

The Cult of Dennis: Part I

By

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FADE IN:

INT. PADDY'S PUB - EVENING

DENNIS, MAC, and FRANK sit ruefully at the bar, each holding some sort of document. FRANK makes a sudden, violent movement.

FRANK

It's a goddamn scam! Madoff ain't got shit on the feds!

DENNIS

I agree with you a hundred percent, Frank. You can't just force people to buy a product. What happened to freedom of choice?

MAC

This is America for Christ's sake!

FRANK and DENNIS roll their eyes. SWEET DEE enters, jubilant.

DEE

What's up, bitches? Why so sad?

FRANK

You're about to get a \$300 per month cut in pay.

DEE's jubilation quickly turns to rage, and she moves threateningly toward FRANK, sticking her finger in his face.

DEE

You are *not* cutting my pay again!

FRANK

I aint doin' shit. Talk to the feds.

DEE moves back, confused.

DEE

Huh?

(CONTINUED)

FRANK

The feds makin' us sign up for health insurance, whether we like it or not.

DEE smiles mischievously.

DEE

Not necessarily.

MAC and DENNIS, who previously had their heads buried in the document, turn toward her. FRANK is all ears.

DEE

Roman told me there's a way around it.

FRANK

Roman? Who the hell is Roman?

DEE

(exasperated)

The tax lawyer I've been dating for the past week. I've mentioned him, I don't know, twenty times.

DENNIS

C'mon, Dee. You know no one listens to you.

DEE slides her hand down her face.

DEE

Shoulda known, shoulda known. Anyway! Roman says that people who either make next to nothing or who refuse medical treatment on religious grounds are exempt from the mandate.

MAC looks confused.

MAC

Stop talking like a smart person, Dee; it doesn't suit you.

DEE

(furious)

You know what? You bitches figure it out. I'm spending the weekend with Roman.

And DEE storms out.

(CONTINUED)

FRANK, MAC, and DENNIS face each other, looking rather worried.

DENNIS  
Well, I guess there's only one option, considering none of us are poor.

FRANK chuckles.

FRANK  
*I'm* not poor. I don't know about you two.

DENNIS  
(desperately)  
I'm not poor. None of us are poor. None of us qualify as poor.

MAC  
So what are we gonna do then?

That characteristic malicious smile forms on DENNIS' face.

DENNIS  
We're gonna start a religion.

CUT TO:

MAIN TITLES

Title: "The Cult of Dennis"

Title: "It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia"

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

INT. PADDY'S PUB - MORNING

DENNIS rifles through a bible, incredulity written on his face. MAC paces back and forth, worried about something.

MAC  
I don't like this, Dennis. This is bad.

DENNIS  
Relax, will you?

MAC whips around to face DENNIS.

(CONTINUED)

MAC  
How can I relax when you're  
planning to send us all to hell?

DENNIS chortles.

DENNIS  
No one's going to hell, Mac.

MAC  
This is the ultimate  
blasphemy! God specifically said  
that we shall not worship any other  
god but him!

DENNIS turns to him.

DENNIS  
God didn't say shit. Whoever wrote  
this...

DENNIS taps the bible.

DENNIS  
...ridiculous thing said it.

MAC  
God was speaking through them,  
Dennis! Don't you know anything?

DENNIS  
(intermittent laughter)  
I know you need to grow up and stop  
believing in fairy tales.

MAC goes pale, enraged, and approaches DENNIS.

MAC  
(very low voice)  
Fairy tales? Fairy tales, Dennis?

DENNIS looks askance at him.

MAC  
(yells)  
God is not a goddamn fairy, Dennis!

DENNIS jumps.

DENNIS  
I didn't say... You know  
what? Either you can help me, or  
you can shut up and get the hell  
outta here.

MAC backs up.

MAC  
Oh, I'm outta here, alright. I am  
so outta here!

As MAC proclaims his plan to depart, CHARLIE walks up from the cellar, holding his rat stick, splattered with rat's blood. MAC beckons him.

MAC  
C'mon Charlie. We're outta here.

CHARLIE  
I'm not outta here. I've got rats  
to kill.

DENNIS  
Good Charlie. See, Mac, why can't  
you be nice and obedient like  
Charlie?

MAC glares at Dennis. CHARLIE is oblivious.

MAC  
Frank's gonna lower our pay \$300  
per month.

CHARLIE gasps.

MAC  
And he called your mom a dirty  
whore.

CHARLIE gasps again, lifts his rat stick, his eyes searching frantically.

CHARLIE  
Where is he?

MAC  
Forget it, Charlie. Here's what...

CHARLIE  
(interrupts)  
How can I forget that he called my  
mom a...

MAC  
(interrupts)  
No, no, no, Charlie. You're  
looking at this the wrong  
way. Here's what you do. You come  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MAC (cont'd)  
with me, and we'll leave that son  
of a bitch two employees  
short. That'll get him.

CHARLIE  
That'll get him. Let's get outta  
here.

CHARLIE begins to storm out. MAC grabs his rat stick.

MAC  
You should probably leave that  
here.

CHARLIE  
Oh, yeah...

CHARLIE looks confused.

MAC  
Just give me the rat stick,  
Charlie.

CHARLIE hands it over and walks out. MAC casts it aside,  
and looks at DENNIS with disapproval.

MAC  
Prepare to be smitten by the might  
of the Lord.

DENNIS smirks derisively, eyes glued to the book. MAC  
exits. DENNIS rubs his eyes, hops off the bar stool, and  
goes behind the bar to mix a drink. As he's walking, FRANK  
enters from the office, excited.

FRANK  
Alright, my boy, marketing's taken  
care of.

DENNIS  
Marketing?

FRANK  
(laughing)  
I put up an ad on craigslist,  
promising a new and profound  
religious experience. All we need  
is something to worship and we're  
in business.

DENNIS polishes a glass.

(CONTINUED)

DENNIS  
Something to worship?

FRANK  
Ya know, some sort of prophet. Or  
a god.

DENNIS goes pale, begins to tremble. A malevolent,  
near-Satanic fire flares up in his eyes.

DENNIS  
(whisper)  
God...

The glass in his grip shatters. He doesn't notice.

FRANK stares at him quizzically.

CUT TO:

EXT. PHILLY SIDEWALK - AFTERNOON

MAC and CHARLIE walk down the sidewalk, having a chat.

CHARLIE  
Wait, so they're making us buy  
health insurance?

MAC  
Yep.

CHARLIE  
That's nice of them.

MAC looks at him in disbelief.

MAC  
Nice of them?

CHARLIE  
Yeah, man. They want us to be  
healthy.

MAC begins to say something, but realizes immediately that  
any effort to explain would be futile.

As they walk, a shady man in a trenchcoat, propped against a  
building, looks at them, smirks, and flags them down.

MAN  
Boys, boys, come here.

MAC and CHARLIE stop short, and approach him.

(CONTINUED)

MAN

You fellas look like you know your stuff.

MAC

Of course we know our stuff, we...

CHARLIE

(picking up the sentence)

We know all the stuffs...stuff...

The MAN smiles.

MAN

Of course you do. It's obvious. That's why I brought you boys over here. You heard the government's making us all buy health insurance, haven't ya?

MAC and CHARLIE perk up.

MAC

Yeah, we were just...how did you know...

He turns to CHARLIE.

MAC

How did he know...

CHARLIE

It's amazing.

The MAN smiles again.

MAN

Lemme guess, those scamming insurance companies tryin' to suck you into a coverage plan right before the law goes into effect?

MAC

Yes!

CHARLIE

How's he doing this??

MAN

Well I'll tell ya: I used to work for those bastards, and the whole thing's nothing but a con. They take your money, and on the off

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MAN (cont'd)  
chance that something bad happens  
to you they pay for treatment with  
other people's money who got  
scammed by 'em before you did. It's  
all a big ponzi scheme. But of  
course you know all this.

MAC  
Of course.

CHARLIE  
Of course.

MAN  
So whatta ya do?

MAC  
I don't know what to do...What do  
we do?...You tell us what to do.

MAN  
Here's what you do. You buy a  
coverage plan from someone who  
actually cares about ya, someone  
who covers ya because they don't  
want you to have to pay full price  
when you get hurt. It's all about  
the principle, you see.

CHARLIE  
The principle, yes! It makes  
perfect sense.

MAC  
So where do we find such principled  
people?

The MAN slaps his forehead.

MAN  
Me! I'm your man.

MAC  
Alright! He's our man!

CHARLIE  
He's got ESP, he's got principles,  
and he cares!

MAN  
Right... Let's head on over to  
that coffee shop. I'll buy ya's a  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MAN (cont'd)  
cup of coffee while we discuss the  
details.

MAC  
Great, let's go.

The MAN leads. MAC and CHARLIE smile at each other.

CHARLIE  
What a guy.

MAC  
A great guy. Principles are so  
rare these days.

CHARLIE  
They certainly are.

The MAN chuckles.

CUT TO:

INT. DENNIS' BEDROOM - DAY

DENNIS, shirtless, stares into a body-length mirror, making grandiose movements within the constraints of a white bedsheet fashioned as a Roman tunic. He trembles and twitches orgasmically.

DENNIS  
Holiest of holies, all-knowing,  
all-powerful...The world is mine,  
as I am...

He makes a guttural sound to accompany a full body tremor.

DENNIS  
The Golden God!

CUT TO:

INT. PADDY'S PUB - EVENING

DENNIS stands on a raised platform, making the same grandiose movements he was making before. FRANK rushes about, putting folding chairs into neat rows. The liquor display is hidden behind a white sheet.

(CONTINUED)

DENNIS

I don't see why you had to cover up the liquor. I'd think you'd have the business savvy to sell booze during the procession.

FRANK

I can't. If the IRS finds out I'm selling anything but bullshit here we're done as a nonprofit organization, and I'll lose 35 percent of my profit.

DENNIS

Thirty-five percent?

FRANK

Income tax rate, Lord Dennis. Shouldn't you, omniscient deity, know this?

DENNIS

(distantly)

Lord Dennis...

FRANK

This really is a sweet deal, though. You take money for not doin' shit, and the feds can't take a dime. I always thought pastors were morons but it turns out they're fucking brilliant.

DENNIS

Say that again, human.

FRANK

Excuse me?

DENNIS

Say it again.

FRANK

Say what again?

DENNIS

Address me as your Lord.

FRANK

Get your head outta your ass, idiot. This is business.

DENNIS points dramatically at FRANK, head tilted back, eyes full of that Satanic fire.

(CONTINUED)

DENNIS  
Do not disobey me, human.

FRANK rushes the platform.

FRANK  
You talk down to me one more time  
you're gonna wish you were a  
goddamn god!

As FRANK rushes the platform, the entrance door opens. A shy, pale young man enters. FRANK stops in his tracks. DENNIS assumes his imperious pose.

FRANK  
How ya doin'?

DENNIS  
Enter, young man. Sit. What is  
your name, my child?

The young man sits subserviently.

CHASE  
Chase.

DENNIS  
Chase, my Lord.

The kid repeats.

DENNIS  
And what brings you to our place of  
worship, dear child?

CHASE  
I have no place else to go.

DENNIS begins to speak, but is interrupted by another entrant, a young latino with the remnants of teen angst settled in his face.

FRANK bows theatrically.

FRANK  
Welcome.

HECTOR  
Shut up, old man.

DENNIS  
Sit, dear sheep, and calm yourself.

HECTOR

Shut up, faggot. I'm only here to  
rip on your bitch ass  
religion. Religions for fools,  
fool! I'm atheist!

DENNIS

I'm sorry you feel that way, dear  
sheep.

HECTOR

Don't be, bitch.

HECTOR gravitates toward the corner and stays there, arms  
crossed, trying his best to look tough though his veneer is  
transparent.

And in walks MARY, a well-worn caucasian woman in her mid  
twenties with a stomach full of life. FRANK leers at her,  
and motions for her to come closer.

FRANK

And who are you, dear?

MARY

I'm Mary.

FRANK

Well hello, Mary.

He's coming on strong. She shies away. He places his hand  
on her lower back and guides her to a seat. They both sit,  
and he inches nearer. She inches away. This continues  
until she gives up and their asses are as close as they can  
be. She smiles, embarrassed.

DENNIS begins his choreographed movements, as if about to  
recite poetry of the highest order.

DENNIS

What is life? Why are we  
here? Who are we? *What* are  
we? These are questions we all  
long to have answered, but yet seem  
so elusive.

Everyone seated nods in agreement. HECTOR scowls.

DENNIS

But no longer, my children. I,  
Dennis Reynolds, your savior and  
prophet, hold the keys to these  
impregnable doors. And for you I

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DENNIS (cont'd)  
shall open them, because I, seer of  
all, have only your best interests  
in mind. But in order to help you  
I must know you. Speak to me, dear  
children. Speak.

FRANK gives him that same quizzical look. DENNIS points to  
CHASE.

DENNIS  
Chase, was it?

CHASE nods.

DENNIS  
What is your story, child?

CHASE  
My parents kicked me out of the  
house because I questioned their  
faith in God. I meant only to ask  
meaningful questions, but they took  
offense. I need a church that can  
take me in, look after me until I  
get on my feet.

FRANK bolts out of his seat.

FRANK  
What! Goddamn freeloader. Son of  
a bitch only wants a rent-free  
room. That shit ain't happenin'.

DENNIS  
Frank!

DENNIS smiles.

DENNIS  
We shall be happy to accommodate  
you, child.

FRANK squirms in his seat.

DENNIS points to MARY.

DENNIS  
And you, dear. Tell us of your  
troubles.

MARY

I done got pregnant after I had sex  
with my boyfriend...

FRANK

(interrupts)

There's a surprise.

DENNIS gives FRANK a look that says, "Shut the fuck up." He then resumes his pious expression.

DENNIS

Please continue.

MARY

Well, he dumped me the minute I  
told him I's pregnant. My parents  
stopped talking to me after that,  
and my church banned me from ever  
coming back.

DENNIS

That's...that's terrible. And  
someone as...lovely...as you. A  
shame. Everyone, excuse me for a  
moment. Frank...

He descends the platform and motions for FRANK to follow him. They walk into the office.

OFFICE

DENNIS

What the hell are you doing,  
Frank? You're going to make these  
people leave.

FRANK

This is a shit idea. Not only are  
they a bunch of broke assholes, but  
one of 'em even wants to live  
here. This shit's turning into a  
liability *real* fast.

DENNIS

This isn't about the money.

FRANK

What the hell kinda bullshit you  
talkin'? What the hell you think  
it's about?

(CONTINUED)

DENNIS  
Frank...I will not have you ruin  
this for me.

FRANK  
Ruin what? You ain't gonna run  
around playin' god at my expense.

DENNIS' face turns murderous. He backs FRANK into a corner.

DENNIS  
Playing god, Frank? Playing god?

His eyes widen.

DENNIS  
I *am* god.

FRANK is silent, and a little scared. DENNIS leaves the office.

DENNIS  
(OS)  
Now, dear children, let the worship  
commence.

FRANK's jaw drops.

CUT TO:

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT

MAC and CHARLIE sit on the bed, on which are spread about twenty laminated cards.

MAC  
Here's our chance, Charlie.

CHARLIE  
A chance to make a difference.

MAC  
A chance to show people that they  
can buy insurance from people who  
*care*.

CHARLIE  
Who have principles!

MAC  
We sure bought a lot of these, huh?

(CONTINUED)

CHARLIE

Oh yeah.

MAC

Alright, so we spent two hundred bucks on these things, meaning we should sell them for...

MAC moves his finger about in the air, as if calculating on a blackboard.

CHARLIE

Cat in the box!

MAC

What...no.

CHARLIE

Wizard nine!

MAC

No!

MAC

It's about...hold on.

MAC pulls out his smart phone and calculates.

MAC

\$10 apiece to make our money back. Thank God for these things, huh?

MAC pauses.

MAC

But to make a profit we should sell 'em for thirty.

CHARLIE

Gotta make a profit.

MAC

Isn't this great? We can profit and give people the principled, caring...

He pauses again.

MAC

...insurance they need!

CHARLIE  
And who doesn't need that, right?

MAC  
Right!

MAC stands up, grabs a beer, and tosses it to CHARLIE.

MAC  
Drink some beer, huff some glue,  
and eat some cat food Charlie;  
because tomorrow, we've got some  
selling to do.

CHARLIE  
(grabbing glue bag)  
You know it.

MAC grabs a beer, cracks it, holds it out.

MAC  
To principles.

CHARLIE  
To principles.

They toast and they drink.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

EXT. PARK - MORNING

CHARLIE attempts to flag down a lady walking her dog; she hurries away. CHARLIE looks exasperated.

MAC sits on a bench, chatting up a flamboyant, conspicuously homosexual man. CHARLIE approaches them. The flamboyant man hands MAC a business card.

FLAMBOYANT MAN  
Call me.

MAC  
You got it.

The flamboyant man gets up and leaves. CHARLIE takes his seat. MAC smiles serenely.

(CONTINUED)

MAC

What a nice guy.

CHARLIE

It's brutal out there. No one's buying. You sell any?

MAC

Nothing.

CHARLIE

Shit.

MAC

Don't sweat it, Charlie. We have a product that people can't refuse. We have consumer demand on our side. It's only a matter of time before we sell these things off. We just gotta be patient.

CHARLIE

Exactly! We're insuring them against health. How can they refuse?

MAC

We're insuring them against threats to their health. Get it right, Charlie. No wonder you haven't sold anything today.

CHARLIE

Neither have you.

MAC

What does that have to do with anything?

CHARLIE

What do you mean what does that have to do with everything...

MAC

You're wrong, Charlie...

CHARLIE

No!

MAC

You're wrong, Charlie...

(CONTINUED)

CHARLIE

No! You can't accuse me of being a bad salesman if you haven't sold any insurance cards either!

MAC

You don't make sense, Charlie...

A stout male passerby perks up as he hears "insurance card." He approaches them.

MAN

Did I hear you say you're selling insurance cards?

CHARLIE stands quickly, pulling out his cards.

CHARLIE

We're not just selling insurance. We're selling principles.

MAN

(smirks)

Of course you are.

MAC stands.

MAC

You see, sir, most insurance companies just take your money on the off chance that you get hurt or sick. They just want your money. They don't actually care about your health.

CHARLIE

It's all a big Fonzie sheen.

MAC

Charlie, shut up!

He turns to the man, tries to laugh it off.

MAC

He's still in training.

MAN

Right.

MAC

(big smile)

We sell insurance *and* caring.

(CONTINUED)

CHARLIE  
(also smiles)  
We care...about you!

MAN  
(nods)  
Well, that sounds great. How much  
for these cards?

MAC  
Fifty dollars apiece.

CHARLIE  
We also offer a family plan: buy  
three for sixty dollars apiece.

MAC  
That's...more...never mind. So  
what do you say, sir?

MAN  
I'm in. My wallet's in my car,  
though. Let's head over there and  
I can pay you.

MAC and CHARLIE look at each other, satisfied, and follow him.

As they approach his car, MAC notices a laptop on the dashboard facing the passenger seat.

MAC  
Surf the net while you drive, huh?

The man chuckles.

MAN  
All the time.

MAC  
That's a great idea. Why get bored  
at a traffic light when you can  
watch porn and play games?

MAN  
Exactly.

They reach the car.

MAN  
Go ahead and hop in the back seat.

He opens the door for them and they hop in. He then circles around to the driver's seat, sits, closes the door, and presses the "lock" switch.

MAC brushes his hand against the wire mesh barrier between the front and back seats of the car.

MAC

What's this for? You a security freak or something?

MAN

Or something.

CHARLIE

You can never be too careful these days.

MAN

No, you can't. All kinds of con men out there, especially in this economy. People will do anything.

MAC

Yup.

The man turns the engine.

MAC

So, uh, where we going?

MAN

I'm a cop, moron, and you two are going to jail for fraud.

MAC and CHARLIE start violently.

MAC

What?? You can't do that. It's entrapment.

MAN

No it's not.

MAC

Yes, it is.

MAN

You decided to sell phony insurance cards. That's on you.

MAC

Phony?

MAC and CHARLIE look at each other, and yell "shit" in unison. The MAN pulls out his cell phone, dials, puts it to his ear.

MAN

Hey, baby. All's well. I'm gonna make quota after all. Yep. Mmm-hmm.

As he makes small talk with his wife, MAC cradles his forehead in his hand.

MAC

Son of a bitch.

CHARLIE

Wait, so that guy *didn't* care?

MAC

No, Charlie! He didn't care. Jesus!

The car drives off into the distance.

CUT TO:

INT. PADDY'S PUB

CHASE, MARY, and HECTOR are sprawled out on the barroom floor. DENNIS sits on the platform, staring at them.

FRANK enters through the front entrance.

FRANK

You've lost your goddamn mind, Dennis.

DENNIS

Do not use my name in vain.

FRANK

Whatever.

FRANK points to HECTOR.

FRANK

What's with this piece of shit? I thought he was only here to piss on this whole charade.

(CONTINUED)

DENNIS

He is but a lost sheep, Frank. He has yet to find his path. I shall help him find it.

FRANK

Right. Well clean these bitches up before we open. No one wants to drink in a bar with a bunch of filthy sheep lying all over the place.

DENNIS

There will be no drinking here, Frank. This is a place of worship.

FRANK starts.

FRANK

(yelling)

You're gonna close down the bar just so you can play pretend like a goddamn five-year-old?? Bullshit!

DENNIS

(voice loud and deep)

Silence, human. You shall speak no more.

FRANK

I ain't afraid of you.

DENNIS

You should be, Frank. You certainly should be.

FRANK

And why is that?

DENNIS pulls out FRANK's revolver, points it at him. FRANK pats his jacket frantically: nothing. Fear takes over him.

DENNIS

Because, Frank: I...am...god.

CREDITS ROLL