

# ***THE ENCYCLOPEDISTS***

Pilot for a Limited Series

Written by

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**INT. THRONE ROOM - DAY**

KING LOUIS XV sits his throne, bedecked in magnificent jewels, a luxurious robe, and a towering powdered wig.

On a little golden lap desk, he does paperwork.

DENNY (V.O.)

There is no man in all of Europe more powerful than the King of France. His title carries wealth, splendour, power -

With half a glance and less a thought, the King dips the royal seal in wax, stamps the order, and hands it back to an attendant, who whisks it away.

**INT. NARROW APARTMENT - DAY**

Denis Diderot (we'll call him DENNY), early 30s, hunches over his desk and writes furiously.

DENNY (V.O.)

But he owes it all to the realm and its people, without whom he'd have nothing.

Hands stained with ink, locks of hair hanging in his face - chasing down an idea, pen in hand.

**INT. ROYAL POLICE BARRACKS - DAY**

The attendant walks through a police barracks. He passes a group of policemen playing cards -

DENNY (V.O.)

Not even the King is truly free; his duty binds him, an all powerful prisoner to the state he serves.

- and then steps to the side as two officers drag a grim-faced prisoner past him.

The attendant walks into

**AN OFFICE**

and hands the king's order to lieutenant-general NICOLAS RENÉ BERRYER, seated at his desk, eating a steak. 40ish.

DENNY (V.O.)

Sworn to serve the King, his men thus owe their true duty to the realm.

As Berryer reads the order, a smug smile spreads across his face.

**EXT. PARIS STREETS - DAY**

The police ride out into the filthy streets: Two officers on horseback, swords on their belts, followed by a horse-drawn police carriage.

DENNY (V.O.)  
The realm reflects the King's rule.  
Under a wise king, the realm  
prosper, as in a golden age.

A woman pours shit out of a second floor window; it lands with a SPLAT on a passed-out drunk, face down in the gutter.

The street itself is crowded with riders, carriages, pedestrians - all of whom part ways as the police proceed.

**INT. NARROW APARTMENT - DAY**

Denny scribbles furiously. With an ink-stained hand he tucks a loose lock of hair behind his ear and keeps going.

DENNY (V.O.)  
But under a selfish King, corruption  
trickles down.

Over his left shoulder, a window; through it you may notice the police pull up outside.

**EXT. PARIS STREETS - DAY**

As the carriage stops, Berryer steps out and his men enter the building.

DENNY (V.O.)  
The King's men serve in their self-  
interest, seeking no greater good  
than their own advancement.

**INT. NARROW APARTMENT - DAY**

Denny keeps writing, his focus total.

DENNY (V.O.)  
Where justice once brought order to  
the realm, it now exists only to keep  
people in line.

KNOCK KNOCK.

DENNY  
 (doesn't look up)  
 One second...

He puts a period on the sentence and walks to his kitchen.

From a drawer, he pulls a knife - and checks his reflection in the blade. It gleams, the brightest item in this dingy apartment. Hilt embossed "Diderot" in elegant script.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK.

DENNY  
 I'm coming!

BERRYER (O.S.)  
 Open up! Before we break it in.

DENNY  
 That's very unnecessary!

But a new idea glimmers behind those eyes -

DENNY (V.O.)  
 Nothing is safe from this corruption:  
 church, commerce, craftsmen, schools  
 of knowledge -

He dashes to the desk and writes, racing to keep up. But there's no more knocking at the door...

DENNY (V.O.)  
 All become tightly bound to the whims  
 of an absolute -

BAM! The doorknob falls off THUD and the door flies open -

A cop with a sledgehammer steps back as the police rush in. They lift Denny by his arms, leaving his sentence half-finished on the

CUT TO:

**EXT. PARIS STREETS - DAY**

The men throw Denny in the back of the police carriage.

**INT. POLICE CARRIAGE - DAY**

Lieutenant Berryer gets in beside him.

DENNY  
 I'm telling you, whatever they said I  
 wrote - I didn't write it.