taking this "Question Authority" trend too far?

Kyle groans - throws the tablet down.

KYLE

Citizenship can fuck itself. Any "Public Good" that risks my life... is not!

He storms from the office, SLAMS the door. Left alone, Alyssa and Derrick share a look.

ALYSSA

Your friend -

DERRICK

Correction, Assigned Roommate. Though at times, Kyle was kinda cool.

ALYSSA

Well, it appears your "Roommate" has rejected his civic duties.

DERRICK

(shrugs)

Yeah. Which disappoints me. You too?

Alyssa stabs a button on the desk.

On the monitor: Kyle's file flashes a big red "X".
Student status DEACTIVATED.

Derrick face palms, then...

Accidentally rests his hand on the scanner. Causing his
student record to pop up next.

Reflexively, Alyssa squints, reads.

ALYSSA

Admirable record, Mr. Anderson. Sophomore
Class. Legacy Student. Your father
graduated Pi Kappa Phil Fraternity in
'12.

A bit more reading - then she frowns.

ALYSSA

Which would make any inherited family
service expired now.

(beat)

So you're draft eligible, too?

Derrick pales - suddenly alarmed.

DERRICK

I... I can't! I mean, I've got mid-terms.
Interviews for a semester internship in a
week. Service is important, don't get me
wrong. But I can't risk getting sick now!

ALYSSA

(perky)

It need not be a contagious trial. How's
about we hook you up with a little
prostate cancer study? That'll keep you
on your feet - and limit exposure to any
vital organs, too!

DERRICK

There's got to be some mistake! Listen,
my Dad's on the Board of Treasurers. I'll
call him and clear this up now...

He whips out his cell, poised to dial.

Alyssa quickly rethinks her options. She closes Derrick's record, CLICK.

ALYSSA

For now why don't we just schedule you
for a new roommate, and worry about the
rest some other time?

DERRICK

(beat)

Works for me. But -

ALYSSA

But what, Mr. Anderson? You *must* choose.

DERRICK

No more poly-sci majors, please. They're
too... exhausting. And Billie Ellish is
too retro. Can we program a music-
compatible roomie this time?

FINAL FADE OUT: