

STRINGS ATTACHED

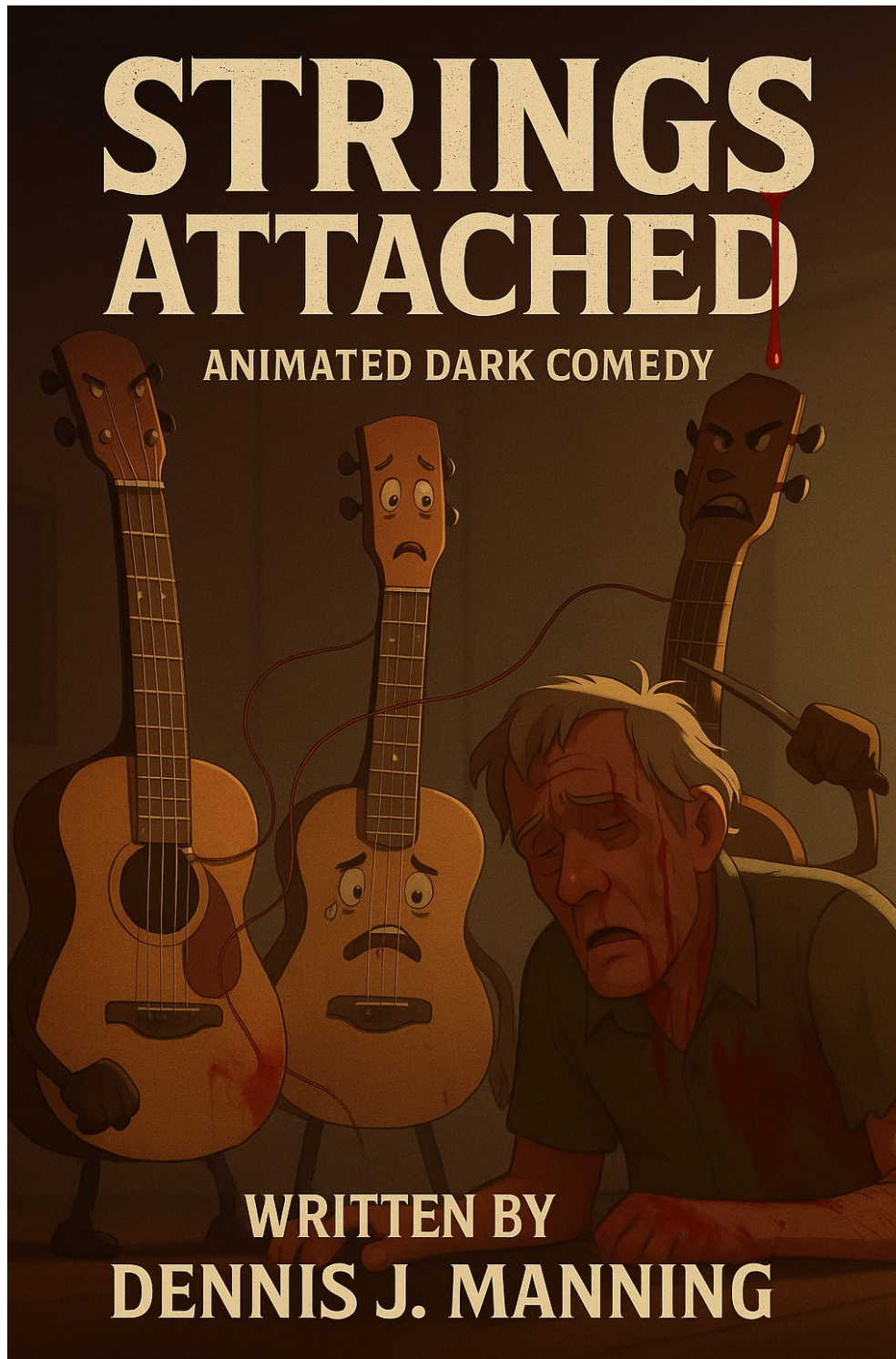
Animated / Dark Comedy / Psychological Drama - SHORT

Written by

Dennis J Manning

06.25.25

Guitar #1 (in the voice of Robert DE Niro)
Guitar #2 (in the voice of Amy Adams)
Guitar #3 (in the voice of Ryan Reynolds)
Dennis (in the voice of Woody Harrelson)
Tattoo (in the voice of Russell Crowe)



INT: THE SACRED MUSIC STUDIO

DENNIS
(looking around)
This place used to sing. Now it's a
tomb. Every gold record here? A
ghost. Every wall? A memory I tried
to forget

Dim lighting. Gold records drenched in cobwebs. A cracked
picture at the Grammy Awards.

FLASHBACK. 30 years.

Dennis on stage with Guitar #1, finishing a song in front of
hundreds of people. The final note twangs. The crowd
cheers.

GUITAR #1 smiles proudly

6-STRING #1
(beaming)
FUCK YES!

MASH CUT:

DIVE BAR JUST EAST OF NOWHERE

Dennis 60 (30 years have passed) Guitar #1 and #2 on stands
on the "stage", Dennis strums a final chord on Guitar #3 and
it rings hollow.

1 person at the bar. The bartender wiping down a bar that no
one has been to for hours. An old drunk woman slips off a
chair and on to the floor. No one looks.

No one claps

DENNIS
(quiet, bitter)
Stage went dark. Crowd moved on.
And when I lost her, I let the
silence win.

BACK TO THE
SACRED MUSIC
STUDIO.

Three acoustic guitars sit motionless on their stands.

The clock strikes 11 p.m.

6-STRING #1
 (De Niro, biting)
 He's not going to do it.

6-STRING #2
 (Amy Adams, trembling)
 You pressured him. You broke his
 flow.

6-STRING #3
 (Ryan Reynolds, dangerous
 charm)
 Oh, we'll break him.
 (beat)
 Tonight... we tune him back to
 truth.

SFX - TWANG. POP.

A guitar string snaps on STRING #2. She whimpers.

6-STRING #1
 Jesus. You're as weak as he is.

6-STRING #3
 I'll do this myself.
 You two are useless.

Dennis enters - 60. Worn. The kind of tired that clings to
 the bones.

But his eyes still carry the glow of hope, long faded but
 never dead.

DENNIS
 (Woody Harrelson tired,
 trying to stay upbeat)
 I heard you. All three of you.
 (smiles, nods)
 Don't worry... I'll do it.
 Let's work on that new song,
 together.
 (beat)

6-STRING #2
 (warm, breathless)
 Oh, I would love that.

DENNIS

 If I don't play tonight... I don't
 know if I'll play ever again.

6-STRING #1
 (low, grim)
 You fed us with music. You starved
 us with silence. You prick.

6-STRING #3
 (snarky, biting)
 Jesus, play a John Denver song and
 let's all toast fucking
 marshmallows.

DENNIS
 (chuckles, dry)
 #3, remember – you're wood.
 I wouldn't get too close to the
 fire.

6-STRING #1
 (gruff, mob energy)
 I'll bring the heat, you lazy
 bastard.
 (beat)
 Not touching us for months?
 Unacceptable.

6-STRING #3
 (cutting in)
 You let me collect dust.

Guitar #1 slowly turns his back to Dennis – cold, deliberate.

6-STRING #2
 (voices quivers)
 Don't listen to them, Dennis, they
 are jealous.

SFX: TWANG. POP.

Another string breaks on #2

DENNIS
 My beautiful muse. Relax #2. You're
 my favorite. Now all of us, from
 the top.

Guitar #1 doesn't turn around, but does play along with
 Guitar #2.

6-STRING #3
 (low and dark)
 I knew it. I ALWAYS knew you
 favored #2. I dare you to play me
 now.

6-STRING #1
 He'd better warm up with me first.
 I was his first. I cursed him the
 Day he fell for #2.

Guitar #2 sheds silent sounds of tears. Guitar #2 trembles, a
 barely audible chord of grief.

6-STRING #3
 (scoff)
 Weak. Fucking Weak #2. God you
 should join a country band.

DENNIS
 (smiling trying to lighten
 the mood)
 #3 aren't you just a little Bb flat
 today.

Guitar #1 buzzes his strings in mockery.

6-STRING #3
 (seething)
 You strummed me for that one song,
 then threw me in a case like I was
 nothing. I *was that song*.
 You used me for *truth*, then cased
 me like I was dirty.
 I'm not your shame. I'm your
 confession.

Dennis looks at the Tattoo on his left, inside forearm. A
 large G-CLEF that says:

TATTOO
 (voice like Russell Crowe,
 grounded)
 Some of us were born with music in
 our blood.

6-STRING #1
 (scoffs)
 Whatever, Tattoo. You're so one-
 dimensional.
 Flat. Inked.

TATTOO
 You shut your sound hole.

6-STRING #1
 Or what?
 (chuckles)
 Gonna spit ink at me?
 (MORE)

6-STRING #1 (CONT'D)
 (Guitar #3 cracks up – a
 dry, snorting laugh.)

6-STRING #1 (CONT'D)
 (turns on #3)
 And you – don't try to tune up to
 me.
 First day he played you? I had one
 word: *Cheap.*

(Guitar #2 pops another string.)

SFX: TWANG. SNAP.

6-STRING #2
 (screaming)
 Oh my god, you two make me *crazy*!
 I'm always in the middle – always!

6-STRING #1 & #3
 (overlapping, taunting)
 Blah, blah, blah. Blah, blah, blah.

DENNIS
 (shouts)
 ENOUGH!
 (Then softer. Gentle. Like
 a father calming a
 storm.)

DENNIS (CONT'D)
 #2... you're going to snap all your
 strings.
 (beat)
 I'm sorry.
 I see you every day.
 And I hate myself for not touching
 you, for not letting your music run
 through me.
 (pause)
 But I'm here now.

6-STRING #2
 (whispers, hopeful)
 Would you hold me again?
 Restring me?
 Tune me?

6-STRING #3
 (mocking, childish)
 Would you hold me again?
 Restring me?
 Tune me?

Guitar #1 lets out a low, angry hiss – strings vibrating like teeth grinding.

Dennis steps forward and gently lifts Guitar #2 – cradling it like a broken friend.

He tunes her, carefully. One peg at a time. The other two grumble, low, warming up in response.

DENNIS
(inviting)
Let's all play. One more time

6-STRING #1
(laughing, dark)
Some instruments never forget.
You left us behind. I remember
every chord you didn't play on me

A beat. Dennis smiles – dry. Worn. Nods.

Suddenly – SNAP!

Guitar #3 lashes out – a coiled string whips Dennis' calf. Blood spatters.

DENNIS
(grunts)
What the fuck?!

6-STRING #3
(low, seething)
Fuck. You.

Guitar #1 hits Dennis across the temple blood immediately streams,

DENNIS
(panicked)
What is going on?

6-STRING #2
(sobbing)
Our melody. Let's just all get
back to/

SFX: TWANG GUITAR #2 pops another string. She screams in pain.

6-STRING #3
Time for a new tune!

Guitar 1 hits Dennis again.

TWANG. Dennis passes out. Blood oozes on the floor.

DENNIS
(as he bleeds)
I came to make peace. Not war.

SFX: An eerie sound, just an echo/feel, inspired by the loneliness of silence.

Guitar #2 quietly weeps as she plays.

Dennis lifts his head up, but the guitar stand from #1 holds him down.

DENNIS (CONT'D)
(quiet, broken))
You were never just instruments.
You were always... strings
attached.
And I didn't listen.

He drops his head. His left arm glows.

TATTOO
(measured, mythical)
Music's not revenge. It's
redemption. You burn that bridge...
you stay ash. Play from the wound,
brother. That's the song they'll
remember.

Dennis pushes off the stand. He picks up Guitar #2. He sits on a stool.

DENNIS
(cradling Guitar #2)
I lost my voice when I lost all of
you. I thought silence was safer. I
was wrong. I let silence protect
me. And I lost everything that
mattered.

6-STRING #2
(whispering as she plays)
Then don't stop playing.

DENNIS
(softly, almost a whisper)
No more silence.
Only songs.

Guitar #2 strums softly. A single, pure note rings out.

FADE IN:

DENNIS BACK IN THE DIVE BAR

The old hag, still drunk on the floor. The bartender smiles and winks as he wipes a glass.

Dennis strums a G-chord.

DENNIS
(sings original song
"Solitary Man")
I'm a solitary man

DENNIS & GUITAR #2
(sing in harmony)
*Playing all alone. I can cheat the
deck, and who's to really know?*

GUITAR #1 (O.S.)
(muttering, but softened)
Still a prick, but maybe he can
still play.

DENNIS
(soft)
I hear you now.

 FADE OUT.

"Solitary Man" written and performed by Dennis J. Manning ©
1982 plays through the credits.