

2B OR NOT 2B

written by

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INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

One word is written on the chalkboard: DETENTION.

MIKE (16, glasses, Back to the Future t-shirt) does homework at his desk while BRAFF (17, beefy, letterman jacket) tries to pry a large air vent covering off the wall.

MIKE

Braff, will you stop trying to do a Great Escape?

BRAFF

One more old movie reference out of you, bro, and I'll break your knees so bad you'll be walking like Charlie Chaplin.

MIKE

You know, if you hadn't bent over, thus exposing your ass crack, while you pantsed me in the hallway, we wouldn't even be in detention.

BRAFF

Mike, Mike, Mike. Public indecency. It hurts more than getting hit with a sports ball.

MIKE

That's your takeaway?

BRAFF

Bullies gotta bully, bro. You want me to take responsibility for my actions like you drama-class nerds?

Braff returns his attention to the air vent.

BRAFF (CONT'D)

If I could just wedge something in between the wall and this vent cover...

He looks around and notices the pencil Mike is writing with.

BRAFF (CONT'D)

Hey, what kind of pencil is that?

Mike looks at it.

MIKE

It says it's a 4H.

BRAFF

Damn, we need at least a 2B to  
crowbar this out without snapping.

MIKE

Well, it just so happens --

He digs through his backpack.

MIKE (CONT'D)

-- That I have a number 2B pencil.  
Now will you leave me alone?

Braff grabs the pencil and jams it between the vent covering  
and the wall. The vent covering falls to the ground.

He starts crawling into the open duct, then stops and turns  
to Mike.

BRAFF

Come on, bro.

MIKE

No, thanks. If I wanted to spend  
time with a meathead crawling  
around in an air vent I'd watch Die  
Hard.

BRAFF

Okay, drama nerd, let me break this  
down for you using your language:  
You just gave me the tool  
instrumental in our journey.

He holds up the pencil.

BRAFF (CONT'D)

If this was Star Wars, that makes  
this the scene where Obi-Wan Kenobi  
gives Luke his dad's lightsaber,  
which makes you my mentor. So by  
the law of nerdom, that means you  
have to help me.

MIKE

Dammit, that's true.

Mike gets up, snatches the 2B pencil, and crawls into the  
vent after Braff.

INT. SCHOOL - VENT - CONTINUOUS

Mike and Braff crawl single file on their hands and knees.

MIKE

But if I'm the mentor, that puts me in the position of power which, by the law of bullying, makes me the bully in this scenario.

BRAFF

Dammit, that's true.

MIKE

So if you don't tell me why you're so eager to escape, I'm going to beat you up so bad you'll look more fucked up than a de-aged actor in a Marvel movie.

They get to a large intersection in the vents and sit facing one another.

BRAFF

Alright bro, but you're dead if you breathe a word of this to anybody. My big, shameful secret is: I'm not a jock-slash-bully. I'm secretly a nerd, bro. Like, full on. I don't like doing sports. How many periods are in a football game? Which football is the American one? I don't even know. I just fell into the jock-bully role because, well, look at me.

MIKE

... So we're sneaking out of detention because...?

BRAFF

I'm a secret theater nerd, full stop. I like old movies, my guy. I'm a bigger nerd than Buster Keaton in his 1927 silent film, College, okay bro? And this is really hard to admit, but --  
 (tears)  
 -- I gotta get out of here to make a five o'clock screening of City Lights, dog. But it's already four-thirty, I'll never make it!

Mike puts his hand on Braff's shoulder.

MIKE

I wouldn't let a fellow theater nerd miss a movie. Come on!

Mike leads the way down the vent shaft. They get to a grate that leads outside. Braff presses on it, but a little latch on the other side keeps it closed.

He tries to reach through the slots with his fingers.

BRAFF

It's like my hand is traditional media and the latch is a Gen Z audience! I just can't quite reach it, bro!

MIKE

Oh, really? Because I think we should pencil you in for a five o'clock showing.

Mike holds up the number 2B pencil and give it to Braff.

Braff works the pencil between the slots and uses it to lift the latch. He shimmies out of the vent onto the school lawn.

Mike tries to follow but gets caught.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Shit, I'm stuck.

BRAFF

Oh, uh, should I get someone?

MIKE

No. Go to your movie. You beautiful fucking nerd.

BRAFF

Thanks, my guy.

Braff runs off, leaving Mike stuck halfway out of the vent.

A beat.

MIKE

I'm sure someone will come along...  
 Yep. Worst case, in the morning...  
 Wait, no, it's Friday... of the  
 long weekend. So. Tuesday... Good.  
 This is fine. I'm fine.

END