

dirtbags

written by

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COLD OPEN

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - DAY

1

A messy Brooklyn apartment. SYDNEY (late 20s, hot-girl stoner) slumps, notebook in lap, a politically-flavored podcast playing through her headphones. It looks like she's taking notes...

...Until we cut: It's her name, over and over. Someone sits on the adjacent couch.

STEVEN

(into his phone)

- three job rejections in a single day.
Could it be I'm destined for something
greater, or should I resign myself to a
life of overpowering, unceasing, deafening
MEDIOCRITY?!

Sydney rips her headphones off. STEVEN (mid 30s, muscle neb) is recording a voice memo on his PHONE.

SYDNEY

Steven!

STEVEN

...What?

SYDNEY

You know how you asked to come here
because of your neighbors' Polish yelling?

STEVEN

Yeah, Stanisław and Dagmara have really
been going through it. Did you know that
"kurwa" is the Polish word for "whore"?

SYDNEY

I can hear your blabbering through my
noise-cancelling headphones.

STEVEN

Syd, I already told you. This memoir is
the one thing keeping me sane.

The doorbell BUZZES.

SYDNEY

Oh! Pad Thai's here.

She doesn't move. Another BUZZ.

SYDNEY (CONT'D)

...Can you go downstairs and get it?

(CONTINUED)

STEVEN

I'm not your boyfriend. You get it.

The doorbell BUZZES repeatedly.

SYDNEY

I allow you into my inner sanctum and this is how you repay me?

STEVEN

Going down the stairs burns calories...

SYDNEY

You're calling me fat? Wow, that mustache really is turning you gay.

Another protracted doorbell BUZZ. STEVEN sighs.

STEVEN

We'll both go.

SYDNEY

UGH!

As they leave, we see Steven's phone is still recording.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

2

Steven and Sydney make their way to the front door.

SYDNEY

Sorry for being such a bitch lately. I thought I'd like being unemployed, but it's just giving me an existential crisis. And that's giving me ringworm. Plus if I don't pay rent this month my landlord can legally evict me, so...

STEVEN

(wasn't listening)

I hear you. If I don't find my way out of this slump, my fit pics will be my only legacy. And my stock options didn't vest.

SYDNEY

Panopticon fucked you like they fuck everyone. People are not happy about that snuff video thing.

STEVEN

Like nobody's ever seen a video of someone get their head sawed off before. Did Nick Berg die for nothing?

(CONTINUED)

STEVEN (CONT'D)

(Beat, sighing)

I can't believe I ever thought I had my life all figured out.

SYDNEY

At least you know what it feels like. When people search "Sydney Winger," I want them to see me and not the girl who played a pregnant nun in *The Secret of Cuck Island*.

STEVEN

Sydney, that was you.

SYDNEY

I'm freaking out. Like, what if I don't have something important to say? What if I'm just a washed-up niche micro-celeb who peaked at 1,200 followers?

STEVEN

Well...At least we have Pad Thai...

They open the front door just in time to see A DOZEN RATS working as one, carrying the delivery off into the night. Steven SHRIEKS.

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

3

Sydney exhales a big weed cloud. They're lying on the floor.

SYDNEY

Back in the day, this apartment's rent was probably \$50 and an eighth of crack. Today's Brooklyn is way less chill.

STEVEN

Welcome to the so-called "free market." Next thing you know, Panopticon is going to buy Chinatown and fill it with fucking Catholic neocons.

SYDNEY

They turned that metal go-go bar into a West Elm! And they do not let you use the bathroom there, even if you tell them you're on shrooms and it's an emergency.

STEVEN

What kind of fucked-up capitalist world do we live in where we can't shit and piss for free? We have to buy dinnerware first?

Steven's phone BUZZES. He sits up to get it.

(CONTINUED)

STEVEN (CONT'D)

Shit, I've been recording this whole time.

Sydney has a sudden epiphany.

SYDNEY

Steven! Are you stepping in what I'm
shitting?

STEVEN

What the fuck does that mean?

She snatches the phone from Steven, rewinds a bit.

STEVEN (V.O.)

Panopticon is going to buy Chinatown and
fill it with Catholic neocons.

SYDNEY

We have to start a podcast!

TITLES

ACT ONEEXT. DELI CURB - LATER (DAY)

4

Outside a bodega, Sydney and Steven share a deli sandwich. While conversing, Steven picks the sandwich apart, giving Sydney the cheese and bread.

SYDNEY

Don't you know a guy from that podcast that changed the lyrics of the Counting Crows song from Shrek 2 to be about jizzing? They're huge now.

STEVEN

Jeff from SploogeForce? I don't know him, he's friends with my old coworker.

SYDNEY

Well, circle back! Maybe he can hook us up.

STEVEN

I don't fuck with those people.

SYDNEY

Yeah, but if I started dating Jeff, it could catapult us into stardom. I could be on *Last Week Tonight* with John Oliver!

Steven's not convinced. Sydney touches his shoulder.

SYDNEY (CONT'D)

Steven, you're smart as hell and built like a house. A mid-century house.

(Beat.)

Besides, have you seen how much these people make on Patronizer? *Rivera Vault Reveal* makes \$100K a month! That's fuck you money!

STEVEN

You think you can just get everything with your feminine wiles.

SYDNEY

It's like that Emily Ratajkowski quote, "Well behaved women rarely make history."

(getting out her phone)

Looks like "Politics" is the most popular podcast subject. We're, like, already there.

(CONTINUED)

STEVEN

Sydney, you have no idea what's going on in the world. You thought Jane Goodall was shot and killed by one of her chimps. Why would anyone want to listen to you talk politics? What are you, a narcissist?

SYDNEY

I told you, I'm not a narcissist. I have narcissistic tendencies.

(Beat.)

And a chimp could get hold of a gun. And revolt.

STEVEN

You want a politics podcast? Try this out.

Steven reaches into his bag, hands her a MARX-ENGELS READER.

SYDNEY

Holy shit, you actually keep this on your person? Is it this a Pickup Artist thing?

(Beat.)

Sorry. Thanks.

Steven gets up.

STEVEN

Whatever. I have to hit the gym before my date tonight.

SYDNEY

I'll keep you abreast!

STEVEN

I don't want to see that again.

INT. STEVEN'S APARTMENT - LATER

5

Steven hosts LEAH (28, Barbie-doll cute) for dinner. They sit over dishes of squid ink pasta and *Josh* brand wine.

LEAH

My mom's been bugging me about dating a Jewish guy, she's gonna be *verklemt*.

STEVEN

Yeah, me too. My mom made it very clear she wants my kids to come from a Jewish womb and not a Taiwanese one like my brother's.

(Beat)

So Leah, you a New York Jew?

(CONTINUED)

LEAH
Recent transplant, actually.

STEVEN
Nice. Where did you move from?

LEAH
I was in LA for a bit. Tried to do the whole acting thing...but I moved here to focus on my art.

STEVEN
I was in Cali, too. Had a tech job there that brought me over here. Panopticon, you've probably heard of them.

LEAH
Panopticon? Do you still work there?

STEVEN
(flexing bicep)
I'm focusing on my art.

Leah laughs, charmed.

INT. SYDNEY'S LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

6

Sydney opens her door to her cousin, Simon (28), an obviously agitated cokehead finance bro.

SYDNEY
Woah. That was fast.

SIMON
(aggressively chewing gum)
I had to walk over to cool off.

SYDNEY
You walked here? From where?

Simon loudly swallows his gum.

SIMON
Some bar. Across the Brooklyn Bridge.

SYDNEY
Oh boy. Come in. I just ordered Thai.

Sydney invites Simon inside. He sits down, still tense.

SIMON
Keith's lucky I got so many tools from those anger management classes. Had no idea I was packing heat.

(CONTINUED)

SIMON (CONT'D)
 Coulda hit him from behind with the
 schwing schwing, blow that ass out,
 boom.

SYDNEY
 Are you talking about anal?

Simon grabs nunchuks out of a holster and spins them.

SIMON
 What? No, you perv. I'm talking about
 these: Solid mahogany. Short shaft
 length. Breast cancer awareness paracord.

SYDNEY
 Oooh, can I try?

SIMON
 Uh...

He stuffs the nunchuks back into his holster.

SIMON (CONT'D)
 No offense. It's just, you know...

SYDNEY
 I'm kind of an
 idiot, I know.

SIMON (CONT'D)
 You're kind of
 an idiot.

SIMON (CONT'D)
 So what is it you called me over here
 for, anyway? My sage wisdom?

SYDNEY
 Simon...I'm starting a podcast!

Simon rubs his temples.

SIMON
 Here's the thing, Syd. Everyone and
 their mother has a podcast now. It's a
 lowly jester's vocation. What sets you
 apart?

SYDNEY
 ...I have *je ne sais quoi*.

SIMON
 Okay, sure...but do you have a point of
 view? Do you know your target audience?

SYDNEY
 Uh...my plan was to discuss leftism so
 that people like me and give me money.

(CONTINUED)

SIMON

Ah, classic. Fool the commie nutjobs into padding your wallet. Like taking candy from an ecstasy-addled raver.

Simon empties a baggy of coke, sets up a couple lines. Sydney expects one, but he snorts all in quick succession.

SIMON (CONT'D)

(sniffly)

You know Joe Rogan, host of the most listened-to podcast ever? My mans laid the groundwork: Blunts with billionaires. Take horse pills. Advertise pube shampoo.

SYDNEY

Joe Rogan took horse pills?

SIMON

Hell yeah! Cured his COVID and his threadworms. Was a huge medical advancement, but "they" don't want you to know that.

SYDNEY

You're not selling me on him.

SIMON

Listen. If I've learned anything from the white power bodybuilding forums I keep ending up on, it's that the people love JoRo 'cause he does his own fuckin' thing. That's how you get a shitton of followers. Authenticity. A point of view.

SYDNEY

Imagine how much attention I'd get if I had a shitton of followers. They'd probably comment on my Instagram posts.

(quietly)

Looking good, girl. With your sexy ass.

SIMON

Plus, my office mate Xavier has finally been declared dead, so I got a bunch of his clients. Things are going pretty well, if you catch my drift.

SYDNEY

Someone died...and that's good?

SIMON

Hell yeah! I'm papered up. And if you're starting a podcast, you need someone who can help you from the ground up.

(CONTINUED)

SYDNEY

That's why I called you. Business stuff.
I'm not good at it. Also, I'm going broke.

SIMON

Most people in our family have a hustle mindset, but all you've ever done is shit your pants on the G train. So is it just you on this podcast?

SYDNEY

My friend Steven, too. He's got a date tonight, but his mustache is turning him gay, so I'm pretty sure he'll be here.

SIMON

Yo Syd, throw on some Mary J. Blige. I need to activate.

Simon reaches for the baggie and sees that it's empty.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Shit. Keith's a fucking Hoover. I'm gonna holler at my plug.

Simon furiously types on his phone.

INT. STEVEN'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

7

STEVEN

So, you're an artist?

LEAH

Yeah, I actually just started a Cindy Sherman-inspired series where I take self-portraits in hand-crocheted bikinis.

STEVEN

Oh, that sounds really cool.

He takes an oversized swig of wine.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

What do the, uh, hand-crocheted bikinis represent?

LEAH

My fractured identity. I feel like I've been so many people throughout my life, but they've all had my amazing body. It's really helped me with a lot of my issues.

(CONTINUED)

LEAH (CONT'D)
Objectification, post-Y2K consumerism,
chlamydia, boy trauma.

STEVEN
More Josh?

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

8

Simon opens the door to KC (27), fat, butch, carrying a large
DUFFLE BAG.

KC
(to Simon)
What up Slimon!?

Simon and KC dap each other up, Top Gun style.

KC (CONT'D)
(to Sydney)
I'm Kacey, but you can call me K.C.,
like the letters. Everybody know Kacey,
but not everybody know KC, ya feel? Your
cuz is a legend, dead ass. On that real
gentlemanly type beat.

SIMON
Yo, Special K, it's 'cause you're family.
(to Sydney)
You hear that, Sydney? She's family.

SYDNEY
(doing finger math)
Does that make her my...drug dealer once-
removed, or...

KC
If you're Slime's blood, you have my
loyalty. He's not like all those other
money-hungry shysters with their secret
devil horns and their investment
properties in Williamsburg.

SYDNEY
... Are you talking about Jews? God's
Chosen People?

KC
No! God no. Finance bros! I got dumb love
for Jews. You guys write, like, the
funniest shows on TV. Prolly like...all
shit on TV, if we're being honest...
(Beat.)
... Wanna snort some lines?

INT. STEVEN'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

9

They're both messy-haired, drunk on Josh.

STEVEN

(close to tears)

And then they ended up training an AI model based on all of my work and used it to replace me. Sort of like a professional cucking. Was not cool.

LEAH

(sympathetic)

I totally get it. My mom always told me, Leah, you should be an actress. You're so pretty, you don't even look that Jewish. I thought being a murdered corpse in the Investigation Discovery original series "Bloodthirsty Wives" would open up a bunch of doors for me. I'm just a girl from the Detroit suburbs with dreams of stardom. Like my hero, Elizabeth Berkeley!

STEVEN

You're from the suburbs of Detroit? I know someone from there! She's Jewish, maybe you know her.

LEAH

Really? Who? Maybe she's my cousin.

STEVEN

Her name is Sydney Winger.

Leah's face goes pale.

LEAH

You know...Sydney Winger?

STEVEN

She's a good friend. I respect her. I respect all women.

LEAH

(weird)

Yeah...we were college roommates. Until the Incident.

INT. SYDNEY'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

10

A little messier than last scene. Lines have been snorted. Sydney and Simon are belting along to "Family Affair" by Mary J. Blige.

(CONTINUED)

SYDNEY

I'm thinking low tech, indie sleaze. I want it to feel like a voice note you leave your friend after reading *Scammer* by Caroline Calloway.

SIMON

You stupid bitch. We can't skimp out on sound quality. You think Rogan's talking into his phone like a pussy? We're gonna need a badass audio hookup.

KC

(wiping her nose)

Badass audio hookup? That's my bread and motherfuckin' butter.

SIMON

Wait, what? I thought selling drugs was your bread and motherfuckin' butter.

KC

That's the main course, brother! But I got a whole-ass degree. Full Sail U let's get it! GO WALLABIES!

SYDNEY

GUYS. SHUT UP! We could RECORD the podcast LIVE. Audience and everything. I can even braid my hair the night before so it looks extra pretty.

SIMON

Yes. Live podcast. A fucking social event.

SYDNEY

A socialist event. The "who's who" of Bushwick/Ridgewood. Most of them are in a unionized polycule anyway. We'll be preaching to the choir.

SIMON

And KC, you can handle all the tech shit. Recording. Intro. Outro. That's about it.

KC

I could throw this on my curriculum vitae! Like near the top!

SIMON

A live podcast. Sydney, you're a genius. Emily Ratajkowski-level.

(CONTINUED)

SYDNEY
Aw, that means a lot.

SIMON
Any time, blood.

KC
Way more busted though.

SIMON
Oh, absolutely. Goes without saying.

SYDNEY
You guys are the best.
(Beat.)
Wait! Maybe the bar my ex-co-worker's ex-boyfriend works at will let us use it if we bring in business.
(checking her phone)
Dammit, missed call!

EXT. APARTMENT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

11

Sydney opens the door to a seemingly intact bag of food.

SYDNEY
I can microwave this...

She picks up the bag and notices it's filled with squirming rats. She drops it, horrified.

SYDNEY (CONT'D)
(disturbed)
Holy shit.

INT. STEVEN'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

12

LEAH
I can't believe you know Sydney Winger.

STEVEN
Are you gonna tell me why that freaks you out so much, or just keep saying it?

LEAH
It's just so funny. Like, what are the odds of you being friends with the girl who called me a "Bichon Frisé" because I'm "a dumb white bitch"?

Steven chuckles, sees Leah scowl. He clears his throat.

(CONTINUED)

STEVEN

...Well! If we're all done with the main course, I think we can move on to a little something that rhymes with "shmocolate shlava shlake."

Awkward pause. He leaps up and pulls a chocolate cake from a hiding place.

LEAH

I'm, uh, actually pretty full...It was nice to meet you, but I should probably go home.

STEVEN

Please. I can't be left alone with this much cake. We talked about this.

(whispering)

About my eating disorder.

LEAH

(looking at her phone)

I can see why you got replaced you by AI. Your mustache screams "bottom." Maybe you should have gone with a more dignified career, like, I don't know, podcasting?

(Beat.)

OK. Uber's here. Bye, douchebag!

She exits. After a beat, Steven starts a recording on his phone.

STEVEN

I refuse to let the sting of rejection dampen my resolve. I have worn many hats: trilby, porkpie, and for one night, Kangol. It would appear fate, that cruel mistress, beckons me now to sport the formidable hat of Podcaster ... which I believe is also a trilby.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO**INT. SYDNEY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

13

The apartment buzzer RINGS.

SIMON
(startled, grabbing for
his weapon)
Shit!

Sydney slams the VOICE button.

SYDNEY
Steven? That you?

STEVEN (O.S.)
Yeah.

SYDNEY
So no head—

STEVEN (O.S.)
Can you just buzz me in?

Sydney presses the door button. Steven enters, crestfallen after his failed date.

SIMON
Simon, nice to meet you. So you're gonna
do a podcast with my cousin here?

STEVEN
Hey, man... Steven.

SYDNEY
Steven's normally cool. He just had a
bad date. Rejection makes him gassy.

STEVEN
About that.

Steven snorts a line and takes a shot.

STEVEN (CONT'D)
Turns out she knew you. From college.

SYDNEY
She knew me?

STEVEN
Yeah. Bichon Frise? That ring a bell?

(CONTINUED)

SYDNEY

Oh, no. Leah Feinglass? We lived together for a year... until I kicked her out.

(Beat.)

I also may have called her a slut pig. But she fucked my boyfriend. Well, he was about to be. Before she slept with him!

STEVEN

I might have liked her better if she was a slut pig.

(Beat.)

Anyway, this socialist podcasting thing. I'm down.

SIMON

We've been brainstorming our asses off.

SYDNEY

Check this: A normal podcast—except it's live! Raw. Uncut.

STEVEN

Live? Isn't that kind of jumping the gun? I mean, I just want to make sure we come across, you know...smart. Or at least not stupid.

A toilet FLUSHES. KC emerges from the bathroom.

KC

I'd let it simmer a lil' before going in there.

STEVEN

(startled)

What the hell is that?

SYDNEY

That's KC. Our audio engineer.

KC

I'd give you my CV, but it's outdated as of ten minutes ago.

STEVEN

An audio engineer? Have any gear?

SIMON

Yo, KC, break out the duffle.

(CONTINUED)

KC

I don't know, this Steven guy kinda seems like a pussy.

KC unzips her duffel bag, removes a bong, grinder, whipped cream canister, and nitrous chargers.

SYDNEY

Oh god, it smells like trench foot.

SIMON

Terpenes. That's how you know it's good shit.

KC inspects her bong.

KC

Oh sick, it didn't break.

STEVEN

That's not the kind of gear I was referring to, Audio Engineer.

KC pulls out a BRIEFCASE from the duffel, unfastens it.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

This is what I'm talking about.

KC opens the briefcase, revealing a selection of marijuana.

KC

(to Sydney)

If you prefer more of a body high, I have this Indica called "Peach Nipples." \$40 for an eighth.

STEVEN

They sell weed around the corner for less.

KC

But does it come in a pouch with the doomed OceanGate submersible on it?

After Sydney buys weed, KC grabs a tangle of wires and mics.

KC (CONT'D)

Now, the microphones. These are genuine ...QUINGPLORX..?

Steven picks up the mics.

STEVEN

Never heard of that brand. Are they unidirectional? Cardioid?

(CONTINUED)

STEVEN (CONT'D)
 (Knocking on them)
 Is this casing made of plastic?

KC boots up her computer, glaring at him.

KC
 You think I don't know my shit? These
 mics had over a hundred 5-star reviews
 on Temu. Grow up.

STEVEN
 Listen, I'm just trying to help.

KC
 I don't need help. The fuck is wrong
 with you? Did you go to Sarah Lawrence
 or something?

SIMON
 Yo, Steven, let her cook. I'm telling
 you, she's a female prodigy.

KC
 I'm like the Stephen Hawking of being a
baller.

Steven, fuming, pulls Sydney aside.

STEVEN
 (hushed)
 What the fuck is this?

They glance over at KC, who continues her Stephen Hawking
 impression for Simon.

KC
 (in a robotic voice)
 Steven Hawking with that Quantum Kush.
 (in a regular voice)
 He was a cyborg or some shit, right?
 Like Robocop?

SIMON
 Wait. Wasn't he on Epstein's flight log?

KC
 You know what that means...

SIMON
 He got MONEY!!

KC (CONT'D)
 He got MONEY!!

CUT BACK TO:

(CONTINUED)

STEVEN

Do we need her here? She's brash. And she smells like boy scout camp.

SYDNEY

You can just say "lesbian," you know.

STEVEN

Come on. I'm just saying, I know how to plug a microphone into a laptop. And I think she lives out of that bag.

CUT BACK TO:

Simon shows off his nunchuks to KC.

KC

Arsenio's Self-Defense Emporium?

SIMON

(saying their tagline)

"If it ain't from Arsenio's, you gon' die."

She pulls out a canister of pepper spray.

KC

That's where I copped this pepper spray. Two milli Scovillis. Fuck with us!

SIMON

(spinning nunchuks)

Bum-rush that fucker. One-tap that ass.

CUT BACK TO:

SYDNEY

I know he's...emotionally unstable, but Simon knows what he's doing.

STEVEN

(hushed)

Sydney, he let a vagrant into your apartment. What if she doesn't leave? She'll have squatter's rights!

Simon and KC saunter towards them.

KC

Y'all whisper loud as hell!

(to Sydney)

I get it. You don't know me. I'm in your space.

(CONTINUED)

KC (CONT'D)
 You're prolly like "who is this?", "does she even know audio engineering?", "are those giant spiders or did I take too many Benadryls?" but, respectfully, chill dawg.

STEVEN
 Well, no offense, KC, but it's hard to take you seriously when you carry around a duffle bag with a bong in it. Who have you worked with, anyway?

KC
 Y'all know "Suck It" by The Shit Twins featuring Ame Bibabi?...OK, what about Mind of Json?...The Miami Joker?

Steven and Sydney stare blankly.

KC (CONT'D)
 Barkev Varjabedian.
 (pantomiming)
 The zurna player?...No?

Steven shoots Sydney a knowing glance.

SIMON
 Sydney. She's family.

SYDNEY
 (to Steven)
 He's right, you know.

KC
 I got your shit handled.

She loads a nitrous charger up, takes a giant bong rip, and blasts the whippit into the bong.

KC (CONT'D)
 (in a very deep Whippit voice)
 Don't even stress about it.

KC coughs until she gags.

SYDNEY
 (checking her phone)
 Guys! The Florida Room says we can use their basement. We need some promo.

Simon's phone DINGS.

(CONTINUED)

SIMON

Finito! I've been using this new Panopticon AI for like, everything. Check this graphic. It even generated a caption.

SYDNEY

(reading the caption)

Sydney Winger and Steven Rosenthal, commentators with aptitude for commentary, premiere their podcast LIVE at The Florida Room. Strong indications suggest they may ascend to becoming a cultural touchstone.

Steven and KC read the post from over her shoulders.

KC

I'm gonna be real, I don't really see it for you guys. But I believe in you or whatever.

STEVEN

You used that Panopticon AI bullshit?

SIMON

Do I look like a philanthropist? Artists don't need money.

KC

I like how Sydney's eyes are almost the same size.

SYDNEY

And the caption is something you would write anyway, Steven.

STEVEN

Are you fucking kidding me? It's like I don't even exist to you.

SYDNEY

You know, if you're gonna keep whining, you can leave. You're harshing the vibe.

STEVEN

Great! Sounds like a plan. Bye.

Steven storms out, slamming the door behind him.

KC

See, I told you he was a pussy.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREEINT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - DAY

14

Sydney reads the event post's comments. She stops at one.

"more wannabe progressives thinking they're 'the next big thing' while they order Pad Thai from an underpaid gig worker every night. nobody wants this."

She clicks to see who posted it—Leah. She looks through her feed and sees pictures of Leah in her bikinis.

SYDNEY

SLUT PIG!

Feeling insecure, she calls up Steven.

STEVEN

What do you want, skank?

SYDNEY

We have to do this podcast together.

STEVEN

I thought you said you could do it all by yourself, Gilles Deleuze.

SYDNEY

Did you just call me a gay loser in French?

STEVEN

Exactament! You don't know shit!

SYDNEY

That's why I need you! I'm sorry we used the AI that cucked you. Even though it gave you a sick-looking five pack of abs.

STEVEN

You know what, Sydney? You made your bed, so lie in it. Have fun with your stupid little graphic and your stupid lesbian friends and your stupid one-woman podcast. I'm out.

Steven hangs up. Sydney, starting to panic, glances over at the Marx-Engels Reader. She opens it, gets bored almost immediately.

SYDNEY

(looking at the cover)

Reader? I can't fucking read this shit.

(CONTINUED)

She looks up a synopsis on Wikipedia, gets bored almost immediately. Hits her weed pen.

SYDNEY (CONT'D)

Nah, I got this. I have a Bachelorette's Degree.

She puts on a YOUTUBE video, MARX-ENGELS DEMYSTIFIED. Almost immediately bored, she skims and gives up, then searches MARX-ENGELS SIMPLE FOR KIDS. Her phone blasts a dopey jingle.

DOPEY VIDEO (O.S.)

Lil' Karl shares all his candy with his friends! Yay! But Lil' Johnny keeps all his friends' candy for himself! No fair!

Sydney giggles, hits her weed pen, and passes out snoring.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - NEXT DAY

15

Sydney wakes up suddenly to KNOCKING at the door. She opens the door to Simon, holding a BODEGA SANDWICH.

SIMON

You're about to become podcast royalty, so I got you this to celebrate.

Sydney takes the sandwich, glum.

SYDNEY

Thanks.

SIMON

What's going on? You usually finish in a few bites.

She nibbles, unenthusiastic.

SYDNEY

It's too much pressure to carry a podcast by myself. I'm scared.

SIMON

Don't tell me you're backing out. I just finished setting up the Patronizer! A \$5 tier for most and a \$10 tier for feet pics. You will have to send feet pics, sorry.

SYDNEY

I'm not backing out. I'm just afraid of coming off like a total piece of shit.

(CONTINUED)

SIMON

Sydney! All you do is smoke weed, order food, and scroll on your phone. Why would anything think you're a total piece of shit?

Sydney shifts uncomfortably.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Here. A Xanny for your nerves.

He takes a baggy from his pocket and hands a PILL to Sydney. She downs the pill with a sip of RED BULL.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Just promise me you won't drink later. You could die...or have the night of your life with a stripper named Nevaeh. The chances are about 60/40, so I wouldn't risk it.

INT. THE FLORIDA ROOM - CONTINUOUS

16

They approach Sydney's ex-coworker's ex HARLOW at the bar.

SYDNEY

Hey, I'm Kyle's ex-coworker, Sydney. I don't know if you remember me, I think we met at the holiday party?

HARLOW

(glaring)

Oh, yes...I remember you.

SIMON

Simon Appelman, producer, financial advisor, licensed Reiki therapist. Well, soon-to-be.

Simon extends his hand. Harlow gives him a weak shake.

HARLOW

Your event's downstairs. I'll be working the bar. And you have to be out at 9:45 because Aristotle has a tantric yoga seminar.

SIMON

Ooooh, can we stay for that?

HARLOW

...I wouldn't jump to conclusions.

(CONTINUED)

KC pops up, holding LITTLE CUPS. She hands a shot to Sydney and Simon.

KC
In case y'all need some liquid courage.

SIMON
I'm already brave. I just like alcohol.

He takes the shot.

SIMON (CONT'D)
(grimacing, coughing)
What is this?

KC
(holding up a flask)
Everclear.

Sydney looks over at Simon, but his attention is on Harlow.

SIMON
So this Aristotle...is her approach
more instructional, or hands-on...?

HARLOW
They work touch-free. But if your chakra
is open, you can reach climax.

Simon nods, intrigued. Sydney looks at her shot, hesitating, shrugs, and downs it.

INT. STEVEN'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

17

Steven, dejected, looks at the podcast's promo post, scrolls the comments. He chuckles at one until he sees it's Leah's.

STEVEN
(to himself)
Wait a second. Wannabe progressives?

He glances at his Reader, fire lit under his ass. He's going to save the day, if only to make himself look good.

STEVEN (CONT'D)
SLUT PIG!

INT. THE BASEMENT OF THE FLORIDA ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

18

As the basement fills, Simon, in the front row, gives Sydney a thumbs up. She smiles back and goes to the stage tech room.

INT. STAGE TECH ROOM - CONTINUOUS

19

KC holds up her tangle of microphones.

KC

So...minor tech issue. Turns out that these QUINGPLORXes are actually mic-shaped speakers. And they're broken.

SYDNEY

We have no mics? How am I supposed to regale a crowd without a mic?

KC

You could regale acoustic.

KC pours from her flask into a shot cup, downs it, shrugs.

SYDNEY

That's your fix? Humiliate me onstage like I'm Bret Michaels at the 2009 Tony Awards?

She sobs just as Steven walks in with a PC Richard & Son bag.

SYDNEY (CONT'D)

Steven! Oh god. It's a mess. The mics are broken. And everything is pulsating.

STEVEN

(holding up the bag)

None of what you're saying surprises me.

He takes PRO GRADE MICS out, tosses them to KC.

KC

"Sennheiser"? What kinda fake ass shit?

Sydney hugs Steven.

STEVEN

Don't make me regret this.

SYDNEY

I would never do that to you.

INT. THE BASEMENT OF THE FLORIDA ROOM - LATER

20

Sydney and Steven face a small crowd. Over the PA, KC plays "What U Gon' Do", takes too long to fade it out.

STEVEN

Welcome to the show! I'm Steven.

(CONTINUED)

SYDNEY

I'm Sydney! Who else feels normal?

Tepid applause. Weird vibes.

STEVEN

Um...so anyone here a leftist?

Silence, save for some coughs and throat clearing.

SYDNEY

Marxists gimme a WOO-WOO!

The crowd WOO-WOOs with slightly more enthusiasm.

SYDNEY (CONT'D)

Groucho, they called him. Ol' Groucho.

STEVEN

Let's talk critique. Is economy a pseudoscience?

(Beat.)

...What say you, Sydney?

SYDNEY

Uh...These lights are really bright...

STEVEN

You didn't read the Marx-Engels Reader, did you?

SYDNEY

Sorry I didn't wanna drag that thing to a bar so someone approaches me and I compliment his one tiny stupid earring.

Unseen by Sydney and Steven, a small figure in a big black hoodie slips into the crowd. It's Leah.

STEVEN

That book is vital. It's step two of socialism, after joining a food co-op.

SYDNEY

I just thought it was just one of your "moves" that doesn't work.

STEVEN

I take umbrage!

SYDNEY

Not umbrage! I'm sorry, I just feel like you should be getting way more pussy. You're a graveyard of romantic mishaps.

(CONTINUED)

STEVEN

The last "mishap" I had was your fault.
 (to the audience)
 I went on a date with her college nemesis.

SYDNEY

(blowing a raspberry)
Nemesis? Leah? With her crocheted bikinis?
 Her braindead ass makes Terry Schiavo look
 like...fuckin'...Emily Ratajowski.

Scattered GASPS.

AUDIENCE MEMBER #1

My uncle was braindead until they took
 him off life support!

LEAH

(disguising her voice)
 Ableist! Also, crocheted bikinis sound
 really brave!

SYDNEY

I've shit myself on public transit. I
 identify as disabled!
 (pointing to crowd member)
 Like how you prolly identify as, I don't
 know, "Frog"?

AUDIENCE MEMBER #2

Seriously? Not cool.

AUDIENCE MEMBER #3

Yeah, what is wrong with you? Did you
 go to Sarah Lawrence?

Simon sees multiple phones emerge to record videos. He panics and
 runs backstage, doesn't notice that one of the recorders is Leah.

INT. STAGE TECH ROOM - CONTINUOUS

21

KC, laughing, sees Simon and pulls down her Xbox headset, a
 video of "Accidentally in Cum" by SploogeForce playing in the
 background.

KC

Yo, your cousin is ON one.

SIMON

She's bombing. And at risk for respiratory
 depression.

(Beat.)

KC...I need you to go out there.

(CONTINUED)

KC
Why can't you do it?

SIMON
Look at me. I'm wearing boat shoes.

They hear Sydney and Steven from the other side of the wall.

SYDNEY (O.S.)
I don't want to sound controversial, but some people should be killed for being freaks.

SIMON
Come on... You got that dyke swag.

KC considers it.

INT. THE BASEMENT OF THE FLORIDA ROOM - CONTINUOUS

22

The few people left in the audience are heckling.

SYDNEY
So you don't think the guy who fucked a dolphin should be chemically castrated?

LEAH
(disguising her voice)
Fascist!

SYDNEY
FOUND THE DOLPHIN FUCKER!

KC rushes onstage, pushes Sydney out of her chair, and takes it.

KC
(to the crowd)
Relax, the lesbian has arrived.

Simon uses a SHEPHERD'S HOOK to yank Sydney offstage.

STEVEN
Thank god you're here. I can't believe I just said that.

KC
(to the audience)
I totally get being trans. I wanted to be Eminem when I grew up. Still kinda weird to me, but it's all love.

INT. STAGE TECH ROOM - CONTINUOUS

23

SYDNEY
What the fuck is that?

(CONTINUED)

SIMON

Every stage has a shepherd's hook, for moments like this! I told you not to drink! You could die.

SYDNEY

So what? You can't replace me.

SIMON

We just did. With KC.

SYDNEY

...You replaced me?

SIMON

They wanted to throw tomatoes, Sydney. But Harlow only had Bloody Mary garnishes. Pepperoncini!

SYDNEY

JUDAS!

Simon covers her mouth.

SIMON

(hissing)

Shut up! I spent 25 minutes setting up that Patronizer!

Sydney attacks Simon, knocking KC's computer to the ground.

SYDNEY

And to think we sang Family Affair together!

She snatches his nunchuks and swings them over her head.

SYDNEY (CONT'D)

Our harmonies were beautiful! WE CRIED!

SIMON

Sydney, don't be a hysterical woman! You're better than that!

Sydney laughs maniacally and runs to the stage, nunchuks in hand.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Damn it! She isn't.

INT. THE BASEMENT OF THE FLORIDA ROOM - CONTINUOUS

24

KC

And like, everyone thought he hated gay people until Elton John performed "Stan" onstage with him at the 2001 Grammys.

(CONTINUED)

Sydney storms onstage waving the nunchuks, Simon close behind.

SYDNEY
Hateration!!! HOLLERATION!!

The crowd BOOS louder. Leah, still unseen, keeps filming.

HARLOW
Get those nunchuks away from her!

SIMON
Damn it, Harlow, I'm working on it!

Steven ducks under the table.

SYDNEY
(brandishing)
IN THIS DANCERY!!!!

STEVEN
The shepherd's hook!

SIMON
I'll get it. Neutralize the threat!

KC
I got this.

STEVEN
I got this.

KC readies her spray, Steven his tackle. KC sprays right as he grabs the nunchuks from Sydney, getting him in the line of fire.

STEVEN (CONT'D)
AH!!! MY OLIVER PEOPLES GLASSES!!

He smacks KC with the nunchuks, causing a major nosebleed.

KC
That's my snorting nostril!!

Sydney coughs until she vomits. Steven follows. KC's computer glitches, blasts "Accidentally in Cum" over the speakers.

HARLOW
Everyone out. UPSTAIRS, NOW. EVACUATE.

Simon, hook in hand, slips, falls in the vomit. Grabs a mic.

SIMON
(screeching mic feedback)
This has been a sociological study
conducted by Harvard University. There
is no podcast. Thank you.

The dispersing crowd reveals Leah, finishing her video.

(CONTINUED)

SYDNEY
SLUT FIG.

LEAH
Nice to see you're still a total piece of
shit. Can't wait to post this on
Panopticon.

In response, Sydney vomits on Leah's shoes.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - DAY

25

Sydney tumbles out of bed. Simon, who slept on her couch, wakes
with a start.

SIMON
You're alive! You piece of shit. You
made us look like assholes last night.

SYDNEY
...Did I get maced?

SIMON
It was a shandeh! Thank God KC's computer
broke, or we'd have to destroy it.
(Beat.)
Pause. Shit. Someone got a video of us.
(scrolling a bit)
...and it went viral.

Sydney pouts, but Simon smiles.

SIMON (CONT'D)
...and now we have 156 Patronizers.

Sydney checks her phone.

SYDNEY
(triumphant)
Slut pig!

INT. SYDNEY'S APARTMENT - LATER

26

They celebrate with joints, a tampon in KC's nose.

SIMON
To the podcast! Whatever it's called.
Did we ever choose a name?

SYDNEY
I was thinking "Pol Pod." Short for
"Politics Podcast."

(CONTINUED)

KC
 "Pol Pod." Nice.

SIMON
 Has a nice patter to it.

STEVEN
 We're not worried about the Khmer Rouge?

SYDNEY
 I don't know what that is.

SIMON
 To POL POD!

A symphony of coughs. Sydney's phone BUZZES.

SYDNEY
 (on the phone)
 Hold on, I'll be right down.

She opens the door, sees food on the ground as the delivery guy speeds away.

SYDNEY (CONT'D)
 (savory whiff)
 Finally.

She heads upstairs. Everyone cheers...until she opens the bag.

SIMON
 Oh my god, is it giving birth?

STEVEN
 No, I think it's—

KC
 Yup. They're known to eat their own young under duress.

Sydney gags, runs away.

SPLOOGEFORCE PLAYS: Come on come on, I'm about to explode, come on come on, nowhere to toss my huge load, come on come on, now there's cum on all my stuuuuuff...

END.