

I LOVE DICK

"Pilot"

Written by

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I Love Dick

"Pilot"

1 INT. BED-STUY APARTMENT -- DAY

A crammed office. Boxes floor to ceiling.

Stacks of VIDEOS. SUPER 8 films, TAPES.

CHRIS (39), clever, with a low frenetic hum, opens a closet. It's crammed with computer monitors, speakers, cables.

CHRIS

Not bringing any of this. I've got the cut on my laptop and can put the rest of the footage on this tiny thing. Insane.

She picks up a small HARD DRIVE.

The HIPSTER SUBLETTER, (30s) nods.

CHRIS

I can clear some space if you want. I got a bunch of crap to throw out.

Chris picks up a stack of mail, aimlessly tidying up.

An envelope catches her eye. She opens it.

"CEASE AND DESIST" letter.

Chris pockets the letter. She'll get to it later.

The SUBLETTER noses around the kitchen.

CHRIS

Oh, garbage disposal hasn't worked in seven years.

SUBLETTER

I don't cook.

CHRIS

You want to do a month to month? See how things go?

SUBLETTER

Perfect.

Prelap Music:

Ah, a traveling tune. A launching, invincible guitar strum.

## THE SMITHS

*I left the North  
I traveled South*

2 **EXT. BED-STUY APARTMENT CURBSIDE -- DAY**

SYLVERE(42) intellectual, vaguely European, packs the Subaru.  
It's a Tetris game. He's winning.

## THE SMITHS

*I found a tiny house  
And I can't help the way I feel*

Chris takes a long last look at the apartment.  
No nostalgia. Adventure face.

3 **EXT. DESOLATE HIGHWAY -- DAY**

A travel montage.

-- The rolling hills of Pennsylvania.  
-- Crossing the Mississippi  
-- The flat desolate plains of Oklahoma  
-- "Welcome to Texas, The Lone Star State"  
-- Tumbleweeds, actual tumbleweeds  
-- Oil pumps patiently seesaw against the vast horizon  
The sensible SUBARU passes a parade of 18 wheelers.

## THE SMITHS

*Oh yes you can kick me.  
And you can punch me.*

Cattle. Horses. Home-made signs for "Home-made Tamales."  
Rusting Grain Silos. Big Sky.  
Desert winds kicking up dust clouds.

## THE SMITHS

*And you can break my face  
But you won't change the way I feel  
'Cause I love you*

4 **INT. SUBARU -- DAY**

Sylvere drums the steering wheel, excited.

Chris sits in the passenger seat, something's bugging her.  
She's quiet.

SYLVERE

One class a semester! With that  
teaching load it's only going to take  
a couple of months to finish the book.  
Then I'll go back on the job market.  
Maybe end up at a nice liberal arts  
college in the middle west.

CHRIS

It's the Mid-west.

SYLVERE

Wharton and F. Scott call it the  
middle-west.

What's up with Chris?

SYLVERE

Why aren't you talking?

CHRIS

You know in the film, that bossa nova  
klezmer smash up that's under  
Rebecca's freak-out? I got this weird  
cease and desist letter from the  
composer's estate.

SYLVERE

How much do they want?

CHRIS

A hundred and fifty thousand. Fucking  
rapists. I guess I have to take it  
out. I don't have time to change it  
before the Venice Film Festival.  
Whole thing blows, it was so perfect.

Chris sees a road-side sign.

CHRIS

Oh! Tacos! Let's stop.

5 **EXT. MARFA -- DAY**

The car passes a "**Welcome to MARFA Pop.1819**" sign.

A blink and the town would be missed.

This land of cattle, javelinás, and snakes more plentiful than  
squirrels.

No drugstore. No Starbucks. Store fronts, abandoned and caked in dirt.

Wait...

A food truck?

An art gallery.

The retro Thunderbird Hotel.

This is Texas. Cowboy hats. Pick-ups. Beer with breakfast.

6 **INT. MEXICAN CANTINA - DAY**

Spanish tile a century old.

Atomic hot sauce on the table.

Sylvere and Chris devour a plate of tamales beans and rice.

Stares from the COOK(40s) a no-nonsense horse women.

Chris and Sylvere are oblivious. Heaven.

CHRIS

I want this entire plate of food in my  
face right now.

7 **EXT. RANCH HOUSE -- DAY**

The Subaru pulls up a long drive.

Behold, weathered Clapboard Homesteader House.

A few shattered windows. A score of bat nesting in the porch eaves. It's seen better days.

8 **INT. RANCH HOUSE -- DAY**

Chris roams from room to room.

Sylvere unpacks the car, dumping bags and boxes into the living room.

Chris sees the wood burning stove.

CHRIS

There's no heat?

She investigates the refrigerator circa 1950s. Doesn't work.

CHRIS

Fridge is broken.

She tries to start the stove.

CHRIS  
(shouting at Sylvere)  
So is the stove.

Sylvere finds a box of long wooden matches over the stove.  
Turns on the gas.

SYLVERE  
Wah-la. Now can we please not be late.  
Party's in an hour.

Chris wanders the house looking for a cell signal.

CHRIS  
There's no wi-fi. They said there was  
wi-fi. There's no wi-fi. It's like  
we're fucking Amish.

SYLVERE  
Not the time for negativity.

CHRIS  
I'm not being negative.

SYLVERE  
I will unpack the rest of the car, by  
myself, which I also happened to pack,  
by myself. If you go get ready. Most  
of the Humanities faculty will be  
there, and of course, Dick, the man we  
owe this bucolic adventure to. So  
please, please. I'm begging you, can  
we be on time?

Chris grabs her purse and heads up-stairs. She walks right into  
cobwebs.

Fuck! Fuck the god-damn spiders.

9 **INT. RANCH HOUSE BATHROOM -- DAY**

Running shower.

Chris sits on the toilet smoking a joint. Towel rolled up under  
the door.

Chris strips, about to step into the shower when:

What's that out the window?

A small Airstream. Beyond the pasture. A HUNCHED FIGURE  
splitting wood.

The figure looks up, stares at the house.

Chris backs away from the window.

10 **EXT. TEXAS INSTITUTE OF THE ARTS -- DAY**

A cluster of buildings, sleek contemporary architecture rising out of the high desert sand.

Framed by mountain on all sides.

11 **INT. DEPARTMENT HALLWAY -- DAY**

Sylvere and Chris freshened up for the party.

They peak into an office. Late afternoon sun streaming in.

Stunning view of the campus quad.

Spare but spacious. Academic chic.

Sylvere tries the door handle, locked.

SYLVERE

This isn't the broom closet I had at  
Columbia. Good God. This is a real  
office.

Chris looks at the number on the door.

Palms outstretched, she takes a "reading" of the space.

CHRIS

405. The birthplace of...  
*Recontextualizing Holocaust Fiction:*  
*An Anthology of Death by Sylvere*  
*Lorringer.*

A STUDENT (20), in pajama bottoms and hoodie approaches the door holding a paper.

The Student shoves the paper under the office door.

SYLVERE

Who's that for?

STUDENT

Dick's seminar. The Author as  
Anarchist.

The student saunters away.

SYLVERE

Author as Anarchist. Of course.

CHRIS

What's that even mean?

SYLVERE

It's one of his most legendary classes. Writing as a radical act. He wrote extensively about it in the 80s. Very provocative. Total bad-ass.

Sylvere consults his phone.

SYLVERE

I'm 405C.

12 **INT. 405C (SYLVERE'S OFFICE) -- DAY**

It's a broom closet.

Out of the window a large A/C vent and a parking lot.

CHRIS

We just need to hang some shelves.  
Once you get your books in here.

Sylvere flips on the light switch. Sickening florescent.

CHRIS

And some lamps. A rug will change everything.

Sylvere stands with clipped wings. Chris shuttles him out.

CHRIS

You got people to meet.

13 **INT. UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY -- DAY**

Spare walls except perhaps a James Turrell illumination.

Or the university's very own Rothko.

The room is teeming with FACULTY.

Sweaty cheese cubes. Room-temp chardonnay.

Shards of academic one-upmanship impale Chris.

--- "His reading of Wittenstein was so reductive..."

--- "When I was on sabbatical in Dar-es-Salaam."

--- "My dissertation on Byzantine choral arrangements."

Chris is trapped by a DISHEVELED THEOLOGIAN shoving a canape into his mouth.

DISHEVELED THEOLOGIAN

New blood I see. What department are we?

CHRIS

I'm, uh, my husband is Comp Lit. Sylvere.

DISHEVELED THEOLOGIAN

And what do we do?

CHRIS

Uh, we? We, are a filmmaker.

DISHEVELED THEOLOGIAN

Anything I've seen?

CHRIS

I'm premiering my latest at the Venice Film Festival.

DISHEVELED THEOLOGIAN

And that's a prestigious festival?

Chris chugs a glass of wine.

CHRIS

Many think so. Whose knowledge of indie film stretches beyond their Netflix algorithm.

The Disheveled Theologian moves on. Chris surveys the room.

A cluster is forming in one corner near the bar. Like moths to a flame.

Chris starts to investigate and is intercepted.

DULL MALE PROFESSOR

You're a filmmaker, huh? I'm a big big Lars Von Trier fan. Antichrist and Nymphomaniac are pure genius. Did you know he grafted actors' heads on the bodies of real porn stars? Provocative stuff.

CHRIS

I think, they are--

DULL MALE PROFESSOR

And the coitus? Unsimulated. Really, one excellent film after the other. Did you start early? Home-movies that sort of thing? Like Coppola?

CHRIS

Oh god no. I thought I would be a writer until I was like eight.

Chris snatches another glass of wine.

CHRIS

But then I wanted to drive a Barbie ice-cream truck. And be an astronaut. And then college was smoking crack and having abortions, you know how it is.

DULL MALE PROFESSOR

Oh I do.

Chris searches for Sylvere.

A blur of faces until the CLUSTER at the bar parts, Red-Sea like to reveal:

A RUGGED, SILVER-HAIRED COWBOY. This is DICK (57).

Chris spots an ASIAN GRAD STUDENT, swapping out Dick's empty glass for a fresh one.

Dick takes the fresh cocktail without acknowledging the student.

Chris, back on Dull Professor, pointing to Dick.

CHRIS

Who's that?

DULL MALE PROFESSOR

Ah, yes. That's Dick Ballard, the man himself.

CHRIS

*Author as Anarchist.*

DULL MALE PROFESSOR

That class has a three year wait list. Everyone loves having a celebrity on faculty. He was on Jon Stewart like ten times. And was a clue in the Tuesday crossword. I mean, Rock. Star.

CHRIS

Be right back.

She makes a B-line towards Dick.

A hand on her arm YANKS her back.

SYLVERE

What are you doing?

CHRIS

That's the Dick. I'm going to introduce myself. Say thank-you for hiring my husband and rescuing him from the distraction of our Bed-Stuy cess-pool.

SYLVERE

No, no, no. He's busy. We don't want to interrupt.

CHRIS

He's probably bored. C'mon. We are interesting. People like us. Let's go.

SYLVERE

(hissing)

Chris don't. Don't. How many have you had? You sound a little slurry.

CHRIS

I'm fine. We're being rude if we don't talk to him.

Chris shakes Sylvere off her.

Sylvere stands helpless watching:

The ACCOLADES make room for Chris in their adoring circle around Dick.

Thrusting a hand out.

CHRIS

Hi. I'm Chris Kraus. You hired my husband Sylvere. And you're Dick.

Nothing.

CHRIS

You go by Dick? Really? You choose to be called--anyway, wanted to introduce myself.

Nothing.

CHRIS

And now I've done that.

DICK

Okay.

But she can't leave. She should.

CHRIS

We just got here. And our fridge is busted. So where should we go to dinner. What's good? Like decent.

Dick studies her. Did he hear the question?

DICK

I like The Rope and Loin.

CHRIS

The Rope and Loin. That sounds like a the title of a fetish micro-fiction.

Dick is surprisingly amused.

CHRIS

Do you eat? Dinner? We tend to do it everyday. Eat dinner. And predictably, will do it tomorrow. If you'd like to? Join us? At like seven.

DICK

Sure.

A TWEEDY LACKEY grabs Dick's shoulder.

TWEEDY LACKEY

Dick, you are gonna shit yourself when I tell you what the fucking Dean did during the finance committee meeting.

On cue Chris skates away to the other end of the bar.

Sylvere joins her.

SYLVERE

What did you do?

CHRIS

Dick wants to have dinner with us tomorrow.

SYLVERE

CHRIS! What? Why didn't you let me,  
talk to him first?

CHRIS

You can talk to him all night  
tomorrow, at dinner.

SYLVERE

It's the principle of the thing! I  
don't want my wife to fish out dinner  
invitations from the head of the  
department!

CHRIS

I think you're gonna like him. He's  
real intense. Do you want to say hi  
before we go?

SYLVERE

I can't believe you.

Sylvere storms out of the party.

Chris downs her drink and then follows.

One last look at formidable, towering Dick.

He's staring at her, nods his head, WAIT...was that a WINK?

The other Faculty around him turn to look at her. Impressed.

Chris gives Dick a sailor salute goodbye.

14 **INT. RANCH HOUSE -- NIGHT**

Shadows fill the house. Coyotes yowl outside.

Sylvere and Chris at the kitchen table.

Chris drinks vodka.

Sylvere reads the email on Chris' phone.

CHRIS

They accepted it. It's been accepted.  
They can't pull it out of the  
festival? I got into the fucking  
Venice film festival. It's not like  
POOF now you're not. That's just,  
that's just, they *can't* do it.

SYLVERE

Apparently they can. Since they are being threatened with legal action. Which they are. You got this letter when?

CHRIS

You think this is my fault?

SYLVERE

I'm not saying that. It's just that if you had addressed this a month ago even, you would have time to--

CHRIS

Well I didn't. And now I'm fucked. I can't change it in forty-eight hours. Get rights to something else? And remix? It's a ridiculous deadline.

Silence.

CHRIS

It would have done well there.

SYLVERE

Agreed. The meditative pace, would, at the very least, been noteworthy from an American filmmaker.

CHRIS

You're not making this any better.

SYLVERE

What can I say? I agree with you!

CHRIS

You're trying to move on to other topics!

SYLVERE

I'm not! But there are other festivals. Toronto? Berlin? South by?

CHRIS

Toronto!? That's my point. It got into Venice. It's not getting into Toronto. It's not their thing. Venice was my shot. How do you not get that?

SYLVERE

I get that!

CHRIS

It's like you don't value my work.

SYLVERE

I value your work!

CHRIS

So what am I supposed to do now? Hang around campus? Be your plus one? It's embarrassing. Following you around like a pathetic wife.

SYLVERE

I'd do the same thing if you were the academic and I was the experimental filmmaker.

CHRIS

Do you know how privileged you sound right now?

SYLVERE

It's the truth.

CHRIS

No, it's what you *imagine* you would do if you were me. But you've only ever been the one supporting us. So you don't know. You've never had to be the one who is always a mooch.

SYLVERE

You know I don't care about money--

CHRIS

'Cause you can AFFORD not to!

SYLVERE

So what do you want to do? Get a job?

Knocking at the back door. Neither hear it.

CHRIS

Is that what you think? I should get a job? If I don't want to trail you around like a LITTLE WIFEY?

SYLVERE

If it would make you feel better get a job!

More knocking. It shocks them into silence. Sylvere opens the front door.

There stands DEVON (30), a bossy butch head to toe in Carhartts, she holds a bundle of wood under one arm. And a six-pack of SHINER BOCK in the other.

DEVON

Hey there. Here comes the welcome wagon.

SYLVERE

Can we help you?

DEVON

I'm Devon, the psuedo-groundskeeper. Didn't think you were coming until Monday. Would have sweep the place out for ya. You're Chris, huh?

CHRIS

I am and this is --

SYLVERE

Sylvere.

Devon hands Chris the beer and shakes Sylvere's hand.

DEVON

Ah, French. Pleasure. I live out back in the Airstream.

Devon takes a long hard stare at Chris, it's ravenous.

CHRIS

The fridge isn't working.

Devon dumps the wood.

DEVON

Nah, it's just unplugged. Save some change on the electric.

Devon pulls the fridge from the wall, like tossing a pillow.

Chris and Sylvere watch as she plugs in the fridge.

Victory hum.

Looking straight at Chris, an invitation.

DEVON

My number's on the wall, near the phone, if you need anything, don't hesitate. Night or day. I'm an insomniac. Or just come pounding on my tin can.

Chris is flustered. Sylvere, oblivious.

CHRIS  
Sure thing. Uh--

Parting flirt.

DEVON  
It's still Devon. Welcome to Marfa.  
Our humble slice of high desert  
splendor.

And she's gone. What was that?

15 **EXT. PASTURE BEHIND THE HOUSE -- DAY**

Dawn breaks.

It's a showy show. Pinks. Violets. Golden Ambers.

The birds announce another day in Utopia.

16 **INT. RANCH HOUSE BATHROOM/BEDROOM -- DAY**

Sylvere reads a book on the bed.

Chris searches through her clothes in desperation. She dumps options onto the bed.

Chris holds up the sack dress.

CHRIS  
Too Mennonite?

Sylvere doesn't look up. Chris holds up the jeans and sweater.

CHRIS  
Or I could go classic, under-stated.  
Maybe a white crisp shirt. Do a 90s  
thing. Blazer? There's always the  
wrap.

She assesses the STUNNING INDIGO WRAP. Winner.

Chris slips into the bathroom.

SYLVERE  
--he's got such an interesting style.  
He's not a flashy writer. Pretty  
spare. Doesn't have that droning  
academic posturing.

Sylvere reads to himself.

SYLVERE

You know he single-handedly created the interdisciplinary department. He got here, had some clashes with the Dean over program requirements. He told the *President of the College* he was going to walk unless he got something like a million dollars to start his own department. At thirty-five. What a rebel.

Chris emerges. Wow, that's some dress.

CHRIS

You want a cocktail before we go?

Sylvere looks up, doesn't notice the dress.

SYLVERE

You want one?

CHRIS

You gonna say something about the dress?

Sylvere finally notices it.

SYLVERE

It's great. Lovely. You look lovely darling.

CHRIS

We have time if you want to...

Takes Sylvere a beat, oh, sex, right.

SYLVERE

Do you?

Of course she does.

CHRIS

I'm open.

SYLVERE

You don't think it might be a little rushed?

CHRIS

Let me do you.

She has his belt in her hands. Sylvere stops.

SYLVERE

I won't come if you won't.

CHRIS

You can get me later. It'll be good.

SYLVERE

No, No, let me try now.

He pats the bed.

CHRIS

You know, I don't want to wrinkle this. It'll just scream "we had sex" and that's not-- we can wait.

SYLVERE

Yeah, absolutely, not the impression we want to make. You want to make us a drink then?

Chris goes.

Sylvere returns to the book.

17 **INT. THE ROPE AND LOIN RESTAURANT -- NIGHT**

Chris takes it all in.

Dim lighting. Organic linens. Twine and tin.

Succulents in Mason jars.

She spots Dick sitting alone at a table set for three.

DICK

So you found it. Grand.

SYLVERE

At long last.

Sylvere moves to shake Dick's hand but Dick is busy pulling out Chris' chair.

CHRIS

Wow, a real gentleman.

Chris starts to sit, then straightens up.

CHRIS

Don't you dare yank it away and make me fall on my ass!

Awkward confusion.

DICK

I'm sorry?

CHRIS

Stupid joke...

Dick returns to his seat, leaving Chris awkwardly standing by her chair.

DICK

They're only serving a tasting menu tonight. Hope you like rabbit.

CHRIS

Are you kidding? Love rabbit. I'm a big, big game eater.

Sylvere shoots her a look, Chris is predominately a vegetarian.

SYLVERE

I've never seen you eat game--

CHRIS

Not big game, like elk, or you know, bison.

SYLVERE

My mother's French, so I grew up eating those tiny birds, bones and all.

DICK

Ortolan.

SYLVERE

Precisely.

Sylvere knows the name of the god-damn bird.

Dick picks up a bottle of wine.

DICK

It's a Bourgogne. Your people.

SYLVERE

Fantastic.

Chris picks up Dick's glass and sips it. Dick doesn't notice, he's filling Sylvere's glass.

CHRIS

Oh, a complicated red. What does that say about you, Dick?

She giggles saying his name.

DICK  
Nothing in particular.

Later:

Two bottles in. All are teetering on drunk.

Dick picks at his food.

Chris is fascinated by Dick's every move.

Sylvere is off on a tangent.

SYLVERE  
...the problem arises when you try to assign an aesthetic to the Holocaust. I mean, does Death have an aesthetic? Moral Depravity? You could point to let's say, the Gothic, but that's a camp version of tragedy. For the book, I needed total immersion. You know, I slept with a mortician at one point. I had this idea of the "scent of death on the living."

Sylvere can't remember where this story was going.

DICK  
Well, there's the obvious problem of lazy writers taking a boring story and giving it genocide stakes. Especially those a generation or two removed. That begins to resemble Holocaust porn.  
(on Chris)  
What do you do?

CHRIS  
Oh, I'm a filmmaker. I make films...experimental in bent...My latest film, was invited to screen at Venice, but then, for complicated reasons that's not happening.

DICK  
Why?

CHRIS  
Why? Why what?

DICK  
Why aren't they screening your film?

CHRIS

Oh, it's just, some legal issues around some of the music licensing. Total bullshit. They're holding my film ransom.

DICK

You didn't pay for the music?

CHRIS

They want a ridiculous amount.

DICK

So how much?

CHRIS

150k. I mean, who does that to an indy filmmaker? It's so grotesquely unfair--

DICK

It's unfair that you don't get to appropriate someone's work for free? Don't you think your work is valuable? Doesn't that value translate into a dollar figure? But you don't think you should have to pay this composer, which in essence means you don't believe their work has value.

CHRIS

Of course their work has value. But, I made the entire movie for less than what they're asking. And this is for a three minute scene.

DICK

And a three minute scene can separate a mediocre film from a masterpiece. I assume you're gunning for masterpiece: the big prize and international acclaim. Which will set you up for your future work to be incredibly well paid. Am I wrong?

CHRIS

I'm not doing this for the money; I'm doing it to make an impactful film.

DICK

(if you say so)  
What's it about?

CHRIS

The film? It's about a couple, a woman really. She is representative of all women. Actually. And how society's expectations of women are just crushing. Oh, and also, it's an exercise in the viewer's endurance to stay present in non-activity.

DICK

So your film is an exercise in boredom? How boring it is to watch women be oppressed?

CHRIS

It's society's --

DICK

You don't want to be a filmmaker.

That's a slap in the face.

CHRIS

*Excuse me?*

SYLVERE

Synopsizing isn't Chris' strength.

DICK

You don't want to be a filmmaker, 'cause if you did, you'd be one. It's a question of desire, not talent, or timing or circumstance. Pure want. Which you don't possess. And don't confuse desire for entitlement. Around your filmmaking.

A lightning bolt to her core:

CHRIS

That's quite an assumption--

DICK

Am I wrong?

SYLVERE

Ah, ha, this is the teaching style I've been hearing about. The provocation.

CHRIS

You think it's lack of will power that prevents filmmakers from making movies.

DICK

Yes.

CHRIS

If all it took was desire, then we'd have a horde of great films by women artist. Instead there's this graveyard of unmade work. But you don't believe that, you're saying the reason there aren't more great films by women is because they lack *will power*?

DICK

Men and women alike. Is it hard to make a film? Sure. Do people do it? Yes. So it must not be that hard.

CHRIS

You're blinding yourself to the social structure, the obstacles. I can't believe you think that?

DICK

What? What do I think?

CHRIS

That it's the women's fault.

DICK

I'm not assigning fault to a gender. You are. I'm simply saying if something was worth making, the person making it would figure out a way to make it, properly, regardless of their identification. Maybe this supposed graveyard of unmade films by women filmmakers are there because they weren't, ultimately, that good.

CHRIS

Women make good shit all the time.

DICK

So we are just going to talk about women right now. Alright. Name names.

Chris is so very turned on.

CHRIS

There are hundreds.

SYLVERE

Hundreds seems an inflated--

CHRIS

Jane Campion. Miranda July. Uh, Sally Potter.

DICK

Are you making those movies?

CHRIS

They may not be as good as Jane Campion's but I'm not interested in making something good, I want the opportunity to--

DICK

Oh, fuck off. You want to make something passable? The only reason you pretend not to care about making something good, is because your films *maybe* aren't. And you know it. So *maybe* that's why you hide behind excuses, and self sabotage by pretending it's fine to use someone's work for free.

Chris is speechless. Burning with lust.

SYLVERE

Susan Sontag. She was great.

CHRIS

What do you even mean by "good." Venice thought my film was "good" so if you are going to determine artistic merit on the choices of a jury panel--

DICK

I equate "good" with being "not shit." And plenty of shitty films make it into festivals, win major awards, but that doesn't make them good. All you have to do is be fair and: Make. Good. Shit.

Chris abruptly stands up. THAT BLUE DRESS weaves through a sea of diners.

Chris looks over her shoulder, beckoning.

Dick excuses himself from the table.

Chris lingers a moment outside the bathroom door, Dick brushes by her and heads into the men's room.

**18 INT. ROPE AND LOIN BATHROOM -- NIGHT**

Chris stands at the sink, flushed. She splashes water on her face. Takes deep steadying breaths.  
Into the mirror:

CHRIS

You don't want Dick. You don't want  
Dick. You will not want Dick.

**19 INT. ROPE AND LOIN RESTAURANT -- NIGHT**

Dick seated at the table. Chris returns.

The waiter brings another bottle of wine, presents it to Dick.  
Chris picks up the glass to taste.

She stares at Dick as she swirls the wine around her tongue.

MEANWHILE, UNDER THE TABLE:

Chris' knee brushes Dick's. She doesn't pull hers away.

ABOVE THE TABLE:

Chris nods her approval of the wine.

SYLVERE

What are ya teaching this semester?

DICK

The Author as Performance.

SYLVERE

Is that the second installment of The  
Author as Anarchist?

CHRIS

I want to take your class.

SYLVERE

No, no, no.

CHRIS

Or audit. Whatever. When do you meet?

SYLVERE

She's not. You're not. I mean, you're  
working on your next film. You're  
taking some time--and you need to  
focus on--

DICK

A lot of people want to take my class.  
But maybe you feel you're entitled to  
it, don't you?

CHRIS

I'm an excellent student.

SYLVERE

She's not serious. You're not serious.

CHRIS

What's on your syllabus of "Author as  
Performance."

DICK

I don't have a syllabus--

SYLVERE

You don't?

DICK

I don't want to dictate a reading  
list. Who am I to say what you should  
read? If a student wants to learn  
then...Yeah, I'm going to head out.

CHRIS

Now?

DICK

Yep.

CHRIS

No, no, let's go somewhere, find a  
field. Smoke up. Starry night and all.

SYLVERE

You brought weed?

Chris shrugs it off.

Dick pulls his wallet out of his back pocket, perfect cowboy  
style.

DICK

Yeah, low on cash. I'll get you back  
pal.

He pats Sylvere on the shoulder. A double bro pat.

And he's gone.

Chris and Sylvere are stunned.

SYLVERE

Did we say something? He invited us out to dinner. You said it was a welcome to the department kinda thing.

CHRIS

Yeah, that's what I assumed when he said yes.

SYLVERE

Wait, so you asked him? You told me he wanted to have dinner with us?

CHRIS

He did. And we have. All had dinner.

SYLVERE

You little bitch.

CHRIS

What are you so pissed off about? We're New Yorkers, he probably thinks we have money. We can pay. How much do you think three bottles of wine costs?

The waiter brings over the check. Sylvere scans it.

WAITER

Gratuity not included.

Waiter steps away.

Sylvere opens the bill. Holy fuck.

SYLVERE

Four hundred and seventy-six dollars. That's two weeks worth of my salary.

Chris drinks.

SYLVERE

And what was that about you wanting to take his class? We just got here. Let's just find out if that's something faculty wives do.

CHRIS

Oh, now we're back to the wifey crap. Fantastic.

20 INT. RANCH HOUSE BEDROOM-- NIGHT

Chris and Sylvere get ready for bed. It's difficult, they are quite drunk.

CHRIS  
I feel stood up.

SYLVERE  
I feel dismissed.

CHRIS  
Jilted.

SYLVERE  
Were we boring?

CHRIS  
You know what? You know what just happened.

SYLVERE  
Oh fuck the room is spinning.

CHRIS  
Oh shit. I see it now. It's perfect.  
It's like the most perfect -- "the conceptual fuck."

Sylvere contemplates this. Yep. She's right.

SYLVERE  
I've never been conceptually fucked.

CHRIS  
I know. But that's what he's doing.  
He's got us all het up. Like Alley cats. Then, Bam, dropped us cold.

SYLVERE  
I am really, really drunk. I haven't been this drunk in a long time.

CHRIS  
You were this drunk last week.

SYLVERE  
I'm showering.

Chris alone, crawls into bed and opens her laptop.

21 **INT. ROPE AND LOIN RESTAURANT (CHRIS POV) -- NIGHT**

Chris and Sylvere walk into the same restaurant only now it's seen thorough A DRASTIC AESTHETIC SHIFT.

COLORS are sharper, saturated.

Dick waits for them at the table.

Dick's BELT BUCKLE in hyper-focus. UNSHAVEN jaw. RUGGED FINGERS cradling a wine glass.

CHRIS (V.O.)

*Dear Dick...*

Dick stands up, a panther surveying his prey. He pulls a chair out for Chris.

The DIN of the restaurant overwhelms their conversation.

CHRIS (V.O.)

*I never understood before tonight how one chance meeting could alter the course of events in someone's life.*

Dick glides Chris' chair into place. Offers her a sip of his wine. She takes his glass.

Jump cut: A waiter placing food on the table.

CHRIS (V.O.)

*I've met charismatic people before. I've been warmed by their glow.*

Dick fills her glass of wine. Sylvere is studying his plate. Galaxies away.

UNDER THE TABLE:

Dick's knee finds Chris' knee, presses hard against it.

ABOVE THE TABLE:

Dick stares straight at Chris, daring her. He reaches down and adjusts his crotch. A silent invitation.

CHRIS (V.O.)

*But I've never had someone shatter in one glance the persona I've spent decades diligently constructing.*

DICK

(on Chris)

So what do you do?

Chris leaps up from the table.

22 INT. RANCH HOUSE BEDROOM -- NIGHT

The bathroom door opens, a cloud of steam, Sylvere in a towel.

Chris keeps typing. Sylvere plops down on the bed.

SYLVERE

Whatcha writing? Read it to me.

Chris, shielding the laptop.

CHRIS

I don't know what it is. Just fucking around.

SYLVERE

I wanna hear it. Read. Read.

CHRIS

It's a letter. To Dick.

SYLVERE

A fucking letter? You're going to write him a letter?

CHRIS

Not a letter-letter. I'm just using the epistolary form. The conceit. I'm thinking of it as a performative writing sample. Which is a response to his conceptual fuck.

SYLVERE

All writing samples are seduction letters.

CHRIS

Right?

SYLVERE

I love it. Lemme hear it.

23 INT. ROPE AND LOIN HALLWAY/BATHROOM (CHRIS FANTASY) -- NIGHT

Chris lingers outside the bathroom door. FUSSING with the belt of her INDIGO DRESS.

CHRIS (V.O.)

*Dear Dick. What I'm attempting with this letter is impossible. How can the confines of language express something as cataclysmic as an awakening?*

She feels Dick approaching her from down the hall.

CHRIS (V.O.)

*I wanted you to follow me from the table. You were stalking your prey. And there I was cornered. Waiting.*

Chris opens the bathroom door, steps inside. Dick holds the door open.

She leans against the sink. Her INDIGO WRAP DRESS draped to perfection.

Dick looks her up and down from the doorway.

DICK  
That fucking dress.

He steps back into the hall, closing the door behind him.

CHRIS (V.O.)  
*I repeated my mantra. Lies, all of them.*

Chris stares at herself in the mirror, stern.

CHRIS  
You don't want Dick. You don't want Dick. You will not want Dick.

She splashes water on her face. She unwraps the dress, as if Dick were seeing it.

CHRIS (V.O.)  
*You didn't come to me. You stayed away. You let me dream it all.*

24 INT. RANCH HOUSE BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Sylvere lies on the bed, still in his towel, head in his hands, listening.

Chris shuts her laptop. Silence.

SYLVERE  
You wrote this?

Sylvere takes the laptop from her. Reads the screen.

CHRIS  
I did.

SYLVERE  
My baby can write.

CHRIS  
What do you think?

SYLVERE  
Well, you're not giving it to him. Obviously.

SYLVERE (cont'd)

Which is a shame, I think he might love it. Exposing the charade of the --

CHRIS

You're not upset that I want to fuck him?

SYLVERE

It's much more complex than simply wanting to fuck. That's a pedestrian expression of what we're experiencing, you're experiencing.

He straddles Chris.

CHRIS

Is it?

SYLVERE

Let me show you the difference, this is fucking.

And they're off.

Sylvere dives into her. Snatching her dress open.

He's ready. Chris tells him to be rough.

Sylvere's aggressive.

SYLVERE

That writing is so good. You're not going to send it to him are you?

Chris wants it rougher-rougher.

CHRIS

Are you fucking crazy? I'd never send it to him.

Wild eyes. Chris slides off the bed, all fours, on the floor.

SYLVERE

He'd fucking die if he saw it.

CHRIS

I told you, I'm playing with the epistolary form. It's an exercise. No way I'd send it to him.

Sylvere comes at her from behind.

A few prolonged screams and it's over.

Sylvere daintily guides Chris up to the bed.

They lie side by side in disbelief.

CHRIS

That was...

SYLVERE

I know...

**25 INT. DEVON'S AIRSTREAM -- NIGHT**

A 1950s style trailer, wood paneled. No plumbing.

Devon sits with a legal pad and pen. Pours some whiskey.

DEVON

Lights up on a run-down Marfa ranch house.

Sip. Good start.

DEVON

Enter, bickering married couple from the New York. The wife is reluctantly beautiful.

**26 INT. RANCH HOUSE (DEVON'S POV) -- DAY**

Back to the scene from earlier that afternoon.

Boxes litter the living room. The house appears more menacing.

Sylvere, played by a different actor, is a schlubby, distinctively unattractive version of the real Sylvere.

He is in mid-argument with Chris, also played by a different actor who is a dialed up, more traditionally femme version of the real Chris.

Knocking on the door. Neither hear it.

CHRIS

I should get a job? If I don't want to trail you around like a LITTLE WIFEY?

SYLVERE

If it would make you feel better, get a job! I'm not stopping you!

More knocking. Sylvere finally answers the door.

In the doorway, beer tucked under one arm and bundle of firewood under the other is a strapping butch dressed like Devon.

DEVON

Hey there. Here comes the welcome wagon.

Chris and Sylvere stand in shocked silence. Exaggerated smoldering looks between Devon and Chris.

The actor playing Devon walks over to the wood burning stove, crouches down and enjoys Chris' eyes all over her.

27 **INT. RANCH HOUSE BEDROOM -- NIGHT**

Back to reality. Sylvere asleep on the bed.

*SYLVERE (V.O.)*

*That writing is so good. You're not going to send it to him are you?*

*CHRIS (V.O.)*

*Are you fucking crazy? I'd never send it to him.*

*SYLVERE (V.O.)*

*He'd fucking die if he saw it.*

*CHRIS (V.O.)*

*I told you, I'm playing with the epistolary form. It's an exercise. No way I'd send it to him.*

Chris folds up the letter.

Nestles it into an envelope and ... LICKS it close.

END OF PILOT.