

A VISIT FROM JOHNNY SMILES

by

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EXT. MODEST APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

A Porsche pulls up outside the building. "Walking on Sunshine" or some similarly obnoxiously upbeat tune is blaring from the car.

Behind the wheel is JOHNNY SMILES, 30ish. He taps on the steering wheel to the beat as the window WHIRS shut.

He exits the car, hits the remote, and notices a MAN walking by.

JOHNNY  
Hey! Good Morning! Is it alright if  
I park here?

The man shrugs.

JOHNNY  
Great!

Johnny looks around and then consults a planner that's covered with SMILEY FACES.

He heads up a staircase to APARTMENT 12. Humming happily.

KNOCKS.

DENNIS, 40ish, opens the door. Looks like he just woke up.

JOHNNY  
Good morning! Dennis?

DENNIS  
Yeah. Who're you?

JOHNNY  
Johnny.  
(Off his non-reaction)  
Johnny Smiles!  
(Again, nothing)  
I work for Lou.

DENNIS  
Lou?

JOHNNY  
You know... Lou? The guy you owe  
(hushed)  
Seven-Thousand dollars?

DENNIS  
You work for Lou?

JOHNNY

(Goofy)

Hello? I think I just said that.

DENNIS

I expected someone... different.

JOHNNY

I get that a lot. Say, you mind if I come in? It's a bit... unseemly talking about these kind of things standing in a doorway.

DENNIS

Uhhh... sure...

INT. DENNIS'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Johnny enters and looks around at the cluttered mess of an apartment.

JOHNNY

So, Dennis... I'm really sorry for intruding on your morning like this...

DENNIS

No, it's okay...

JOHNNY

So, if you just give me the seven grand, I won't take up any more of your time.

DENNIS

Yeah, that's the thing -I don't exactly have seven grand. Here. Now.

Johnny sits on the couch and SIGHS loudly.

JOHNNY

Okay, well, you can get it, right? A trip to the bank? Borrow it from a friend? Relative?

DENNIS

Not really...I...

JOHNNY

Oh. This is not good, Dennis. Lou pays you on time when you win, right?

DENNIS

Yeah... it's just...I mean look around, I'm not exactly wealthy here...

JOHNNY

Well, if you're placing bets you can't cover, you've got a big problem...

Johnny reaches into his jacket.

Dennis panicked. This is it. The end.

DENNIS

Wait! I know Lou must-

JOHNNY

-it's called Gambling Addiction! I see it all the time.

Johnny pulls a pamphlet out, places it on the table.

JOHNNY

Let me give you this pamphlet about it. I really think you should go to one of the meetings.

Johnny slides the pamphlet across the coffee table.

A wave of relief washes over Dennis.

DENNIS

(picking up the pamphlet)

Oh, I will! I see now that I have a problem. I'm going to take care of it. You can bet- I mean COUNT! No more betting for me. You can count on it.

JOHNNY

Good. I'm so glad to hear that.

Dennis looks at Johnny. Who doesn't budge, just sits there SMILING at him.

Dennis looks around awkwardly.

DENNIS

So, y'know... Thank you for giving me this information... so much.

JOHNNY

You are welcome!

Johnny still doesn't move.

DENNIS

Oh! So, tell Lou that I am really grateful for his compassion and understanding and...

Johnny starts LAUGHING.

JOHNNY

Ohh.. Ohh... Dennis, you didn't think that just because you admitted you have a problem that your debt goes away, did you?

(laughing)

I'm sorry. I shouldn't laugh. That's very insensitive of me. I apologize. Besides admitting you've got a problem is only the first step. You have to take accountability for it as well... Granted, you're supposed to do that on your own but... unfortunately, I'm gonna have to help you with that step.

Dennis soaks this in. The realization that he's not off the hook sinks back in.

DENNIS

Hey, you want a drink? I sure could use one.

JOHNNY

That's not another problem is it? 'Cause I didn't bring any A.A. pamphlets.

(beat, laughs)

I'm just joshin' ya! Who can blame you under the circumstances?! What are ya havin'?

DENNIS

Scotch on the rocks.

JOHNNY

Sounds good. Make it two.

Dennis heads into the kitchen.

INTERCUT KITCHEN/ LIVING ROOM

Johnny notices a wooden frog sitting on the coffee table. He looks at it inquisitively.

Dennis gets two glasses and fills them with ice.

Johnny picks up the frog and examines it.

Dennis pours the Scotch.

Johnny notices a stick-like piece in the frog's mouth that comes out. He slides the stick out, trying to figure out what it does.

Dennis looks around nervously and takes a gun out of the kitchen drawer and tucks it in his pants, before grabbing the drinks and heading back.

LIVING ROOM

Dennis returns and puts the drink on the table.

Johnny puts the frog down.

JOHNNY

Have a seat here on the couch and  
we can figure out what to do about  
this darn debt issue.

Dennis reluctantly sits on the couch next to Johnny.

JOHNNY

(raising his glass)  
Cheers.

They clink the glasses and take a swig.

JOHNNY

Blended?

DENNIS

Yeah. Can't really afford the  
single malt.

JOHNNY

Yeah. No, I understand.

DENNIS

I tell ya, I have the worst luck  
lately. I just lost my right  
testicle to cancer and now this...

JOHNNY

That sucks but... you've gotta stay positive, look on the bright side.

DENNIS

Of testicular cancer?

JOHNNY

Yeah! You gotta see your scrotum as half full not half empty.

(beat)

Like Lance Armstrong, y'know?

DENNIS

Uhhh... yeah... but y'know, it was a lot of medical bills... and then I blew the tranny in my truck. That was five-hundred bucks-

JOHNNY

Whoa! That's not cool.

DENNIS

I know it's not cool. Five Hundred bucks-

JOHNNY

No, I mean... Dude, "trannie" is not a cool word to use anymore. You should be respectful -especially if you're engaging in... acts of...

DENNIS

Huh?

JOHNNY

I mean... OH! You blew the transmission in your truck! I thought... Nevermind.

(beat)

Look, Dennis, gambling is not the way to get yourself out of debt. But I think you realize that now.

Johnny puts the glass down and picks up the frog again. He's trying really hard to figure out its function.

As Johnny is seemingly memorized by the frog-

Dennis slowly reaches behind him and takes out his gun.

JOHNNY

Okay. I give up what does this frog do?

Dennis aims his gun at Johnny, who seems oblivious.

JOHNNY  
Oh wait. I know...

In a FLASH-

Johnny CRACKS Dennis on the bridge of the nose with the frog and grabs the gun out of his hand.

JOHNNY  
It's a weapon, right?

Dennis MOANS and puts his hands over his nose.

DENNIS  
Ahh... Dude, that really hurt.

JOHNNY  
You pulled a gun on me, Dennis.

DENNIS  
I know.. But still... owwww...

JOHNNY  
That was a bad idea. I may not look like much but I'm an expert in several martial arts. Some you've never even heard of... like "Lazy Seahorse Karate".

(beat, laughing)  
Okay. I made that one up.  
(more laughing, then serious)

Look, Dennis, this problem isn't gonna go away. You have to find your inner strength and deal with it in a positive way.

(RE: the gun)  
This? Not very positive.

DENNIS  
I'm sorry. I just... I don't have seven grand...

JOHNNY  
Okay... Well, how much do you have?

DENNIS  
If I empty my bank account, I can get half.



JOHNNY

Okay. Well, like your testicular situation, half is better than none.

(beat)

Too soon?

(beat)

Okay. If you give me half today, I can give you another week to come up with the other half.

Johnny sighs with relief.

JOHNNY

Of course I'll have to break your leg.

(off his reaction,  
shrugging)

Sorry...

DENNIS

Couldn't you just break my pinkie or something?

JOHNNY

Pinkie is for like 500 bucks or less, a few grand is definitely leg range. Again, sorry.

DENNIS

Can I have another glass of Scotch first?

JOHNNY

Sure!

(beat)

I'll get it. Just in case you've got a set of Ginsu knives in there you're fixing on grabbing.

Johnny heads into the kitchen, still holding the gun, and returns with the bottle a moment later.

JOHNNY

And I'll tell ya what else I'll do for ya, since I like you... I'll let you pick which leg I break.

Dennis manages a weak smile as he pours himself another drink.

JOHNNY

Okay. Let's get to the really important issue here...

(MORE)

JOHNNY (cont'd)  
(motioning towards the  
frog with the gun)  
What does that frog do?

Dennis sighs and picks up the frog. He takes the stick out its mouth and rubs it across the frog's back. It makes a frog croaking-like sound.

JOHNNY  
(pleased)  
Ohhh! It makes a frog sound! Cute.

FADE TO:

INT. LARGE ROOM - NIGHT

Dennis, on crutches, with a cast on his leg, HOBBLER forward with determination.

There are several people in folding chairs watching as--

Dennis reaches the front of the room and stands behind a PODIUM.

He leans his crutches against the side of the podium and clears his throat.

DENNIS  
Hi. My name is Dennis and I'm a  
gambling addict.

EVERYONE  
Hi Dennis.

From the back of the room, Johnny Smiles with a donut in his hand, smiles proudly and gives him a big THUMBS UP.