It's like you're getting off on messing with my sanity

by Kachina

Summary

"Clowns were creepy. With all that white make up and painted faces one just couldn’t tell what these guys were really thinking. Were they really as sad as the painted tears underneath their eyes wanted to make one think they were? Or these wide smiles. They just couldn’t be happy twenty-four seven. No one was constantly smiling."

Another Harley Quinn Origin Story set in the Gotham universe.

Notes

I know, I should be writing on my other stories but I started this story in the last few weeks and just hearing about the events in season 4 pushed me into finishing the first chapter. I'm no good with regular updates (tends to happen with a 9-5 job) but I'll try my best to keep this story going. It's the last thing I can do for our dearest ginger murder puppy.

A big THANK YOU goes to our lovely AnonymousMink for kinda becoming my beta for this chapter - and for all the spoilers on season 4: the "good" and the bad ones.

I am always thankful for kudos, comments and bookmarks. Let me know what you think about this set-up.
Also the title is taken from "Sexy, Dirty Love" by Demi Lovato.
Chapter 1

The sun started setting when she first stepped foot on the circus grounds. The lights were already shining, getting brighter as the sky darkened with every minute. It was her first time at a circus and she couldn’t quite decide where to look first. Her fellow pals from college made the choice for her, dragging her to a food stand just a few feet away from the entrance.

Chewing on her candy apple, she followed the other students and was looking left and right at the various stands and performers. One performer caught her attention especially, a middle aged woman dressed in oriental garb who’s dark hair was covered with a turban. She was dancing slowly wearing a snake around her neck. It was really fascinating how she moved completely in synch with the animal, as if the snake was part of her.

“C’mon, the show starts in a few,” one of the other Freshmen told her, taking her attention off the snake dancer. With one last look she followed the others and asked herself again why she agreed to come with them. She didn’t know them that well but that was the point, wasn’t it? She needed to get to know them, had to hang out with them every day for the next four years. A little bonding time of campus couldn’t hurt, right? Right.

The show was good though she liked the acrobats way more than the clowns. First and foremost, she used to be a gymnast and she was itching to climb up there and join the “Flying Graysons”. Second and almost as important, clowns were creepy. With all that white make up and painted faces one just couldn’t tell what these guys were really thinking. Were they really as sad as the painted tears underneath their eyes wanted to make one think they were? Or these wide smiles. They just couldn’t be happy twenty-four seven. No one was constantly smiling.

When the main event was over, the other students left the big top to mingle between the other visitors – leaving her on her own in the process since everyone else already had someone they knew way better than the rest of their group. It didn’t bother her though, maybe she could find that snake dancer again.

Her mind set on that task, she strolled around the circus grounds. The sun was gone completely now but the place was well lit thanks to the million fairy lights. She felt like she’d entered a different world, a place so alien compared to the gray streets of Gotham. Everything in Gotham seemed to be gray. Just plain gray. A little bit of color wouldn’t hurt no one.

She’d already searched every part where patrons were allowed but the snake dancer was nowhere in sight, so she assumed the dancer must have gone to her trailer already. What a shame. Everything else wasn’t as fascinating here – especially, when one was on their own. Maybe she should just head home.

“You looking for someone?”

Surprised to be addressed at all, she turned around to lock eyes with the green pair in front of her. For a moment, she couldn’t do more than taking in the boy’s appearance – because, wow, he was one of those people who were just beautiful. And if someone didn’t agree, they were just jealous. End of discussion.

When he raised one of his perfectly curved eyebrows, she remembered that he was still waiting for her to answer his question. *Oops.*

“Eh, kinda,” she replied quickly, “Before the show started, there was this snake dancer. Tried to get
a second look. It was quite fascinating to watch.” She thought she’d seen a little twitch beneath his left eye when mentioning the snake dancer, but she just ignored it.

“Yeah …” His voice sounded a little forced as if he didn’t want to talk about it – but maybe that was just the natural tone of his voice. She’d heard him say five words so far, so what did she know about the sound of his voice at all. Except that it was really melodious and just a little bit higher than one would expect. “Mom’s often leaving while everyone watches the show.”

Now, that really was a surprise. She couldn’t see any form of resemblance but maybe he just took after his Dad.

“So, you’re part of the circus then? What’s your talent?” She was curious, not just because she could get a glimpse at life behind the big top, but because he chose to talk to her. She had always wanted to know what made people tick.

She could feel his eyes on her; could literally feel how he tried to look into her mind, how he tried to figure her out. There was some kind of tension but she couldn’t define it; couldn’t point out the origin for the life of her.

“Just helping out backstage. No real talent here.” Somehow, his words sounded like an understatement, even though they suited his posture: Shoulders slumped, hands buried in his coat pockets but something didn’t fit into the picture. She just couldn’t name it right now.

“I’m sure you’ve got some great talents. You just need to embrace them. Let loose and do what you can do best,” she tried to encourage him with an advice she’d once received when she started doing gymnastics.

In response to her words, he just eyed her again for an endless moment before he shrugged his shoulders.

“Gotta have to wait and see, I guess.” His emerald eyes literally pierced her own baby blues. The words were followed by a heavy silence she didn’t know how to break, too distracted by a pair of incredibly green eyes.

He was the one to break the silence: “You wanna take a look at Sheba?”

“Sheba?” She asked with a raised eyebrow.

“My Mom’s stu- … snake.” She wasn’t sure what he’d really wanted to say before he’d corrected himself but it was that little slip that spiked her interest in him further. She still couldn’t pinpoint what he was trying to hide but she wanted to find out. She needed to find out his secret. That was just part of her curious nature, just one of the many reasons why she’d chosen her major the way she did. You didn’t go into Psychology if you weren’t curious about the human mind after all.

“I’d love to. But am I even allowed back there?” She really wanted to see that snake but she had been raised to always consider what was right and what was wrong. Trespassing was definitely a gray area.

He fixed his eyes on her for the third time and she felt like he was trying to pry into her head again. Then he moved a little closer to whisper in her ear – and all of a sudden his voice was a whole octave deeper than before: “Who cares if it’s right or wrong. We just won’t get caught. That way, no one can decide if it was right or wrong.”

While she felt his breath ghosting over her cheek she realized that she didn’t even know his name. She wanted to ask but she just nodded her head being way to fascinated by his change in personality.
“Let’s go then.” His voice was back to normal while he turned around to head towards the trailer park behind the big top. She hesitated for a moment. She didn’t really know him. At all. She shouldn’t follow a total stranger into an area where they’d be on their own. Who knew what he might try.

“You coming? Cause I won’t wait for you,” he said without looking back to her. She eyed the lights highlighting his auburn hair for another second; then she hurried along the path he took towards the trailers.

When she caught up with him, he mumbled something under his breath she didn’t quite get; though she was sure she’d heard the word “girl”. While considering if she wanted to ask what he’d said or rather not, he already stopped in front of a trailer. Right next to the door stood a cage hosting the beautiful reptile.

She leaned forward putting her hands on her knees to get a better look at the creature: “Hey there, beautiful.” The snake lifted its head a bit as if considering her for a moment before it decided to get back to sleep. “What kinda snake is it?” she wanted to know and looked back to him, noticing that he was eyeing her again. “What is it? Do I have something on my face or …?”

“No. You’re looking good,” he replied after a few seconds of silence passed between them. “Just not a big fan of snakes,” he added with a shrug of his shoulders, hands burying themselves deeper into his pockets.

She couldn’t deny that his complimenting her looks made her a little bit flustered. Since her High School sweetheart dropped her when she finished High School early, she hadn’t even entertained the thought of being with another man again, so her own reaction to his words caught her a little of guard.

“We can go back, if you want to,” she says to distract herself from these very inappropriate thoughts, thoughts that were distracting her way too much. Just as much as his green eyes which were piercing her own right now – but this time, she held his gaze to try and guess what he was thinking in that moment. Though the intensity of his eyes not matching with that slightly introverted person he appeared as.

Finally, he shrugged his slumped shoulders and started to walk back towards the sounds of the cheerful visitors: “Yeah, let’s go back.” She needed a moment to grab a hold on what just happened. The switch between their intense starring match and this nonchalance was irritating her just as much as it fed to her curiosity – which was one of the reasons that she followed him again.

They just entered the fairgrounds again when she heard one of her friends call her name: “There you are, Harleen. We were looking for you all around.” Oh wow, all of a sudden they were concerned about her? Yeah, sure. Whatever. Didn’t feel like it, when the left her on her own after the show.

“You coming or what?” another one of her group wanted to know. “We’re heading back into town now.”

“Coming,” she said before she faced the beautiful circus boy again. “Thank you for showing me the snake. I appreciate it. Especially since you don’t like them.”

In reaction to her thankful words, he shrugged his shoulders again: “Sure thing. Maybe I’ll see you around … Harl-een.” The way he pronounced her name had her shivering and she couldn’t tell if it was the nice kind or shiver or if it was more on the creepy side.

While she pondered that thought he started to walk away, back towards the trailers. But she couldn’t
let him go like that; she had to know his name at least.

“It’d only be fair if you tell me your name”, she called after him, “You already know mine.”

He stopped in his tracks and looked back over his shoulder, a small grin appearing on his lips and Harleen had a strange feeling about that grin. It was just a slight uplift of the corner of his mouth but it felt kinda contagious.

“If you wanna know my name you have to come back here, I guess.”
Chapter 2

And here's the second chapter. I'm really proud of myself that I finished it on time and I'm also really thankful for every hit, comment and bookmark as well as your kudos.

There might be a really small hint at another TV series. Maybe someone can point it out ;) But for now: Have fun, lovelies!

“I want you to prepare the chapters 5 and 6 for next week.” The elbow of the person next to her pulled Harleen out of her daydream, hitting her in the ribs while their teacher ended today’s lecture.

“Did you even hear anything he taught us?” her friend asked while she put her books into her backpack.

Harleen looked around the room to see everyone else packing up their stuff. Hadn’t she just entered the lecture hall a few minutes ago? Geez. She really was trapped in her thoughts there, wasn’t she?

For now, she ignored her friends question and pushed her non-existent notes back into her bag while she kept telling herself that she wasn’t thinking about green eyes and auburn hair for over one hour straight. Nope, definitely didn’t happen.

“We thought about hitting a club tonight. You coming with us, Harleen?” Her friend hadn’t stopped talking since the end of their lecture but now Harleen started paying attention again. Usually, she wouldn’t say no to a night out with her friends. But since she was left standing the night before, she couldn’t stop thinking about the mysterious circus boy. She needed to see him again, needed a name to go along with that face, needed to know the secret behind the discrepancy between his withdrawn behavior and that intensity of his stare.

“I’m not feeling well so I’ll pass this time, but thanks anyway,” Harleen said her goodbyes afterwards and headed home. She didn’t plan on taking her books to the circus and she had to wait a few hours until there would be any patrons on the fairgrounds anyway. She could always use that spare time to read the chapters again they were talking about in today’s lesson. She would definitely not spend the afternoon in front of her mirror trying to choose the perfect outfit for the occasion. That would just be ridiculous.

Half an hour before the sun started to set, she arrived at her destination wearing the same black jeans and red shirt from her day at college. Nothing special, just what she wore the whole day. It was one of her favorite shirts, though that was just a coincidence.

She strolled around, trying to seem interested in the performers and not to be the girl looking for a guy. It helped a lot to find that snake dancer from a night before, Harleen being intrigued by her all over again – stepping towards her to get a closer look.

Now that she knew about the connection, she tried to see a resemblance between that woman and
her mysterious ginger. Not that he was her ginger of course, not technically. But who cared about technicalities?

Getting a closer look than the night before, Harleen did notice that the snake dancer and her ginger stranger – she wouldn’t justify her own thoughts to herself – had the same green eyes. But his eyes had this kinda gloomy spark which fascinated Harleen.

The snake wound down the woman’s arm until it reached her hand where it looked towards the audience. She moved her arm from left to right and back again but the snake fixed its little black eyes on Harleen the whole time and for a short moment she thought about the possibility that Sheba remembered her. Could snakes recognize people? ‘Well,’ Harleen guessed, ‘it definitely recognizes its owner.’

“What’s your name, girl?” The woman looked Harleen dead in the eye while she spoke, so there’s no doubt that the dancer was taking to her.

“Harleen,” she replied and wasn’t sure what to make of this. Did he mention her towards his Mom last night or was this just a coincidence?

“Give me your hand, Harleen,” she asked her while offering her right hand for Harleen to take. Hesitating for just a few seconds, she finally reached out to put her hand into the woman’s. Harleen didn’t know what to expect of this gesture – definitely not that the snake dancer would move her hand towards the snake or for the snake to wound over towards their joined hands. She also didn’t expect the smooth feeling of the cold skin or the tickling of its little tongue. The whole experience was kinda overwhelming.

“Sheba likes you,” the woman smiled before she removed the snake from Harleen’s hand to show another trick leaving Harleen to stare at the animal for a few more seconds. Then she reminded herself that she wasn’t here to watch the snake dancer but rather to find her son. She had to know his name at least. It was driving her mad that he wouldn’t tell her yesterday, though maybe that was the point. Maybe he wanted her to return and made sure she had a reason to do so. But he couldn’t know that her curiosity would literally drive her nuts if someone withhold a piece of information, could he? This was confusing as hell. Time to find the handsome ginger.

Her mind set on the new old task, she left the snake dancer behind and mingled with the other visitors again, looking out for auburn hair. After half an hour, she had searched the whole area at least twice and still hadn’t found him. Would he tell her to come back for his name when he wouldn’t even be around this evening? She didn’t have an answer to this question, since she just talked to him for less than twenty minutes. That wasn’t enough time to create a differentiated analysis of any human being let alone someone who was definitely hiding a part of their personality, which was one of the few things Harleen was sure about.

When she reached the path that led into the private area with all the trailers, she hesitated. Should she risk it and walk back there to try and find him? Would it still be a gray area if she walked back there on her own without the ginger by her side? He wasn’t anywhere else on the circus grounds so she kinda had to go in there to find him, right? And she really wanted to find him, even if it just satisfied her curiosity by learning his name.

Harleen still discussed the pros and cons inside her head, when she suddenly heard that voice – already able to recognize it after one conversation: “So you did come back, huh?”

She turned around instantly, facing the redhead who managed to sneak up on her somehow. His hands were buried in his pockets again, his posture showing that air of submissiveness that just wouldn’t fit the mischievousness lingering behind his green eyes.
“Cat got your tongue, Harl-een?” A small smile pulled at one corner of his mouth, though it didn’t reach the other side yet.

“No,” she replied immediately but didn’t quite know what to say apart from that. He also didn’t reply to her but just lifted one of his perfectly shaped brows. She couldn’t let him be right so she said the first thing that came to mind: “You promised me your name when I’d come back.”

“I did, didn’t I?” That hint of a smile, which graced his lips before, evolved into a small grin. “Why don’t you make a guess first?”

“You want me to guess your name? There are like a million probabilities,” Harleen exclaimed with widened eyes.

“If you get it right in three attempts, you’ll win a prize. We’re at the circus after all,” he offered with a shrug of his slumped shoulders, while the words and the glint in his green eyes were a strange paradox to his posture.

“A prize?” That piqued Harleen’s interest – and woke up her curious nature once more. What kind of prize could he offer her? And why did he propose this little guessing game in the first place? What was his gain? So many questions and Harleen didn’t even seem to be close to getting any answers. It was so frustrating.

“What’s the prize?” she asked him instead, searching his face in hope to find some hints there.

“If you want to know what the prize is, you’ll have to guess right,” he replied with his voice lowered to a whisper resulting in Harleen stepping closer towards him.

She watched his face while she tried to imagine a name which would fit that handsome boy, but she just couldn’t decide on any name. Also, that glint in his eyes was really distracting, causing her to finally sigh in defeat: “Ugh, it could be literally any name. This is a totally unfair game. Give me a hint at least.”

He looked at her with that same stare from the night before, the one that seemed to pierce her soul, looking right into her very core. Then he shrugged his shoulders again and buried his hands a little bit deeper into his pockets; though at the same time, he radiated a nonchalance that was completely contrary to his body language.

“I suppose I could give you one hint. Maybe you’ll get another one if you don’t get it right the first time,” he pulled his right hand out of his jacket to rub his chin in thought, while Harleen followed his every movement with her eyes. He’s got such a chiseled jaw and she really should stop staring at his face, because she was sure that he noticed by now. He had to notice that she was somehow attracted to him. It seemed impossible to miss in her own eyes.

Harleen was pulled from her thoughts when he finally decided on which hint she would get: “The first letter is in close proximity to your own.”

Her intuitive reaction was to pout. That still meant a hell of a lot of names. But she fought that urge and concentrated on the task that presented itself in front of her. She considered his hint while eyeing him, trying to gauge his intentions. ‘G and I seem a bit too obvious for that close proximity stuff, but E and K are too far away, I guess. That leaves only F and J as an option. Okay, does he look more like an F- or a J-type of guy?’

She could really only guess from there and the first name that came to thought was John as in John Doe, so she decided to go with her gut feeling – though she wouldn’t dare to guess a random name
like John. He really didn’t seem like your ordinary John guy.

“Is your name Jeffrey?” she asked while trying to read his face for any indicator if her guess was even close to the truth, but he just shook his head no before he imitated the negative buzzing sound of a quiz show: “Unfortunately, that’s incorrect. Though I have to admit, that you’re quite close.”

He considered her with that intense look again, before he added another hint – or two: “At least you’ve got the first two letters and the number of syllables right.”

Of course the first guess wouldn’t be correct. Harleen just didn’t have that kind of luck – and no matter what everyone else suggested, she definitely worked hard for her scholarship and she earned it. Also moving from Brooklyn to Gotham on her own was definitely challenging but she never dreaded change. And if she could make it on her own in a city like Gotham she could definitely guess a boy’s name right!

She knew now that his name started with “Je” and that only one syllable followed. There couldn’t be that many names fitting these specific criteria right? Right. So, it could be names like Jerry or Jesse but these didn’t really fit him in her eyes. Jesus would definitely not go into consideration either. She searched her memories for other fitting names and finally came up with something that wasn’t completely unlikely: “How about Jensen?”

“Do I look like a Jensen to you?” His words almost sounded offended, which was only accentuated by his mouth dropping open while he put his hand right over his heart – as if her answer hurt his feelings. Such little moments made Harleen wonder why he wasn’t as shy as he seemed to be the previous night. Maybe he just needed some time to open up to a complete stranger. Though on the other hand, it was him you initiated the conversation last night. Oh well, this just added to his mystery then.

“Well, I didn’t believe it’d be something like Jerry, Jesse or Jesus which leaves me with limited options. I still have one guess, right? Means I can still make it up to you since Jensen seems so offensive to you. What names are even left with two syllables? Maybe I should just call you J,” Harleen finished her little rant with a small huff. She didn’t even intended to rant like this, but just wanted to defend her second choice.

Before he got a chance to respond another voice interrupted them: “What do you think you’re doing there, Jerome? Hanging around back here. I bet you’ve still got things to do before the show ends any minute. You really are useless, aren’t you?”

At first, Harleen wanted to tell the snake dancer that it was her fault, that she distracted him from doing his job. But then she realized that his mother just told her his name. But when she turned towards him again with a grin on her lips, she noticed immediately how tense his posture suddenly became with his mother’s appearance. Also the smile he put on while facing Harleen seemed forced.

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“Looks like there won’t be a prize then. Goodbye, Harleen,” he said while walking towards his mother, leaving Harleen behind just like the night before.

But this time Harleen wouldn’t let him get away so easy: “I’ll see you tomorrow, Jerome.”
Sorry for the delay, the constantly changing weather took its toll on me. But here’s chapter 3.

And it’s for all of you out there who’ve already read Mink’s new chapter or going to read it. You may know why ...

“You’ve been to the circus yet, Harleen?” One of the girls living across the hall looked expectantly at Harleen, waiting for an answer to her question. Well she couldn’t know that Harleen’s thoughts had already been at said circus all day long. But since Harleen just stared at her with big blue eyes, the girl clarified her question: “The circus that’s been in town for a few days? Toni and I wanna go there this evening and are wondering if you wanna come with us.”

Harleen just looked at her for another moment, before she broke into a grin: “I’d like to join you.” That was just perfect, an excuse to go back there for the third night in a row. But she did promise Jerome she would see him again today. Jerome. Since their farewell the night before, she had repeated his name inside her head as well as aloud, enjoying its feeling on her tongue.

“Great. Meet us downstairs in half an hour?” The girl, Harleen thought her name was Trisha or something similar, beamed at her.

“Sure. See you then.” Now Harleen just needed to get rid of them as soon as they arrived at the circus. *Shouldn’t be too hard.*

Knowing she would see Jerome this evening, Harleen selected her clothes for college like she would have done for a date. This way, she could still go with “It’s just the clothes I’ve worn all day.” It was just a coincidence that this red skirt hugged her curves really nicely and the black blouse might be just the tiniest bit see-through.

It was the same excuse she gave her neighbours when she met them in the hall that evening.

“Wow Harleen, you really go all out for classes,” one of the them had replied with an easy grin, “they’re lucky if I turn up in anything other than sweatpants.”

“Ugh same,” the other crinkled her nose, “but we can swap fashion tips later - It’s circus time! I’ve been waiting all week for this.”

Harley didn’t know why but for some reason she felt like she’d been waiting a lot, lot longer.

Arriving at Haly’s Circus, Harleen noticed that there were a lot more patrons than there’ve been the previous nights. ‘Good,’ she thought, ‘people get lost in a big crowd all the time.’ Though, against all odds, Trisha and Toni both curled one arm around Harleen’s own. She was literally trapped between them.

Before the show, they tried to watch the performers who were scattered around the fairgrounds, but there were too many other visitors to get a good look on any of them. Harleen also tried to spot
Jerome’s mother again - still being awestruck by the snake dancer. She didn’t really get a chance to find her, since T’n’T already pulled her into the big top to see the main show. This evening definitely didn’t play out the way she’d hoped it would do.

Well, the circus folk seemed to think the same way she did. At least she guessed they’d think so, when the clowns and acrobats suddenly started to beat each other’s heads in. At first, Harleen wondered if it was part of the show even though she had already seen it once - and there definitely wasn’t a stage fight two days ago.

The people around her started to panic when suddenly a man in his thirties stood up calling out “GCPD” for everyone to hear over the ruckus. While everyone was staring at the fight going on in the ring, Harleen saw her chance to escape her neighbors to search for Jerome.

When she reached the boundary between the public and private area, she hesitated for only a second. If someone saw her between the trailers, she could tell them she was a friend of Jerome’s. That way, it wouldn’t be trespassing, right? Right.

After looking around for a minute or two, Harleen remembered the way to his trailer, where he took her to the first night to see his mother’s snake. Upon seeing the snake’s cage, she knew she found the right place and didn’t hesitate another moment, before she knocked on the door hoping, almost praying, that he was home.

It felt like forever before the door finally opened, revealing him in all his ginger glory - and for just a millisecond Harleen thought to see surprise on his face, which was instantly replaced by a small smile pulling at the corners of his mouth.

“Harl-een … now that’s a nice turn of events on this boring evening,” he took a step back into the trailer, giving her room to enter - and she followed his silent invitation immediately.

‘Cosy,’ was her first thought upon stepping into his home. Then she reminded herself, that she was supposed to say something in return to his greeting: “I’ve told you I’d see you today.” She wanted to smile at him, but she noticed that his shoulders were slumped even more than when she first met him and automatically wondered if something happened. Thinking about it, she remembered the harsh tone of his mother when the woman interrupted them the night before.

“I’m sorry. I’ll get you into trouble when someone sees me here, right? I should go. I bet my friends are already looking for me,” Harleen started to ramble and only stopped when Jerome grabbed her hand, gaining her full attention.

“My Mom’s … not here right now and everyone’s busy with the show going on. So who could possibly see you here with me?” That mischievous glint was back in his eyes, fascinating Harleen like it did the first time she noticed it. And if his mother wouldn’t come back anytime soon, then what’s the harm in this?

“Did you get into a lot of trouble yesterday because of me?” Harleen just had to know. She didn’t want to be the reason that he’d gotten into an argument with his mother, because she knew how it was to have a tough relationship with your parents, or at least with one parent.

But Jerome just waved it off, shrugging his shoulders a bit: “Nothing I couldn’t handle.” The resignation laced in his tone caused goosebumps on Harleen’s skin and sadness to pool in her stomach. She wanted to ask him if it happened a lot, but she had a feeling the answer would be yes - or something even more disturbing - and she didn’t want use the time she had with him with such a depressing topic. She also had a feeling that he wouldn’t want to talk about it.
Before she could come up with another question to ask, he already switched the topic himself: “Since your last try on winning that amazing prize yesterday was stolen from you, I think you should get at least a consolation prize. How does that sound to you?”

Harleen knew she was behaving ridiculously embarrassing but she didn’t care while she beamed at him. “What’s the prize?” she wanted to know, almost bouncing on her feet and making Jerome grin over her reaction; though he didn’t get a chance to tell her what kind of prize she won due to a heavy knock on the door. They look each other in the eye for a moment, before Jerome opened the door to the trailer, stepping out when the blond GCPD guy from the big top introduced himself to him.

Harleen followed him but kept herself in the background while the detective - if she heard him right his name was Jim Gordon - asked Jerome about his mother. For now, Harleen just watched, noticing how Jerome’s shoulders slumped even more while he buried his hands in his pockets again, explaining that he hadn’t seen his mother the whole day. She had to keep her facial expression under control when the ringmaster told them about Lila Valeska being kind of a whore. He didn’t use the actual word but it was quite clear that he meant it. She was also a bit surprised when Jerome somehow defended his mother by telling the men she wouldn’t go out without her purse. She also couldn’t shake the feeling, that something just didn’t fit but she couldn’t tell what it was.

“And you are?” Detective Gordon asked, looking from his notes to Harleen and back again.

“I’m Jerome’s friend, Harleen Quinzel. What’s going on anyway?” She took a step forward to stand next to Jerome, putting her hand on his arm on instinct. Something just wasn’t right and the presence of police never was a good sign.

“There has been a fight during the show between the Graysons and Lloyd’s. Apparently, Owen Lloyd as well as Alphonse Grayson were … involved with Lila. That’s why I wanted to talk to her,” Gordon explained his presence.

“Well, she’s not here, is she?” Harleen replied, not liking the way Gordon was looking at them.

“And she hasn’t been here all day. So how are we supposed to help you?”

“So you two have been together all day?” Gordon concluded from Harleen’s words eyeing them a bit suspiciously.

“You’ve got a problem with that? Is a girl not allowed to spent the day with a guy?” Harleen folded her arms over her chest, staring Gordon down until he looked away and with the turn of his head his gaze fell on Sheba’s cage.

“How fast moves a snake?” he suddenly asked not letting the snake out of his sight.

For just a second, Jerome looked Harleen in the eyes before he mumbled a reply: “Fast walking pace. Why do you ask?”

“Let it out of the cage.” It wasn’t a question, more of a demand, causing Jerome and Harleen to ask in unison: “Excuse me?”

“We let the snake out and follow it.” It was obvious that ‘No’ wasn’t a possible answer, so Jerome shrugged his shoulders and opened Sheba’s cage, while Harleen watched with mixed feelings still thinking something just wasn’t right about this.

Together, then followed Sheba over the fairgrounds until the snake slipped under a sheet lying on a cart. That looming feeling lurking in the pit of her stomach since the detective showed up at the trailer evolved into something very similar to dread. This just couldn’t go well.
When Gordon pulled back the sheet, Harleen wished her intuitive feeling wouldn’t have been right. Just like the woman who accompanied the detective, she slapped her hand over her mouth when her eyes fell onto the body in front of them. For several seconds, Harleen could just look at the snake dancer’s unseeing green eyes, taking in all the blood that leaked out of several deep cuts all over her body, soiling her costume.

Her attention was torn off of Lila Valeska’s body when Jerome fell to his knees, crying over the loss of his mother. Instantly, Harleen kneeled down next to him, wrapping her arms around his shoulders and trying to console him. Without wanting to do it, her gaze turned back to the cart while she pulled Jerome into an even deeper embrace. Maybe she did it, because she wanted to show him her empathy - or maybe she did it, because she felt like his crying was just the tiniest bit too much to be genuine. Either way, his face was pressed into her chest, his hands grabbed her shirt, while she couldn’t look away from the corpse.

Detective Gordon summoned the whole circus to the GCPD but Harleen didn’t really hear what he was saying. Her head felt like it was wrapped into cotton candy, the detective’s words sounded dull and far away. She felt like she was dreaming and like everything from this point on was happening to someone else. And while she rode in the back of Gordon’s car, Jerome sitting next to her and staring out of the window with red rimmed eyes, Harleen’s mind repeated one sentence over and over again.

Nothing I couldn’t handle.

Chapter End Notes

I don’t know if I’m able to finish chapter 4 until next weekend cause I’m on my holidays this week. But I’ll try it. Let me know what you think about the new chapter until then.
Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

Thanks again for all comments, kudos, bookmarks and hits, you lovely, lovely people. And an even bigger 'Thank you' goes out to AnonymousMink for doing a great job as beta again :D

Also, I'm sorry for the wait, the real life got to me somehow and then there was the 'Google Docs incident' which I don't even wanna think about anymore. (Just a small hint, approximately 500 words needed to be re-written from memory alone ...)

Maybe it helps that this chapter is a bit longer. There also may be two lines from two different songs integrated into this chapter, though one song is already 15 years old. Maybe you can spot them and tell me in a comment ;-) 

Now do enjoy the ride, my lovelies, I'll just leave you with this chapter.

Oh you know how mothers are. She just. kept. pushing!

His words were just as stuck in her ears as his laughter. Even now, weeks after the incident, she kept hearing his words followed by his maniacal laughter whenever she was left alone with her own thoughts, lying in her bed at night, trying to study for her lectures at the library, waiting in line to get a cup of coffee at the nearest Starbucks.

Gordon had sent an officer to her dorm in the dead of night to escort her to the police station. At first she hadn’t understood what was going on, being summoned to the GCPD. They had kept her waiting in the observation room with another detective. Though she couldn’t remember his name even if her life depended on it.

She had wanted to ask the detective why they had brought her there, when the door to the interrogation room had been opened and Jerome had stepped through it. They made her watch, unable to help him. She’d had to watch how his slumped shoulders had started to shake with suppressed laughter, how it had burst out of him, how he had finally relaxed his posture leaning back into his chair. They had made her listen to his confession, had made her recognize that he didn’t regret what he had done to his mother; that he would butcher her all over again if he got another chance.

“Double Chocolate Mocha with extra cream for Harleen!” The barista’s baritone pulled her out of her memories, grabbing her paper cup and heading swiftly towards the lecture hall.

He’s not the boy he made you think he is. He’s a murderer. He fooled everyone. You couldn’t have known.

That’s what they had told her afterwards. After they’d sent him off to Arkham. When they’d reassured her that she hadn’t done anything wrong, that she couldn’t have known what she was getting herself into.

Hadn’t she though?
She’d been captivated by him from the get go, because she’d noticed the contradiction, because she’d wanted to find out his secret. Now that Harleen knew what he was trying to hide, she should be repelled by him. But instead her fascination for him just grew. Well, she did study Psychology to work with mentally-ill criminals at a facility like Arkham Asylum after all and she did it for a reason. There was nothing more intriguing than trying to analyze the twisted minds of the most dangerous men, being the one who was able to understand them. The thought alone made her feel superior, powerful even.

But of course she hadn’t told Gordon that. For him, Harleen had just nodded her head, kept her thoughts to herself and left the police station when the detectives deemed her own interrogation of sorts done.

“Good morning, Harleen. Have you done the research we were talking about last week?” This time it was her professor’s voice breaking her out of her memories of red hair, green eyes and high-pitched laughter. For just a few seconds, Harleen blinked at her teacher who was looking at her expectantly. Oh right. She still had to interact with actual people in her life that was still carrying on without asking her.

“The research, of course, it’s all … researched,” Harleen internally winced at her own words. She was really losing it over a boy she knew for three days in total, who’d got locked up for murdering his mother because she just kept pushing him into doing it. Harleen started wondering what Lila Valeska did to Jerome to deserve this kinda death without giving herself permission to think about him for the sixth time this day.

Her teacher looked at her, concern reflecting in his gray eyes. Plain gray just like Gotham itself. Nothing compared to mischievous green.

“You feeling okay, Harleen?” He asked her and put his hand onto her left arm. His skin felt cold on her own, which helped her to focus more on what was happening right here, right now.

“Yeah, sure. Just didn’t get enough sleep last night. I was working late on an essay that’s due today,” she replied immediately and started to look for the mentioned research in her backpack. When she finally found the correct papers, she pulled them out and handed them over quickly, dying to get to her seat already. Thankfully, he accepted her research without saying another word and Harleen got her chance to finally sit down next to her friends - just to be greeted with giggles.

“What? What is it?” Harleen looked at her so called friends, asking them with her gaze alone to dare and say it out loud.

“C’mon, Harleen, it’s obvious that he’s hot for you. I just don’t get why you don’t … do something about it.” The tone of her friend’s voice really gave Harleen the creeps. Even thinking about hooking up with her teacher made her shiver - and definitely not in the ‘you’re making my toes curl’ kinda way. And, for once, this really wasn’t about a certain ginger.

“Because he’s teaching us the essentials of Psychoanalysis,” Harleen couldn’t help it but her words sounded more like a question than an answer, still not able to believe her friend really suggested to sleep with one of their teachers.

“Oh please, that’s more a reason to do it than not do it. Freud’s all about sex after all,” her friend countered without hesitation. Harleen didn’t even have a reply to that statement - though that wasn’t really necessary because said teacher started his lecture elaborating Freud’s thoughts on Psychoanalysis; or at least what he thought had been Freud’s thoughts on Psychoanalysis, saving Harleen from further discussions of inappropriate topics in the process.
After almost two hours on Freud and his obsession with sex, Harleen really needed another coffee to survive the rest of the day, though before she could grab her stuff and leave for her next lecture - something about chemical reactions inside the brain and their influence on the human behavior - their teacher had to make an announcement: “As you may remember from your introduction courses, there will be several excursions during your studies. The first will take place in a fortnight thanks to my colleague and good friend Professor Strange. He’s director at Arkham Asylum and invites you to get a first look at working as a psychiatrist with the criminally insane.”

As soon as the teacher finished his announcement, everyone started talking, excitement filling the room while Harleen tried to process the words she just heard. They were going to Arkham in a fortnight. They were going. To Arkham. In a fortnight. Two weeks. Fourteen days.

It turned out to be the longest fourteen days of her life. She couldn’t even be sure if she would get to see him again - and she definitely shouldn’t want to see him again. Throughout the whole fortnight, Harleen was just going through the motions without paying attention to her surroundings; getting up every morning, going to her lectures, attending her training sessions every other day, reading the assigned chapters without remembering their content.

She knew that she needed to get her shit together to keep her grades at their best - otherwise she would lose her scholarship. But her mind was way too occupied with that small possibility of seeing him again, even though she didn’t even know what they were going to learn in Arkham or if they were even going to have contact with the inmates.

Finally, the day she was simultaneously dreading and anticipating arrived. After waking up five minutes before her alarm went off, Harleen stood up and went straight into the shower. She wished she could say that she hadn’t spent the whole evening yesterday in front of her wardrobe, trying to decide on an outfit that was fitting for a ‘school trip’ but also accentuated her assets. She hated herself for being that way because she’s usually above those girls who were dressing themselves up for a guy. She used to be proud of the fact, that she dressed in whatever she liked best without giving a damn about everyone else’s opinion. This was all about analyzing his secrets anyway.

Stepping out of the shower, Harleen used her hand to clear the foggy mirror to get a glimpse at her own reflection, blue eyes sparkling with excitement. She hurried through the rest of her bathroom routine and decided to put her hair into a messy bun at the back of her head - professional but also the tiniest bit mischievous; then she put on the clothes she decided on last night. Black slacks with one of her favorite blouses, deep red with tiny black little diamonds creating kind of a checkered pattern. She was going to visit an institution today, where she wanted to work one day - she had to make a good impression to boost her chances for the future.

When she met in front of the asylum with her friends, one of them made a comment about Harleen dressing up to impress the professor, causing her to roll her eyes in annoyance. She wouldn’t even grace that dumb question with an actual answer. That was just ridiculous, almost hilarious. Fortunately, she didn’t have to answer, thanks to their professor showing up and guiding them into the castle-like building.

They had to sign in at the front desk, every single one of them had to write down their name. Harleen wondered if they wanted to make sure that the same number of students came out as they went in afterwards - or so they could put a name to you, if anything happened during the stay.

Right on time when the last student had put their name onto the list, they were greeted by a small man with round glasses who introduced himself as Hugo Strange, director of Arkham Asylum and their guide for the day.

“To ensure that you’ll go home in one piece, I advise you to follow my orders and listen carefully to
everything I’m telling you. Just remember to always stay on the yellow brick road. But for now, let’s start the tour.”

They followed Professor Strange down the hall as he started talking about the history of Arkham Asylum, naming a few of the infamous patients and some of the old treatments which weren’t allowed any longer. Though it was quite interesting to learn about the institute’s past, Harleen was still wondering if she might get a chance to see a certain redhead during the visit.

His speech went on for another fifteen minutes and Harleen knew that she was supposed to pay attention but she just couldn’t help it, her eyes as well as her mind were wandering the hallways and trying to get a sign of Jerome. She just had to hope that there wouldn’t be a test afterwards.

Her attention was stirred again though, when Strange started to give them another warning: “Everyone who’s not suicidal should stay away from that corridor. This is where we house the most dangerous criminals. Most likely, we’ve got every felony you can think of. Ranging from rape to homicides to cannibalism, just to name a few.”

“You’ve got all kinds of homicide then?” Harleen heard the question before she even recognized that she was the one asking it.

Professor Strange looked her in the eye, raising one eyebrow while he considered his answer to that specific question: “Well, like I’ve said, you can find almost any felony in these halls. What kind of homicide are you thinking of, Ms. …”

“Quinzel. And I don’t know, what about … matricide?” Smooth, Harleen, very smooth. Not one bit suspicious. Not. At. All.

As if he couldn’t put two and two together.

He looked her over for a few seconds and Harleen was sure that he was trying to read her, so she put on her most convincing poker face - or at least she hoped it was convincing. Then, without giving her a proper answer, he turned back to the group: “Just like I’ve told you. Think of a felony, Arkham’s got it. But now, we do have to move on. There’s still a lot to see for you.”

Strange walked off into the opposite direction of the dangerous corridor as Harleen’s mind started working at high speed. The group moved on but her eyes were glued to the hallway. She knew that she had to follow Strange, but now she also knew that her ginger was most likely sitting in a cell just a few feet away from her current position.

Her feet were already moving, taking one last glance back at her fellow students who were moving around a corner now. A quick look wouldn’t hurt no one, would it now?

So she walked right down the forbidden hall, looking left and right for a label on the door telling her the whereabouts of Jerome Valeska but so far she didn’t has a clue on which cell he was in. Hence, when she reached the end of the next turn, she didn’t even hesitate to take it - just to hit a dead end afterwards. Great.

She was about to walk back to her group with a sigh on her lips - fate obviously didn’t want her to meet Jerome again - when she heard it. It was low and more of a chuckle than a laugh but she recognized it anyway. This laughter was stuck in her brain since she heard it for the first time. There was no way she’d forget that laugh.

Slowly, Harleen turned around to face the last door on the right. Curious blue met mischievous green, the corners of his mouth turned up in a full-blown grin this time; seeming so much more
natural on him than the shy behaviour he displayed on their first meeting.

“Harl-een … What a nice distraction. I am bored out of my min-d in this damned nuthouse. You can’t even imagine it …” His eyes pierced hers, his words followed by the same chuckle that had drawn her attention towards him just seconds ago.

She couldn’t see much of his body through the small window in the door, though it was enough to notice that his shoulders weren’t slumped any longer. His posture showed confidence instead, even though he was the one being locked up - and Harleen’s fascination for him just grew even more.

“Jerome …” She didn’t even know what she wanted to say to him. She’d literally spent fourteen days imagining this meeting and now her mind was just blank. What should she even say in a moment like this? Well, definitely not how sorry she was that he was incarcerated and kept away from her. On the other hand if they hadn’t arrested him he would have left the city anyway. This way at least she got the chance to try figuring out his intriguing mind.

“Ahhhh, I like the way you say my name. Didn’t get a chance to tell you that, did I? That’s just a shame.” He leaned a bit forward, so his face was almost touching the glass, his left shoulder resting casually on the wall next to the door.

“You’ve told me now,” she was glad that she got the whole sentence strung together, “and, just for the record, I like the way you say my name too.” That was true, but she felt ridiculous saying it anyway.

“Well, don’t get used to it, Harls. Seems like we won’t get to see each other as often as we hoped for. Speaking of … how did you even get here? You are not trespassing into the restricted area of Arkham, are you?” His eyes were filled with that glint again which made her think doing something bad never felt so good.

“I might have gotten lost during our guided tour. This place just has too many twists and turns …” She couldn’t stop the grin spreading over her lips as well. So it was true what they said, laughter really was contagious.

Especially his laughter.

“Now that’s my girl,” his smile widened as the heat rose to her face, a sure sign that she was furiously blushing, “getting lost on purpose just to say ‘Hi’. You wanna do something even more daring?”

Harleen knew that the wise answer would have been ‘No’. She knew that she was talking to a murderer who didn’t even regret his actions one bit. She also knew that she couldn’t resist him.

“What do you want me to do?”
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

Thanks again for all your love and support. This chapter is a bit shorter than usual but it was a tough one ... ;-)

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Ohh, she was so much more than he could have hoped for. So much potential. So responsive. Just the tiniest hint of darkness in her baby blues. Even if she didn’t know it yet herself.

When he’d first laid eyes on her at Haly’s Circus, he’d just being looking for a cure to his boredom. The whole day he’d tried to find something to entertain him. Not even pranking the Lloyd girl had occupied his mind for more than twenty minutes.

He hadn’t hoped to get more than ten minutes of fun out of it. But as it turned out, she was way more promising, even though he’d thought about dropping her the instant she’d revealed her fascination for his mother and that stupid snake. Honestly, what was the big deal with snakes? There was nothing special about those slithery creatures. At. All.

Surprisingly though, she’d been able to spark his interest - especially when she so willingly abandoned her opinion of right and wrong, following a complete stranger into a restricted area.

Although he still couldn’t understand why she was so intrigued with that scaly sonuvabitch it was captivating to watch her interact with the beast. And when she’d asked for his name afterwards, he’d seen the perfect opportunity to test her. He’d wanted to know if she would come back to learn his name - and she did.

To be honest, he’d been the slightest bit surprised to see her again the next evening. He’d watched her strolling over the fairgrounds for a while, always keeping in the shadows so she wouldn’t catch a glimpse of him. Back then, he thought of her as another distraction, albeit one that lasted a little longer than the usual five minutes - but then she’d surprised him even more when she’d decided to step foot into the private trailer park with only the slightest bit of hesitation showing. So determined.

In that moment he’d decided to get the most out of her. He wanted to see what she would be crazy enough to do, just because he asked her to do it. That’s why he’d played that name guessing game with her. He’d got a great insight into her during those minutes. But his damned mother had to go and interrupt them, that annoying bitch even dared to put him down in front of Harl-een. Well, her bad.

That night, when everyone else had been asleep, he’d knocked her out and dragged her as far as he could before he’d put that hatchet to good use. He had never felt as free before. Of course he had woken her up before he brought the hatchet down on her head. He’d wanted to see her eyes becoming dull after all, so he could remember the exact moment her soul had left her body. The following blows had just been for fun; hearing the cracking of her bones, seeing her blood leaking out of the wounds. Beautiful. Magnificent even.
He’d spent the following day in his trailer - since his mother was no more that thing belonged to him now - sulking the slightest bit. It had been great to end that whore for sure, but now that she was dead it was only half as fun to imagine her death. So what should he do all day long? He should have thought that through before he acted on the strong desire to kill that nagging woman.

Thinking about his options for the day, he hadn’t even noticed how the time flew by, only coming back to reality when he’d heard that soft knock on his door. She had promised to come back that day again after all. And she had kept her promise. She’d been just as responsive as the previous days, revealing herself to be even more useful as he could have hoped for.

Of course he couldn’t have planned any of the events after Detective Gordon had shown up at his door. He’d really had trouble keeping in the huge grin that wanted to break out on his face when Harl-een told the police that she had been at his side the whole day. That was a plain white lie and he would definitely remember that she was more than willing to lie for him.

With that in mind, it hadn’t bothered him at all when Jim Gordon had arrested him. They had sent him off to Arkham Asylum and the minute he’d set foot into this building he’d started looking for an escape route. There were so many things he had to offer and Gotham would witness them all.

So when he’d heard footsteps too light to belong to a guard, his curiosity was spiked and he just had to take a look. Seeing sweet Harl-een was literally the best thing happening since he was forced to wear this striking striped ensemble. And naturally, he had to tease her just a tiny lil’ bit - before he presented her another test to pass.

“You wanna do something even more daring?

“What do you want me to do?” Her words sounded like the sweetest music to his ears.

“You see the hatch there?” He asked with nonchalance colouring his tone while he leant against the wall next to the door. “It’s not locked but you can only open it from your side of the door,” he couldn’t help but to roll his eyes dramatically on this one.

“You want me to open the hatch? That’s all?” She sounded a bit disappointed and on the verge of pouting and he loved it. Leave it up to Harl-een to think opening the hatch to a convicted murderer’s cell wasn’t even daring enough to worth thinking about. That really deserved more than a chuckle but a chuckle it was all he granted her - for now. She had to work a bit harder to earn a full blown laugh from him.

“You’ll have to open it to see what you might get as a reward, Harl-een.” Just as he expected the words were enough for her to open the hatch. “There you go … give me your hand.”

Her big round eyes shot up to meet his own and for a few everlasting seconds nothing happened at all. Then, with confidence showing in her baby blues, she reached her hand through the hatch without breaking eye contact.

When, again, nothing happened for a moment or two, she kept her eyes on him, not showing any sign of uncertainty. Hence, her little gasp when he suddenly gripped her hand in his own, seemed to be the sweetest sound on earth.

“How’s this now, Harl-een? Is this daring enough for you or do you wanna take another step?” He stroked her pulse point, his touch light as a feather, while he waited for her answer, feeling her heartbeat quicken under his fingers.

Her eyes searched his face as if she was trying to read his mind. How amusing. So he held her gaze,
looking at her with the same intention, the tension between them intensifying.

“Show me what you’ve got in mind,” she whispered.

Her voice slightly trembling with excitement turned into a beautiful yelp when he pulled on her wrist with enough force to bump her into the door. Her face just inches away from his own, only separated by the barred window.

“I’d like to ask you a favour, Harl-een. Can you do it for me?” He could smell her shampoo, something fruity with a hint of sweetness. Her eyes still locked with his own.

“Anything. I’ll do anything for you, Jerome.” A blush was slowly working its way into her cheeks. He could literally feel the heat. It was a bit distracting, to be honest.

“That’s exactly what I wanted to hear,” he grinned at her, his mouth spreading wider than before. She was already hanging on his words, waiting for him to reveal the favour.

“I’m gonna find a way out of this loony bin and when the time’s right, I’m gonna need a helping hand.”

“You can count on me!” Her response was immediate and he became suspicious. He tightened the grip on her arm, pulled her against the door a bit more and searched her face again. Could she really be so open to helping a murderer? Or was it more likely that Jim Gordon had sent her to him, trying to fool him into trusting that blonde and blue-eyed doll? He had to be sure about her motives.

“But until then … show me that you mean it.”

~*~

Mean it?

How was she supposed to show him that she meant everything she just said? Cause she really did mean every single word. And she was determined to prove it, whatever that meant.

But before she could tell him, she heard heavy footsteps approaching. Footsteps that definitely belonged to a guard, she was sure of that - though she didn’t move an inch. She was supposed to show him that she would stand by his side. So she would do exactly that. Stand by his side even though the authorities were going to catch her.

He seemed to notice her determination, his grip on her arm now bordering on painful, just to let go of her the next moment, shoving her away from the door. She could still feel his touch on her skin, burning her, leaving a mark no one except her would knew about.

“Close the hatch,” were his last words to her - at least for the day. She did as she was told and stepped back from his door just in time.

The guard rounded the corner at that exact moment, halting in his stride when he laid eyes on her.

“What are you doing here?”

“I’m a student at GCU and I really needed to use the bathroom, but it seems that I’ve got lost. Can you help me find the way back to my group?” She knew how to handle herself, especially with men who thought very little of women - and just as she expected the big guy fell for it, sickeningly overindulgent as he helped her to find her way back to her classmates.
Before she left she risked a last look towards Jerome’s cell and was granted with big smile that made her heart skip another beat.

Chapter End Notes

I’ll hope to get another chapter up before next Sunday. I’ll be on vacation then and won’t have time to write.
Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

I am so sorry that it took almost 2 month to get chapter 6 out to you guys but a lot of things came together at the same time. First my muse didn’t came home with me after my vacation, then I’ve got hit by this down that lasted until earlier this week. But now I’m back and I do hope so myself that it stays this way until this story is finished.

Another huge THANKS to Mink for helping through that time and to my lovely new commentator Melissa who commented at just the right time.

I hope all of you like it and I promise that J will have a bigger part in chapter 7.

After seeing Jerome again in Arkham, Harleen developed a new drive for working on her studies. She also applied for an internship at the asylum - to further support her studies of course. She had to wait a few weeks but she finally received an invitation for a job interview.

When she set foot into the building for the second time, she felt a tingle creeping up her spine. She knew she wouldn’t get a chance to see Jerome this time. But even knowing that they were in the same building at the same time was enough to get her excited. Yeah, she was pathetic like that.

She had to wait at the reception desk for Doctor Jacobson to arrive. He would do her job interview and be her superior and mentor if she became an intern. Since she was early, Harleen had to wait a good ten minutes until he showed up.

“Ahh, you have to be Miss Quinzel. Follow me, please,” he held his hand out for her to shake which she took hesitantly. He seemed nice at first look, though Harleen had a strange feeling about him - a feeling that was confirmed the next moment when he put his hand at the small of her back to guide her towards his office.

Harleen wanted nothing more than to shove him away but she also really wanted that job. She kinda needed it to keep herself sane. If she had the chance to be around Jerome on the regular than she wouldn’t have to think about him 24/7 which would not only improve her mental stability but also her grades that needed to be at their best at all times so she would keep her scholarship.

Keeping all that in mind, Harleen didn’t even flinch on their way to Doctor Jacobson’s office where a desk would separate them again. Or so she thought. Instead he sat down in the seat right next her, placing a hand on her own which was lying on her thighs.

“I have to say that I was quite impressed by your application. You're an excellent student and I haven’t read such a convincing reasoning to do this helluva job in a long time. And you didn’t need more than three sentences to convince me of your talents and willpower. To cut this short, I’m more than willing to take you as an intern.”

Harleen did hear the short pause he made, before he said ‘as an intern’ but she decided to ignore it. She was taking advantage of him just as much as he wanted to take advantage of her. But she definitely wouldn’t let him go through with it. Though before she had any chance of answering him, a loud ringing noise disturbed their conversation.
Irritated, Harleen looked up towards the ceiling since the sound seemed to be originating there: “What’s with the alarm?”

“It means that there’s a breakout. I have to check on some patients. Stay inside my office and don’t make a noise,” Doctor Jacobson told her with a very serious tone to his voice. Harleen just nodded her head in agreement and watched him leave the office.

It seemed like a lifetime while she was sitting in her chair, barely breathing to not make any noise at all. The alarm was still blaring and she was sure she’d have tinnitus afterwards. And - as it was Harleen’s nature lately - she couldn’t help but think about Jerome, wondering if he had something to do with all of that ruckus. So, naturally, when she heard voices in the hall outside the doctor’s office her curiosity was sparked immediately.

She knew she should stay exactly where she was, shouldn’t move a muscle, shouldn’t even breathe too heavy. But even though she knew all of it, she stood up, trying to move as silently as possible, before making her way to the door just as carefully. Harleen tried to understand the voices on the other side of the door but to no avail. So - as it seemed to be the only logical thing to do next - she cracked open the door to get at least a small glimpse.

“Hey!” The word had left her mouth before she could’ve even thought about keeping it in. “What have you done to him?!”

Seeing her ginger being slumped over some guy’s shoulder, definitely unconscious, must have snapped some essential synapses in her brain which would have otherwise kept her from making herself noticed.

For just a few seconds nothing happened at all. The masked people carrying out Arkham prisoners had halted their steps but didn’t turn around. Though the few seconds weren’t enough for Harleen to get her brain functioning again. She was still standing in the opened office door, eyes fixed on her precious redhead, when the woman leading the kidnappers turned around to face her.

The masked woman didn’t even get a chance to speak before Harleen cut her off, “Let him go.” Her words forced the woman’s dark eyes towards Jerome’s body and back to Harleen herself. The mask covering the lower half of her face, Harleen couldn’t say for sure what the strange woman was thinking. But it didn’t matter anyway. All that mattered was Jerome’s well-being and Harleen would do literally anything to keep him safe in that moment.

When nothing happened at all, she repeated herself - this time raising her voice to be clearly heard over the blaring alarm: “I said, let him go!”

That small outburst finally resulted in a reaction - even though that reaction equaled a gun pointed right at her head.

Harleen didn’t move a muscle. She didn’t so much as flinch. Instead, she fixed her eyes directly at the strange woman as if they were participating in a staring contest - and she wouldn’t back down. Her gaze was literally daring the woman to pull the trigger. Every one of Harleen’s cells turned over sensitive, she was hyper aware of every single sound, movement and smell. She was also sure that she could taste the air, even though all of her concentration was focused on the dark haired woman and her gun.

When the other one finally moved, Harleen held her breath. But instead of being shot in her pretty face she watched the woman lowering her gun while she cocked her head to the side: “I like your guts, missy.” With that said, she motioned to her henchman to get going again and Harleen knew that
she was getting off lightly - but that didn’t stop her from speaking up again: “Let. Him. Go!”

The woman looked back at her, definitely frowning now: “As much as I’m into young love and all that bullshit … can’t do that. Now, don’t you tax my patience, pretty one, or this doesn’t end pretty for you.”

Harleen was about to say something again, knowing very well that it was just plain stupid to do so, when the woman raised her gun again. Though this time, she didn’t hesitate in the slightest before pulling the trigger.

~*~

The alarm was still screeching through the echoing halls of Arkham Asylum. The whole place was a mess and Doctor Jacobson was more than lucky to get off with just tinnitus. Guards were lying in many different corridors, some just lightly wounded others with more fatal injuries. Blood was splattered against the walls and pooling on the floor.

Come to Arkham, they said. It’s gonna be fun working with the criminally insane, they said. Well, it had been extraordinarily good for his career to work at the asylum, but this wasn’t the first incident of sorts. It was the most violent and disturbing one though.

“We’ve got any numbers of the casualties already?” He had to raise his voice to talk over the alarm. “And could someone turn off that damned alarm?!”

The colleague he had asked, Doctor Forester, pushed a brown curl behind her ear that had escaped her once neatly pulled back ponytail: “Three guards are dead for sure but otherwise it’s still a very vague number.”

“What about the patients?” His gaze settled on the recreation room - the setting of the recent breakout. Or was it more like a break-in? It was definitely far easier to break in than to break out since the staff focused on securing the place against breakouts.

“One patient’s dead as well. He was just brought in today. Said his name was Zaardon. The other patients will be okay though …” Doctor Forester avoided looking at him while she pushed her white coat back onto her shoulder properly.

“How many of them have they taken?” Doctor Jacobson knew that it was most likely more of a problem of whom they have taken from Arkham.

“Six patients have been … taken by the intruders.” Forester hesitated but then she told him who was taken without him having to ask again. “Aaron Helzinger, Robert Greenwood, Arnold Dobkins, Barbara Kean, Jerome Valeska and Richard Sionis have escaped.”

The day couldn’t get any worse now, could it?

“Doctor Jacobson!” A nurse came running towards them, looking distressed - well that was to be expected considering the recent events, wasn’t it?

“What is it?” And why was the alarm still blaring?

“It’s that intern of yours.” Damnit, that girl. Sweet Harleen. “They’ve found her in front of your office.” He’d explicitly told her to hide in his office for God’s sake. “She was shot during the breakout.”
Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

Thank you all for the new hits, kudos and comments. I always appreciate and love to see your reaction to my writing.

Now have fun with chapter 7!

Maniax!

How fitting. Especially the exclamation mark. And really convenient that a capital N, I and X looks just the same when it’s seen upside down. That way only four out of seven guys have to land in the right way to spell out the message.

Harleen wondered if it was too cynical to think about what the photo would look like if pictures moved as they did in the Harry Potter stories. Would there be blood seeping into the sidewalk? A last twitching of muscles?

She was brought back from her dark thoughts when another student walked into her, bumping her shoulder and making her wince. The newspaper fell from her hands as she grabbed her right shoulder. All the doctors at the hospital insisted that she would have to stay at least another two days, but she wouldn’t have it.

The bullet went straight through her shoulder. Her shoulder blade had been grazed by the projectile but otherwise it was a mere flesh wound. A flesh wound that still hurt like a bitch. Harleen knew that there was only one reason that she was still alive - because that dark and mysterious woman wanted her to live for some strange reason. She could have shot her in the head or heart, but she didn’t. It wasn’t just good luck that it didn’t turn out to be a major injury. That had been precision at its finest. Even though every damn physician on this planet wanted to think that she was one lucky gal.

Well, Harleen knew that it wasn’t sheer luck. She blamed it on her guts as the woman had called it. Now that she was back on campus she didn’t feel particularly brave. Everyone seemed to know what had happened to her in Arkham - at least that’s what all the looks made her feel like. Most of them were sympathetic but some people looked at her like she wasn’t any better than the Arkham fugitives.

And maybe it was true. She couldn’t think of a thing she wouldn’t do to help Jerome. He’d gotten inside her head without even trying to and she was drawn to him like a moth towards light.

He was now officially a psychopath responsible for not only his mother’s death but also for the deaths of those seven men now spelling out Maniax! on a street of Gotham.

And here she was, on her way to her next class, still thinking of the ginger 24/7 and wondering if he was thinking about her as well or if he was to busy terrorising the city.

“Harleen, sweety, how are you doing? Shouldn’t you be at the hospital or at least at home?” Trisha and Toni seemed to appear out of nowhere, hugging her without any warning and making her wince in the process.
“Ahh, damn, hun, sorry. Is it bad?” Toni examined her shoulder carefully, being pre-med and all.

“It’s okay. Nothing fatal. Just hurts like a bitch whenever it’s touched,” Harleen tried to convince her friends with a forced smile on her lips.

They had almost reached the lecture hall of their next class which they actually shared, when they were stopped by a man in a colourful jumpsuit, his face painted white with bright red lips and a tear under one eye. An equally bright red, curly wig adorning his head.

Harleen couldn’t shake the feeling that she’d seen the man before but she couldn’t put her finger on where it could’ve been.

“Harleen Quinzel?” He asked in a deep, slow voice.

“The one and only,” Trisha laughed obviously thinking the situation to be very amusing.

“These are for you,” the big man said in his slow voice, handing over a bunch of red and black balloons.

Harleen was far too stunned to do anything else but grab the balloons. She didn’t have to anyway. Trisha and Toni had everything under control - better than Harleen could ever do it herself.

“Is there a card as well?” Toni inquired and Trisha took over right after her: “Or do you have a message to tell her?”

“No message,” the man said before he turned around and left.

Harleen still stared at the balloons. Her two favourite colours. Well, anyone could figure that out considering her wardrobe only contained them. Though she had the distinct feeling that she knew very well who had sent her the balloons. Maybe it was also due to the slightly creepy clown handing her balloons. Such a circus-y thing to do …

“Someone’s got a secret admirer,” Trisha still giggled, hooking her arm under Harleen’s to drag her with her into the lecture hall.

“You’ve got any idea who he is?” Toni took her other arm, eliminating any chance for Harleen to escape the situation - though the other girl was careful enough to not hurt her bullet wound.

“Well …” Harleen didn’t know what to say. She couldn’t tell them that she’d met that cute but handsome ginger who turned out to be a homicidal psychopath who not only killed his own mother but also a bunch of other people by now. And, oh, did she mention that she had voluntarily lied for him to get the coppers outta his house? She’d get a helluva reaction to that answer.

Fortunately for her, their professor arrived and told everyone to sit down so he could start his lecture. Toni and Trisha had to stop their interrogation for the time being, giving Harleen some space to think it all through. She tied the balloons to her wrist, so she wouldn’t have to hold them the whole time. Her pen hovered over the page of her notebook but she didn’t write a single word during their lecture.

After their Professor was finished Harleen was the first one out, trying to get away from Trisha and Toni’s prying. Somehow she managed to escape them, which she was very thankful for considering the balloons gave away her whereabouts to everyone in seeing range. Though she wouldn’t ever blame the balloons for anything. She loved the balloons. She loved the balloons and especially their meaning.
She headed straight home after her last lecture of the day, holding on to her balloons as if they were the only lifesaver in Marianas Trench. She was well aware of the fact that she was pathetic. No need to hide it any longer. So she didn’t.

Arriving at her dorm, Harleen was so deep in thought about Jerome and the balloons he had sent her that she didn’t notice the card until it fell to her feet upon opening the door. For a moment, she just stared at it before realising it was actually a playing card.

Harleen looked left and right but she was the only one in the halls, so she crouched down and picked up the queen of diamonds. Her heart skipped a beat before it started again at a much quicker speed. Her stomach was suddenly filled with the prickly feeling of excitement.

This had to be another message from Jerome, right? It was the only logical explanation. Right? Right.

But first, she had to get into her room, before T’n’T showed up and found her with a playing card in hand staring into space.

Once inside, Harleen sat down on her sofa still looking at the card and trying to understand what Jerome wanted to tell her with this gesture - other than the fact, that he knew very well where she lived and how to find her. Everyone else would’ve seen that as a threat, a convicted murderer letting you know he was able to find you. But for her, this was like a dream coming true and she knew that sounded crazy though at this point she didn’t even care.

While she examined the queen of diamonds, her gaze fell upon the back of the playing card where a few words were written in black sharpie: *You still owe me that favour, Harls.*

So he literally left her a message - which immediately reminded her of their meeting in Arkham. His hand wrapped around her wrist. The cold metal of the door against her heated skin. His face just inches from her own.

Just remembering the intimacy, her skin heated up again, prickling from head to toe like her stomach did, yearning to feel his touch for the second time.

She almost jumped out of her skin, when the ringing of her phone interrupted her inappropriate thoughts. Fumbling with her bag, she finally pulled out her mobile and frowned at the screen telling her it was an *Unknown Caller*. She hesitated just a second, before she accepted the call: “Who’s calling?”

“Now, that’s not how you answer your phone, Harl-een. Didn’t your parents teach you some manners?”

The prickly feeling hit her full-force again just by hearing his voice. Only now did she realise that she missed hearing his voice. Especially when it got that slightly teasing tone to it that had only made itself known since his mother was … gone.

“Jerome …” Her own voice cracked and she had to clear her throat before she resumed talking. “How did you get my number?”

“I’m afraid I can’t tell you, Harls. A magician never reveals his tricks.” It was the third time he’d called her *Harls* and it did things to her too embarrassing to even think about them - and it also cut off her brain to mouth filter.

“I was there. I tried to stop them but there was nothing I could do. Did they hurt you?”
There was a short pause after her question and she could tell just from the shift in his voice that he’d got a serious expression on his handsome face: “You were where exactly?”

She could feel her face heating up and she was sure he would know that she was blushing, even though they were talking over the phone.

“I had an interview for an internship at Arkham when that strange woman and her henchmen broke you out. I heard voices in the corridor and I risked a quick glance and I suddenly just blurted out that they should let you go, which didn’t work out at all as you might have noticed ...”

Harleen knew she was rambling by now and was somehow relieved that Jerome started to chuckle on the end of the line.

“You told her to let me go?” He wanted to clarify, still chuckling so bad he couldn’t even breathe regularly.

“Three times to be exact,” Harleen answered truthfully, though she did feel just the slightest bit ridiculous by now.

“Three times?” His chuckling turned into full blown laughter, causing her goosebumps all over her body - the good kind though. “I’m surprised you’re still alive, Harls.”

“Yeah, well, ask her why she just shot my shoulder,” Harleen huffed, folding one arm over her chest since the other one was holding her mobile to her ear - but all of a sudden the laughter died down just as fast as it appeared.

“I’ll have to go. Don’t forget about that favour, Har-een. I’ll get back to you, when I need you.” And with that, the line went dead.
Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

Thanks to all my lovely readers and their hits, comments, kudos and bookmarks. I appreciate all of it and it's what I'm living off.

So if you like the new chapter, maybe you wanna tell me about it :)

Everyone seemed to be talking about the latest act of the Maniax! and how the GCPD and Jim Gordon saved the day - and apparently twenty-something pretty cheerleaders. Well, was it really necessary to stress the word pretty in every single conversation? Harleen always thought you had to be pretty to be become a cheerleader in the first place. No need to state the obvious.

It just happened this morning. Not more than two hours ago and while everyone in Gotham was empathising with the victims, Harleen felt torn. Torn between feeling bad for the cheerleaders and feeling bad for Jerome, because his plan had been disrupted by the police. She would bet he was sulking now - and looking for a way to pay back Jim Gordon at the same time.

She had just entered her next class, when someone called out her name, “Harleen Quinzel?”

For just a moment she thought back to the day before, when that big guy dressed up as a clown had handed her those beautiful balloons, which she definitely didn’t tie to her nightstand. Just in case someone might ask.

Though when she turned around, she was confronted with a police officer looking expectantly at her. For just a few seconds she felt on the verge of a panic attack. But there was no way the police could know about Jerome’s call last night. Well, unless they had tapped her phone. Maybe she should get one of those burner phones.

Instead of panicking, Harleen showed off her most convincing smile, when she stepped closer to the policeman, “How can I help you, Officer?”

“Detective Gordon wants to have a word with you.”

Okay, shit. He definitely listened in to her conversation with Jerome. There was no other explanation for it. But she wouldn’t show any sign of weakness. She would not.

“Well, lead the way,” she said instead before she excused herself to her professor for missing his lecture.

Sitting in the back of a police car reminded her of her third night with Jerome. The night his mother was found dead in a cart. The night she first lied for him.

She couldn’t deny that she became more and more nervous the closer they got to the GCPD. Though she told herself again and again that Jim Gordon couldn’t prove anything. She really hoped her dorm wasn’t bugged. That would be more than a bit embarrassing. The things she had done after hearing Jerome’s voice again.

Upon stepping foot into the police station, Harleen calmed herself as well as she could.
“Detective Gordon!” The officer escorting her called out to the (in)famous Jim Gordon, gesturing towards Harleen in the process.

“Put her into interrogation room one. Alvarez, keep Ms Quinzel company. I have to talk to Lee and Essen first.” Gordon didn’t even as much as look up, before he headed into the direction of the medical examiner’s office as far as Harleen remembered.

The officer nudged her shoulder - the bad one - to get her going, making her wince in the process. He didn’t even show any hint of remorse for her pain. He just opened the door for her and left her alone with Detective Alvarez.

“Are you allowed to tell me, what I’m doing here or is Detective Gordon the only one brave enough to talk to a psychology student?” Her voice was laced with sarcasm and she didn’t even care.

“He’ll be right with you. I don’t know why he wants to talk to you. But since every waking hour is dedicated to these maniacs terrorising the city, I bet it has something to do with that.”

Harleen had to admit that she was a little bit surprised that Alvarez said anything at all. It was quite refreshing to be honest.

Moments later the door opened again and Gordon showed up, telling Alvarez to get a bullet examined they’d just pulled out of Dobkins’ body. Harleen crossed her arms in front of her chest, leaning herself against the table in the center of the room and looking at Gordon expectantly.

“Why am I here, Detective? I’m missing an important lecture on infant development right now,” Harleen decided to take the route of confrontation instead of waiting for Gordon to attack her first.

“I thought you might have already guessed it. I heard about the incident at Arkham. You feeling alright?” Had he really just shown something bordering on empathy? Who would have thought Gordon was capable of such a thing.

“I’m fine. I would feel better though if I could get back to my studies. I can’t help you with this problem.” And even if I could I wouldn’t want to. But she wouldn’t say that out loud.

Gordon sighed deeply, probably preparing for a lecture of his own, when the officer entered the room again, “There’s a call for you, Detective. She said she had some intel for you regarding the Maniax.”

“We’re not done yet, Harleen. I’ll be right back,” Gordon said before he left the room commanding the officer to guard her door.

“I can’t wait for round two,” Harleen called after him before sitting down on one of the chairs. Comfortable was definitely not the word to describe them.

The time she spent waiting felt like an eternity even though it couldn’t have been more than ten minutes. Probably less. She was getting impatient, when a commotion on the other side of the door drew her attention. Harleen couldn’t help but be reminded of the Arkham breakout.

Through the opal glass of the door, she could only make out shadows but that was enough to notice that the man guarding her was shot down. On instinct, Harleen crouched down under the metal table hoping that whoever had just started shooting inside the GCPD wouldn’t search the interrogation rooms. But there was only one person bold enough to attack the GCPD at daylight, wasn’t there?

Before that strange form of relief could settle inside her, the door burst open revealing a policeman armed with a Winchester. At first, Harleen wasn’t sure what to think, but when the man grabbed her
hair to pull her out from under the table she was sure he wasn’t one of the good guys. She tried to fight him off, hitting him somewhere in the chest, kicking his legs but to no avail.

“Hey boss,” she finally heard him shout over the ruckus, “Look what I’ve found. Can I keep her?” That said, he yanked on her hair again making her look up towards the captain’s office.

The whole police station was damaged, officers and detectives lying on the ground, some wounded, some definitely dead. Blood splattered everywhere. But none of these things bothered Harleen.

Harleen felt safe and relieved just by locking her gaze onto those emerald eyes.

She could tell that he wasn’t amused to be interrupted while talking to the dark-haired woman in front of him. Though his frown turned into a lopsided grin upon seeing her. Standing right in the middle of all this chaos without being fazed by it at all.

The henchman was still grabbing onto her hair and it really started to hurt, so Harleen decided to break the silence, “This idiot’s literally about to rip out my hair, J!”

His grin widened, reaching almost from ear to ear. Then he lifted his revolver and shot the guy in the head. The dead weight of the man pulled her down to the floor as well, but she was able to get back on her feet with at least a little bit of her grace left.

“Now get up here, Harls, I’m in the middle of something.”

Harleen didn’t hesitate for a second, climbing the stairs on the right side of the room immediately. She knew any psychologist would deem her suicidal for doing so, but she didn’t care.

For the first time she was able to witness Jerome’s true nature in action and the word ‘fascinating’ wasn’t even covering it in the slightest. The way he held himself. His voice changing from his usual tone to that baritone and back within seconds. That grin splitting his face in half. The sparkle in his eyes. She wouldn’t get started on that uniform accentuating his long legs. Was a man supposed to have such long legs?

Harleen loved to see him being finally free. What she didn’t like though, yeah hated really, was how close he was to that woman. Whispering in her ear. Getting into her personal space. His nose almost touching hers.

Just a few seconds later, Harleen realised that she was possessive towards him. She didn’t want to share the intimacy she experienced through Arkham’s metal door. And she really wanted to tell that woman that at least one person in this room would always remember Jerome - but she had a feeling he wouldn’t appreciate the interruption.

She was almost glad that the guy holding the camera - she thought him to be one of the Arkham fugitives as well - cut off Jerome mid-sentence. Harleen held her breath, watching her ginger pulling the trigger again without hesitation, explaining his actions with a simple “My line” before repeating the dead man’s words: “There is nothing more contagious than laughter.”

When the woman in the chair head butted him, Harleen was sure he would get mad. And if the maniac laughter shaking his body was any indication, she was definitely right.

“Pick up that camera for me, would ya, Harls?”

Harleen needed a moment or two to process the fact, that he talked to her again, but then she walked over to his dead accomplice and took the camera. The guy couldn’t use it any longer anyway.
“You know how to handle it?” His voice had switched to that teasing tone again making her blush instantly.

“Sure thing. I can’t promise to keep it focused on your face though,” Harleen retorted with an acknowledging look towards his ass.

“And here I thought you were in it for my personality,” Jerome pouted at her, making her giggle.

“Show me some more of that personality and maybe I’ll change my mind.” Teasing could work two ways - and Harleen enjoyed every single second.

“I’m done here anyway,” he replied with that broad grin, reaching for his revolver again and planting three of the remaining bullets into the woman’s stomach without breaking eye contact with Harleen, “Now pick up that camera so we can head outta here, Harls.”
The sirens interrupted the recording and a strange feeling of excitement settled in Harleen’s stomach. With the police approaching, the whole situation felt so much more real than before. She never felt so alive as she did in that moment.

She grabbed Jerome’s hand to flee with him from the scene, but on their way out of the police station her eyes fell onto the officer who’d escorted her to the GCPD. The man was leaning against a desk, his head bleeding due to a cut, a bullet hole in his stomach. He would definitely make it.

Jerome noticed her slowing down and stopped in his tracks, looking at her with a slightly annoyed expression. Well, they were in the middle of escaping so his mood was understandable.

“What is it, Harl-een? You getting second thoughts on teaming up with the bad guys now?” Harleen turned her head and locked her eyes with Jerome’s, her face one of complete composure: “No. This man-”

“What about him?” The sirens were getting louder with every passing second.

“He hurt my shoulder, the one that was shot, when he shoved me into the interrogation room.” Harleen hadn’t even finished her sentence, when Jerome put the last bullet of his revolver into the officer’s head.

“There. Happy? Let’s go now.” The ginger pulled on her hand and dragged her out of the building without looking back.

Harleen did look back though, thinking about Jerome’s question. Happy? Could she be happy that she just caused the death of a policeman? What was she expecting to happen anyway when she told Jerome about the man hurting her bullet wound? She didn’t know to be honest.
She barely noticed their escape, still trying to sort out her emotions. Did she even have any emotions for the dead man? Did she feel any kind of remorse or sorrow? The man had been a little bit rough with her but did he deserve to die because of that?

Harleen came back to her senses when she was shoved inside the back of a car, but she had a feeling that Jerome tried to not hurt her shoulder before he got into the car after her. One of the henchmen was driving, allowing Harleen to fully focus on Jerome. Just now, she noticed that he was wearing his hair in a quiff - how could it be that she hadn’t done so earlier? He was looking good in a quiff.

“What are you staring at, Harls?” Jerome’s teasing voice got her back off the most inappropriate train of thought. Feeling caught red-handed, Harleen started to blush and averted her gaze from those intense green eyes.

But Jerome wouldn’t have it. He grabbed her chin with his slightly calloused fingers and forced her head up so she had to look at him again: “I asked you a question, Harl-een …” He dragged out the last syllable of her name even more than he usually did.

She swallowed hard while she tried to not drown in his mischievous eyes: “I like the way you wear your hair.”

His gaze turned puzzled. Then he rolled his eyes up as if he was trying to look at his own hair, most likely trying to remember how he wore it back at the circus compared to now. Then he started laughing. Loud and maybe a little bit obnoxious. So still contagious, making Harleen giggle at least.

“After all that just went down at the GCPD you’re opting for complimenting me on my choice of hairstyle? You really are special, Harls.”

Now she was blushing again. He just had that effect on her. “Well, it looks good on you. Just stating the obvious.”

In response, Jerome got into her personal space, his lips almost grazing the shell of her ear, making her shiver - in the best way possible - and her breathing getting heavier. “You still thinking I’m good-looking with my face all bloodied up like this as well, Harl-een?”

He pulled back just enough for Harleen to look over his face. His nose stopped bleeding some time ago, the blood already dried, now almost the same colour as his hair. Then she became aware of the fact that the blood mostly surrounded his mouth and that she was staring at his lips in result. She looked up, catching his eyes instead.

“It suits you …” Harleen wasn’t capable of articulating more than these three words at the moment.

From the corner of her eye she noticed how his lips turned up into a grin, drawing her attention back to his mouth. On a closer look, she spotted his bottom lip was still bleeding due to a nasty looking split. She fought down the unnatural urge to lick away the blood - though maybe her thoughts were written all over her face, because the next thing she knew were his lips pressed harshly against her own.

Every time she’d imagined their first kiss, she hadn’t thought that it would taste like metal and smell like gunpowder. But now that she was experiencing it, she felt like an idiot for thinking it could be any other way. The rough feeling of his lips working against her own, her tongue tasting his blood, the pressure of his fingertips against her jaw … it felt just right. Perfect even.

When the clearing of a throat interrupted them, Harleen couldn’t keep in the annoyed sigh leaving her lips the moment Jerome’s own weren’t touching her anymore. They both looked towards the
front seats where the henchman was looking at them, obviously uncomfortable: “Erm, sorry boss, but we’ve reached the hideout.”

“Well, thank you, Freddie,” Jerome mumbled with a frown on his face.

“My name’s P-”

Harleen couldn’t tell where Jerome had hid the second gun, but ‘Freddie’ had definitely not seen it coming. And for just a moment, she thought back on the officer who’d found a similar end at the police station.

“I guess, we better get up to the penthouse since we’ve already been interrupted,” Jerome mused while loosening the tie of his uniform, “Turn around.”

Harleen knew better than asking for the reason, she just turned her back towards him. Seconds later, she already got her answer when the tie was wrapped around her head working as a makeshift blindfold.

“It’ll be easier that way, when ol’ Jimbo wants to have another chit-chat with you.” His breath ghosted over her ear, causing yet another shiver shooting down her spine. Harleen really hoped he didn’t catch sight of her thighs rubbing together.

He guided her out of the car and through the parking lot she had been able to see before she was blindfolded. She was more than a bit distracted by his hands on her shoulders though she did notice the distinct sound of an arriving elevator.

As soon as they stepped inside, Harleen moved her head in the direction she assumed Jerome was standing: “Can I take it off now?”

“Just a little longer, Harls. Patience. Though it would be fun to keep it on once we’ve reached my bedroom, don’t you think?” He spoke right next to her ear again, getting her all worked up. She knew that he knew how she reacted in his vicinity. He did it on purpose. Reveling in all her small and obvious reactions.

Another ding announced their arrival at their destination and Jerome pushed her out of the elevator, guiding her to his room apparently. She was a bit surprised that they didn’t run into anyone on their way but, finally, a door closed behind them.

Harleen waited for the tie to be removed but instead her back hit the wall, his fingers grabbing her chin again. All of her other senses were heightened immediately. She felt like prey caught by its predator. Nothing in her life had ever felt so exciting as this specific moment.

“Jerome …” Her voice sounded breathy and small while she waited for him to do something, anything.

The seconds felt like an eternity but then his lips pressed against her own again and her hands buried themselves in his red locks on reflex. In the few minutes it took them to get from the car to his room, she already started to miss the feeling of his rough kiss.

His tall, lean body pushed against her own curves. Her skin became over-sensitive, singing with his every touch, even though both their clothing was separating them from touching directly.

Setting her mind on changing that fact, Harleen removed her hands from his hair to start unbuttoning his dress shirt. Though her fingers halted while undoing the third button, when Jerome’s hand wrapped around her throat.
At first, Harleen had to understand what was happening, when he already pulled way, removed her blindfold and locked his darkened eyes on her own: “What do you think you’re doing, Harleen?”

She opened her mouth to explain herself but she couldn’t form a single sound, trying to get some much needed air into her lungs instead. Her hands grabbed for his that was still choking her, trying to loosen his grip.

“I’m the one in charge here, Harleen. I’m the one deciding what happens next. Do you understand that?” His voice had changed to that deep baritone again and even though he literally had her life in his hands, she couldn’t help her body’s reaction to that dark side of his fascinating personality.

Since she couldn’t speak, Harleen nodded her head yes in response to his question and he finally led her breathe normally again. She immediately sucked in as much air as possible. Her head was swimming, feeling all dizzy and disoriented.

“Good girl,” he added before stepping back a few feet, “Now, since you want these clothes to be gone so badly, how about getting undressed already, Harleen?”

She knew better than refusing his words so she grabbed the hem of her red and black patterned top and pulled it over her head. While the fabric fell to the floor, Jerome sat on his four-poster bed, leaning back and enjoying the show.

Harleen bit down on her bottom lip, before she reached behind her back opening her bra and letting it drop from her arms slowly. She caught Jerome’s gaze and walked up to him, while undoing her black jeans.

She couldn’t explain it but with him her fight or flight instinct wasn’t working at all. Getting away from the man who had just been choking you was the only sane thing to do. But that’s exactly what he did to her. He had messed up her sanity without her noticing until it was already too late.

That’s why she stood in front of him, watching him lazily rubbing the bulge in his slacks, before turning her back towards him. Her fingers didn’t even shake one bit while she took off her jeans and panties in one go bending down at the hip until she reached her own toes. The gymnastics training was finally paying off.

Before she could undo her shoes and get rid of her pants for real, she was suddenly grabbed by his strong hands and pulled back onto his lap. His raspy voice speaking right next to her ear again: “You, my sweet Harleen, are a real tease. You can be glad I’m in a really good mood right now. Otherwise, I’d have to punish you.”

She didn’t get a chance to reply because Jerome already used his grab on her hips to push her down on the bed before he removed her shoes and trousers.

“Turn around. And don’t even think about touching yourself,” he commanded while undoing the remaining buttons on his police uniform.

Harleen just lay on the soft mattress watching Jerome revealing more and more of his pale, freckled skin. Her eyes moved over his body, from his chiseled jaw over the red hairs adorning his chest to the happy trail leading from his belly button down to his cock.

She had to be insane to do this. Getting intimate with a convicted murderer. Letting a homicidal maniac have his way with her. The most gorgeous, fascinating psychopath she had ever met. And she wouldn’t have it any other way if she could have.

She wanted this. She wanted him. She needed him. She needed to be his.
And that’s what she became the second he entered her.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you enjoyed reading this as much as I enjoyed writing it. If that's the case you may consider stating it in a comment :-D
Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

Thanks again for all the hits, kudos and comments.

This chapter also needs a little warning, though since it’s canon no one should be surprised: Warning for Character Death.

When Harleen woke up the next morning she felt strangely disoriented. Her hand searched the other side of the bed but Jerome had gone, the sheets cold to her touch. She knew she had a lecture to attend, but her limbs were just too heavy to get out of bed yet.

After a few minutes of snoozing, she experienced the aftermath of last night’s events. Her throat was dry and Harleen felt like she had swallowed a bunch of razors. That’s how a sword swallower must feel every day.

She’d finally pushed herself up in search of water when she halted in her tracks, staring at her surroundings. How was it even possible that she had woken up in her dorm? She couldn’t have imagined all of the things that had happened yesterday, could she? That would be really insane.

Now wide-awake, Harleen slipped from her bed and hurried over to her full-body mirror - though she already knew that at least the last part of her evening must have happened due to that familiar dull ache between her legs. A really nice ache she hadn’t felt in a while.

Upon looking in the mirror she detected the bruises on her neck at first, followed by a bite mark at the end of her collarbone. Just remembering the marks origin made her shudder with lust and her cheeks heated up with a blush.

There were also some bruises on her wrists and by lifting up her shirt she confirmed her suspicion that her hips were bruised as well. But she didn’t mind. Not one bit. It had been the best night of her life and she wouldn’t trade the experience for anything.

That still left open the question of how she’d ended up in her own small apartment. She knew she had fallen asleep with Jerome right next to her in his bed. He must have snuck her out some time before dawn so no one would know that she had been there in the first place. But that raised another question: Why didn’t she wake up?

Well, she probably had to ask him when they saw each other again - or when he called her from that unknown number. Why couldn’t she have his number, so that she could give him a call, too?

All of a sudden she felt pathetic again. They were separated for like five minutes and she already missed him big time. She definitely wouldn’t keep her scholarship that way. She had to keep her act together. At least when she attended her classes.

When she turned around to get dressed, Harleen caught sight of a card lying on the unused pillow on her bed. On a closer look, she realised it was a second queen of diamonds. Her heart skipped a beat, walking over to her bed and picking up the card.
This time, she immediately turned the card over to read Jerome’s message that had to be there - and she wasn’t disappointed: It’s time to redeem that favour, Harls. Be dressed up and ready to go at 7. Freddie will pick you up. P.S. If you don’t like the dress, too bad.

She had to read the words a few times, before she could fully comprehend what they meant. The first thing she was sure of was that the driver’s name was most likely not Freddie. She did hope though that he would make it longer than Freddie the First had.

The second thing she realised was the fact that she would see Jerome again and it would happen in less than twelve hours as well. Though she did wonder what the favour would involve.

The last thing she got to was the dress. Had he bought her a dress for their date this evening? If so, where had he put it?

Harleen looked around her bedroom, but no dress. She couldn’t find it for the sake of her remaining sanity - not until she stepped into the bathroom. There it was. Draped over a coat hanger on the other side of the bathroom door. The most beautiful dress she had ever laid eyes on. All red and black. A twenties flapper dress that would hug her curves and swing with every movement, fringed from top to bottom. The lining was a bright red, the fringe alternating between red and black not just from row to row but also from left to right.

In that moment, Harleen wanted nothing more than to call Jerome and thank him for the ultimately perfect dress. She really hoped he had got her size right. It would be a shame if it didn’t fit.

The hours until she had to get ready dragged on and on, the professors liked to hear themselves talk even more than they usually did. At least, that’s what it felt like.

Harleen had used her camouflage make-up to hide the bruises on her neck, because she knew she would have to explain them. She didn’t have the time or nerves to talk to a student counsellor or the police - though she didn’t hide the blue and purple marks on her wrist. Those she was wearing with pride.

When she finally reached her dorm she didn’t waste any more time than necessary. She took a quick shower and decided to put on her favourite red underwear. Then she blow dried her hair and pumped up her natural waves with the curling iron. After reapplying her make-up, she finally slipped on the dress.

It fit perfectly. The lining ended just a few inches below her ass but the fringe reached towards her mid-thigh. Harleen had never felt so beautiful in her entire life.

Checking the time, she realised she had just a few minutes left until the second Freddie would show up, so she grabbed her black satin clutch threw in her phone, keys, some money and her lipstick - just in case it would need some reapplying during the evening - and left her dorm.

But of course she had to meet Trisha on her way out: “Wow, Harleen, looking good tonight. Any special occasion?”

“I’m about to find out but I’m already a bit late. See you later.” Running down the stairs, Harleen noticed how good a liar she had become during the last weeks and months. Before meeting Jerome, she had always stuttered when she had to lie.

Outside the dormitory a black car waited, the driver getting out to open the door to the backseat for her: “Good evening, Miss Quinzel.”

This one had some good manners and Harleen thought it would be a shame if he ended up like the
first Freddie. Maybe she should give him some kind of warning ...

She was so lost in her thoughts about Jerome and their upcoming evening, that ‘Freddie’ had to remind her about their arrival: “We’re here, Miss. I’m gonna pick you and the boss up afterwards.”

Why did this sound like he’d be driving the getaway car?

“Thank you, Freddie,” Harleen didn’t even give him a chance to tell her his actual name - she needed to get inside and find Jerome. The excitement got the better of her.

Inside, a gala of some sorts - something involving the children’s hospital - was going on and Harleen felt a little bit out of place. She was dressed up like everyone else, although they all seemed to be simply wearing black. *How boring could you be?*

While looking around her gaze met that of a dark-haired woman who was about to leave. The woman nodded her head just the slightest bit towards Harleen which helped her to recognise the woman’s eyes. This was the mysterious woman who broke out Jerome and the other Maniacs. In passing, Harleen saw just a little bit of a white cloth peek out of her dress around her shoulder. *Could it be …?*

She didn’t get a chance to talk to the woman, because someone called out her name: “Harleen, isn’t it?”

Another dark-haired woman approached her and Harleen had to look her over twice before she remembered her. That was Jim Gordon’s girlfriend. The one who accompanied him at the circus. Great.

“Yeah, that’s me. Doctor Thompkins, right?” What was Jerome planning with Gordon’s girlfriend around?

“Oh please, Lee is just fine. What are you doing here?” That was a tricky question indeed. She couldn’t tell her the truth, right? That would totally ruin Jerome’s plan and Harleen wouldn’t let that happen.

“Oh, you know, being a psychology major it’s always good to do some networking. I hoped to meet some doctors or directors here. Kids can always benefit from a psychologist in rough times.” Crisis averted - for now. Doctor Thompkins didn’t have to know that she was opting for working in a place like Arkham.

“Well, I am a doctor and I can introduce you to a few people. C’mon.” Harleen wondered if Lee had forgotten about her connection with Jerome though that would be too convenient to be true.

Gordon’s girlfriend just introduced her to Bruce Wayne and his butler when she excused herself to announce the show part of the evening: a magician.

Upon hearing the word ‘magician’, Harleen’s skin started to prickle from head to toe. As soon as he stepped out of that box, she knew it was him. His posture, all confident and charming. His voice, even though he disguised it. Everything about him screamed ‘Jerome’.

Bruce was the first one to get onto the stage as a volunteer and Harleen had to calm herself so she wouldn’t run onto the stage to kiss him senseless. That wouldn’t be very subtle.

She tried not to stare too much, especially after Bruce returned from his trip on stage. Though that wasn’t a problem anymore when Jerome called out for the deputy mayor to join him: “Oh, by the way, nobody’s getting out *alive.*”
When the throwing knife hit the deputy mayor’s heart that strange excitement she’d experienced at the GCPD came back to fill up her body. Jerome dropped the act of the magician and started laughing. That beautiful, contagious laughter.

As the guests started to panic, Jerome’s eyes found Harleen’s and he nodded to the floor just in time for her to get down before the shooting started. After a moment of shock, she started crawling over the tiles towards the stage, trying to get to Jerome.

After everyone calmed down a bit - Lee was tied against the knife thrower’s wheel - Jerome set up a camera to stream the show all over Gotham, while Harleen just stood next to the stage, not moving at all. She knew Jerome had something special planned for her so she just waited for his instructions. Though to the outside world she might have seemed like a common girl paralysed in fear.

For now, Harleen just watched. She watched Jerome on the phone talking to Jim Gordon and to the rest of the world through the camera. She watched that strange man walking on stage talking about some ridiculous stuff. He didn’t even sound convincing. That guy was shady as hell. Didn’t anyone else notice that?

Harleen was about to get on stage as well just to call that guy off, but Jerome’s blonde assistant - Harleen tried to ignore the fact that she would have been a much better assistant than that chick - knocked him out with a hammer before Harleen could move a muscle. That did look like fun though.

She resumed watching again, still waiting for Jerome to tell her that she should join in. She still needed to redeem that favour, didn’t she? With every passing second, she became more nervous.

The man who had an apple shot off his head was allowed to sit back down, before Jerome called for his first official victim: Bruce Wayne.

Oh well, that had been a really short acquaintance. Too bad. He seemed like a nice boy even though he was loaded.

But Bruce was nowhere to be seen. He must have been able to escape or was hiding somewhere. Either way, Jerome wasn’t pleased at all. And Harleen already thought about a few ways to get his mood back up, as soon as they were sitting in the back of Freddie’s car.

Her ginger maniac was about to shoot Bruce’s butler instead when the young billionaire dashed through a curtain in the back, revealing himself to save his butler. He was a brave one as well. Brave and maybe a little bit dumb. But these two things had always been sides of the same coin.

Harleen watched as Jerome got back on stage with Bruce acting as a human shield, a throwing knife pressed into the younger man’s throat. Her fingers were itching to help Jerome, but what was there to do really? She could step between the guns and her redhead but she doubted that either Gordon or the butler would hesitate more than a second before they’d simply shot her to get rid of her.

“I said enough!”

Everything afterwards happened so fast and at the same time in slow-motion.

Harleen heard the scream before she even realised she was the one screaming.

Her legs moved on their own, stumbling onto the stage.

Her hands trembled, when she shoved the shady guy aside to kneel down next to Jerome.

Blood seeped through her fingers, while she pressed down on the wound in his neck.
“Don’t you dare, leave me, J. You can’t leave me, you hear me?”

Tears rolled down her cheeks when his mischievous eyes turned dull, wide grin still plastered over his face.

Meant to be there for eternity.

Chapter End Notes

If you enjoyed it despite the ending - we all know he’s coming back soon - please be so kind to tell me in a comment. I love to read your thoughts on my stuff.
Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the long wait. This chapter has been edited like a thousand times and I have to thank the best alpha reader out there for keeping up with me and my edits.

Also a massive thanks for all new hits and kudos. You guys are great.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Harleen couldn’t remember the first few days after the gala. Everything around her seemed to belong to another person’s life. She didn’t even leave her bed at first, couldn’t bring up the energy to move.

For three weeks she stayed inside her room, the tv streaming some meaningless tv show. Nothing important. Just cheesy comedy stuff. It was more like background noise. Avoiding the news at all costs.

Trisha and Toni knew what everyone else in Gotham knew. It had been shown on every channel all over the city after all. But even though they knew what happened they still tried to get her out of the grieving pit Harleen had dumped herself in.

At least one of the girls came over every day, getting her something to eat, organising the notes of classes Harleen had missed. Though the best thing they did for her was the fact that they weren’t judging her.

On a Sunday, three weeks after the incident, Harleen woke up to the sight of her balloons, deflated at last. All of a sudden, everything came back to her. While isolating herself in her small apartment she had been trying to deny that it had really happened. But when she saw the sad remains of the red and black balloons it hit her like a tidal wave.

He was gone. He was gone for good and he wouldn’t come back. He had left her just like the helium had left the balloons.

But instead of crying - T’n’T always told her that it was okay to cry - Harleen got angry. She hit the sad, airless balloons again and again, screaming at them without even realising what she said at all. She only stopped her fit of rage when Trisha came running into the room trying to calm her down by pulling her into a hug. Oh right, the other girl had slept over again. Another thing her two neighbours were doing for the sake of her wellbeing. Sleeping over on her sofa so she wasn’t alone every night.

When she calmed down a bit, Harleen started rambling: “It’s not fair. This wasn’t supposed to happen. We had just started getting to know each other. It’s not fair that he was taken from me. Why did this happen? That guy who did it deserves to be punished. Why isn’t he punished? He should be punished. He’s not a hero. He’s just another murderer. Why’s nobody seeing that? I wish we had more time together.”

Her rambling went on for almost the rest of the day - until the tears streaming down her cheeks overwhelmed her.

Waking up the next morning was accompanied by a massive headache thanks to her crying all night.
And maybe it was the headache that reminded Harleen that even though Jerome wasn’t she was still alive and she had responsibilities to live up to every day.

So she got out of bed, took a shower and dressed to attend classes again. It had to be the eighth wonder of the world that she still had her scholarship. She could catch up on the lectures but she had also missed ten training sessions for her gymnastics team. It had probably something to do with the fact that she freaked out over a certain death on live television. It’s another wonder that she wasn’t forced to see a psychologist. Maybe psychology students didn’t make the best patients for psychologists.

Harleen turned to her studies so she wouldn’t have to deal with anything else. She loaded herself with as much work as she could handle between her training three times a week. She only returned to her dorm for sleep and was mostly found in the library. She knew it wasn’t the sanest thing to do but she had given up on her sanity a while ago.

She knew she could never really accept his death. Even thinking the word was more often than not impossible. Discussing Elisabeth Kuebler-Ross in one of her classes didn’t make it easier either.

So she learned and learned and finished her undergraduate studies way before the scheduled date. The GCU grad-school was dying to have her and Harleen willingly accepted. Some more studies to do before she had to face the real world again, which was inevitable once she finished university for good.

On the first anniversary of his death, Harleen had allowed herself a dark day. She had left Gotham and went upstate to watch the circus. She hadn’t talked to anyone. Had just watched the clowns and acrobats and all the other artist without showing any reaction. Then she had went back to school as if nothing had happened.

The second anniversary was coming up now, but before she could escape the town again she had to get the research on her final thesis done. She already convinced her supervisor to approve of her writing about suitable methods when working with the criminally insane. Now she just had to get some more input for her research.

Luckily the medical examiner of the GCPD had agreed to meet with her. She assumed that Doctor Thompkins was still feeling bad for what had happened two years ago, but Harleen couldn’t care less. It was all about the research. And the recent blackout had already messed with her notes and schedule.

It was a strange feeling to be back at the GCPD after all this time, but Doctor Thompkins had a tight schedule as well so Harleen was okay with the location as long as she got the missing notes for her research.

The other woman was nowhere to be seen so Harleen asked one of the officers where she could find the doctor.

“Doc’s in her office. They just brought her some more work over if ya know what I mean,” the man explained, waving his hand in the general direction.

Harleen said a quick thanks and followed the vague directions until she found the door labeled Medical Examiner. Standing in front of the office, she hesitated for a moment. She did understand what the officer meant, but she wouldn’t be scared of a dead body. Her chances of winning at roulette were higher than the possibility that she would know the newest victim of Gotham.

So she knocked on the door and entered the room, “Hello Doctor Thompkins, I’m a bit early but-”
The words got stuck in her throat. Her eyes were glued to the lifeless body lying on the metal table in the middle of the room. The skin of his face had been removed but she recognised him anyway. How could she not?

Harleen couldn’t move, paralysed by all the emotions she locked away during the last two years. How was this even possible? It had been two years.

She still stared at the ginger hair, while Doctor Thompkins grabbed her shoulders and shoved her out of her office. Her head was spinning and she couldn’t concentrate on her surroundings. The older woman made her sit on a chair and told her she would be right back with some water.

For a while, Harleen just sat on the chair trying to calm down again. There had to be a logical explanation for this. Maybe she just projected him onto that faceless person. They were faceless after all. It could have been any ginger really, couldn’t it?

Harleen was determined to find out. She had been doing great for the last two years, she couldn’t have a nervous breakdown now when she was so close to becoming a psychologist for real. Her mind set she stood up and went back to the medical examiner’s office. She was sick of waiting. How long would it take to get some water anywho?

She was about to open the door to Doctor Thompkins’ office again when she heard it. Now she really must be imagining things. It seemed like it really was too soon for her to be back in a memory-loaded place like the GCPD.

But then she heard it again. That familiar laughter. And she opened the door without further thinking.

~*~

Coming back from the dead was kinda tough. So many loose ends to connect again. But the pretty Doc was helping with his recollection for now. Although it was unnerving to hear about all the stuff that hadn’t worked out as planned. Brucie was still alive. Galavan died, twice. And to top it all off, his face was missing. That really sucked. Big time. His good looks had always been one of his best characteristics, now even that had been taken from him.

“Now, where’s my face?” He invaded the Doc’s personal space, waiting for her answer when the door to his right opened all of a sudden.

He was about to shoot whoever it was, but he dropped the gun when he caught sight of the big baby blue eyes in front of him. The blonde locks fell in waves around her shoulders. A pair of glasses sitting on her nose.

Staring at her, he cocked his head to one side, squeezing his eyes as if he could see her better that way. Then the corners of his ruined mouth spread into a wide grin: “Harl-eeee-“

He couldn’t finish her name due to another one of those little coughing fits taking place. Those were getting irritating as hell.

“We need to shorten your name, Harls,” he coughed again, before focusing on his surprise guest, “the glasses are new, right? I don’t remember you wearing glasses before?”

Since she’d entered the room his favourite cure for boredom had been staring at him and she still seemed to be at a loss of words.

“Why are you still staring at me, Harls? Shouldn’t you be like hanging on my neck by now? Oh, it’s the face thing, right? I was just trying to figure out how to get it back. Don’t you worry. I’ll be as
good as new soon."

With that said, he turned back to the Doc to get that much needed information on the whereabouts of his face. The dark-haired woman looked over at Harleen for a moment before she finally told him she didn’t know where to find his lunatic fans.

“That’s very disappointing, Doc … Harls, get over here!” He waved the gun at her, it was the first reaction she’d shown since she had entered the office. She slowly took a few steps and ended up right next to him. He could smell her shampoo again. It was still the same.

“Take this and keep an eye on the Doc for me, would ya? I need to get dressed.” He shoved the gun into her small hand, before he walked over to the dead officer to put on his uniform.

When he was done, he walked back to his sweet Harleen, still pointing the gun towards Jimbo’s ex girlfriend without showing any emotion at all. She really needed to process the shock.

“Well done, Harl--ey. Yeah, let’s go with Harl-ey. I like it. Now look at me, Harl-ey!” He took the gun from her and grabbed her jaw with his other hand. Her eyes locked with his own immediately.

“You like the uniform, Harl-ey? Reminds me of that great time we had and of your incredible flexibility,” he whispered the word into her ear after he’d remembered that she’d liked this back then. He really needed to get her emotions out and working again. Otherwise she wasn’t of any use for him. And boring as well.

When he felt her shiver, he knew it was working. Yeah, that’s his Harley-girl.

“Turn on the TV, Harl-ey, would ya? I’ve got a feeling that the guy who stole my face is some kind of copycat.” He watched her from the corner of his eye, while he used some gauze bandages to tie up the Doc and gag her for good measure.

It didn’t take long until Harley had found the right channel, the one broadcasting that impostor, the one who’d resorted to strapping his face on in a pale imitation of the real deal, “Look at that. No charisma, no stage presence.”

Such a pathetic loser.

“Okay, let’s go, Harl-ey. We need to get my face back, cause I really wanna kiss you and I’ve got a feeling you would appreciate it more once I’ve got - yaknow - actual lips. A shame, really. Well, whatever. See you then, Doc. And keep watching. You don’t wanna miss what happens next.” That said, he pulled Harley with him to retrieve his face.

“I mostly need them for reading but I’ve been wearing them a lot lately, so I just keep them on most of the time.”

He halted in his tracks just outside the GCPD, when she finally raised her voice again, leaving him a bit confused: “Wait what?”

“My glasses. I had them back then, but I didn’t wear them outside of classes.”

He blinked at her for just a second, then he started laughing again. There she was. Making him laugh with her silly antics.

“I think I’ve kinda missed you, Harls … Now c’mon. We’ve got a face to find.”
Chapter End Notes

Oh well, look who's back! If you are just as glad as I am that J is alive again, maybe you'll consider leaving a comment. They keep me going.
Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

I recommend to listen to Billy Talent's "Hanging by a Thread" while reading this, cause it kinda inspired this chapter and one of J's lines. Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Jerome’s driving resembled everything else he did. Not boring. It caused Harleen’s heart rate to double in speed, adrenaline coursing through her veins and keeping her on edge the whole time.

Kidnapping that Dwight-guy hadn’t been difficult, making Harleen wonder if the police academy shouldn’t test the candidates’ intelligence before making them into cops. They really were all idiots save the odd exceptions here and there.

She didn’t know where they were headed to teach Dwight a lesson on ‘why you shouldn’t remove someone’s face when there was a possibility that said someone might want it back,’ but Harleen didn’t really care. All that mattered was that Jerome was alive again. Something she couldn’t quite wrap her head around just yet. It was just so unreal.

Harleen still found herself staring at him in awe from time to time, though right now she was distracted by the guy sitting in the back of the van they took at the tv station. The police car they used to get there wasn’t very subtle after all. Plus, the van was stacked with tv equipment.

She was distracted by him because he was staring just as much as she had been - only he was staring at her.

“Stop staring at me or I’ll make you stop.” She couldn’t keep from snapping at that Dwight-person, causing Jerome to laugh out loud and pull on the steering wheel a bit harder than necessary.

Where did that outburst come from?

“You better listen to the lady, pal. She’s not joking,” Jerome kept laughing, before he handed over the bag containing his face to Harleen, “keep an eye on this would ya, Harl-ey? We gonna take care of that when we’ve arrived at our destination.”

Harleen did like that new nickname he gave her. Maybe she would even keep it in general.

“And where’s that, J?” She couldn’t help but ask. The whole experience felt like a dream. Jerome returning from the dead and taking her with him to wreak havoc around the city. She’d had similar dreams before, all ending with her waking up when Jerome laughed at one of her pathetic attempts at making a joke. The memory of his laughter burned into her brain, mocking her the moment she’d woken up, hearing its echo inside her head during the whole day afterwards.

“Just wait and see,” Jerome laughed again at a joke only he understood, but just like its memory, his laugh was still contagious and Harleen started giggling as well.

Only a few minutes later, Jerome stopped the van and turned around to look at Dwight, “Grab that camera, pal. We’re gonna give Gotham a show worth dying for.” The words were accompanied by more laughter though it was disturbed by another one of those coughing fits Harleen had already
noticed at the GCPD.

“You okay?” She kept her voice low, making sure that Dwight-dude couldn’t hear her.

“Yeah and I’m gonna be even better after you’ve stitched me up again,” he mumbled while shoving something else into her hands. On closer look, Harleen realised it was some kind of medical sewing kit. He must have snatched it from the medical examiner’s office.

Her eyes widened as she realised why he’d given it to her.

“You … you want me to …” She couldn’t put it into words. The thought alone was too strange to explore any further.

“Of course, Harls. Should I do it myself? Without a mirror? Funny little gal.” His nonchalance astonished her but she followed him into the industrial building anyway, Dwight right on their heels. *Why was that creep still with them anyway?*

“Okay, let’s get this over with. I want my ‘so glad you’re back from the dead’-kiss.”

Harleen’s hands started to tremble but she tried to calm herself while she prepared the needle. Even though she needed five attempts before she finally managed to put the thread through the eye of it.

“You sure about this, J? It’s gonna hurt like a bitch,” she asked more for her own sake than his.

“I can handle it, Harl-ey. How about you?” His voice dropped to that baritone again, making her swallow hard around a lump in her throat. It was the same tone he’d used to tell her that he was the one in charge during their night at the penthouse. The memory alone made her tremble for very different reasons.

“Sit down,” she heard herself say before she turned towards their third wheel, “You! Get me some more light here.”

The first few stitches at the right side of his forehead were slow and careful but when she reached the other side, her hand was working steady and precisely. Jerome only flinched when she reached his jaw and the sensitive skin of his throat. But once he got used to it again he kept still as a statue.

After the last stitch was done, Harleen tied up the thread and cut off the rest: “That’s it …”

“Well done, Harls. Now c’mere!” He grabbed her wrist and pulled her into his lap pressing his re-attached lips onto her own with force. And just like their first kiss this one tasted like blood.

It was this very moment, this rough and bloody kiss, which made Harleen realise that this was really happening. Jerome was alive again - and he hadn’t forgotten about her. Her wish to have more time with him was finally granted and she wouldn’t let this chance go to waste. She wouldn’t leave his side ever again. If he let her that was.

His hands pulled her just that much closer when they were interrupted by Dwight clearing his throat. Without wanting to, Harleen thought about the first Freddy and wondered if Dwight might find the same end now. She definitely wouldn’t mind. He still had to pay for cutting Jerome’s face off.

“Oh right. We’ve got a show to film. Keep that thought in mind, Harl-ey. We gonna get back to it as soon as we’re done here,” he murmured the words against her ear using that deep baritone again, before he bit into her shoulder. It was the same point at the end of her collarbone where he’d left a bite mark last time. A bite mark that never fully healed and left a faint scar. A scar he now traced with his tongue, driving the last remains of her sanity out of her mind.
“J--- focus,” she tried to get him back on track though her voice betrayed her determination. How could she withstand his ministrations, when he made her feel all giggly and oh-so good? Not at all, that’s how.

“Yeah, yeah, yeah, I know. Back to work,” he growled lowly against her skin before he pushed her off his lap.

Harleen couldn’t help but giggle again while she watched her manic ginger setting up several large barrels to work as a giant bomb. She wasn’t sure what kind of building they were in at the moment but she did know that it wouldn’t be part of Gotham anymore when they were done here.

For just a millisecond she wondered if any employees were still in the building. She wasn’t sure how to feel about it if there was anyone still inside. If so … well, she wouldn’t really know anyway so there was no point in wondering about it, right? Right.

“Hey Harls, stop daydreaming and help me out with this, would ya?” Jerome’s voice pulled her out of her dark thoughts and when she focused her eyes on her favourite criminal she realised that he was in the middle of tying up Dwight to a chair. Okay, maybe she’d been thinking about collateral damage for way longer than she thought she had.

Shaking it off she walked over to Jerome and helped him with Dwight’s restraints.

“What have I missed?” she asked squatting down to tie up his legs as well. She didn’t ask because she wanted to help Dwight. He deserved this for cutting off Jerome’s face.

“Hey, eh, what’s your name again?” Jerome patted Dwight’s head while he looked him straight in the eye.

“Dwight,” the impostor swallowed visibly.

“Dwight, why don’t you ask Harl-ey here what you asked me just now, huh? I really wanna see her reaction.” Jerome’s laughter echoed around them due to the high walls of the room, causing another shiver to run down Harleen’s spine.

“Uhm, you’re not mad because of the ya-know face-thing, right?” Dwight stumbled over his own words and Harleen lifted one eyebrow at him in disbelief. He was kidding, right? He had to be kidding.

Without thinking about the soon-to-be dead man’s questions any longer, Harleen started laughing. It wasn’t like the giggling she always did when Jerome said or did something even remotely funny. It was full-blown, hysterical laughter filling the whole room. And she couldn’t stop it. Didn’t want to either. This was just too hilarious to stop laughing.

It took her several minutes to get composure back together - and she had to admit that she’d never felt this good before in her entire life.

“Be thankful, Dwight,” Jerome’s voice pulled her back into focus again while she rubbed at her eyes to get rid of the tears of laughter, “You were allowed to be witness to the most beautiful thing in the world. C’mere, Harl-ey.”

She didn’t hesitate, skipping over to stand right next to Jerome. He pulled her into his side and placed a kiss onto her cheek, “I want you to do the honors once we’ve told Gotham to let loose tonight.”

He pushed a pack of matches into her hand while placing another kiss on her forehead: “Now set up the camera, Harls.”
He could tell that his masterpiece was almost finished. She just needed another small push in the right direction. Her laughter was the most beautiful thing he had every heard and he was kinda glad that he’d decided to mould her into this perfect little creature. It was time for her to finally bloom. She had to leave her cocoon and spread her newly developed wings.

And Dwight-wighty wasn’t even appreciating the fact that he was allowed to watch Harley taking another step into completion. *Rude.*

“Keep the matches at hand, Harl-ey. And don’t forget your cue, honeypie.” He was double-checking the camera’s position but he still noticed her eagerly nodding her head.

“Good girl. We’re going live in five, four, three, two-” He hit the bright red recording button and started his speech addressing all Gotham citizens, telling them about the little wonder of coming back from the land of the dead and inviting everyone out there to do what they wanted to do - there would be no rules tonight.

With all of that said he raised the end of the fuse and looked over at Harley, she eagerly struck the match and held it to the fuse until sparks started to fly. Then they both dropped everything in their hands, he grabbed her and pulled her with him.

On their way out, he stopped next to that pathetic impostor, “Oh and, Dwight? If you haven’t noticed by now … we are still mad about the ya-know face-thing.”

He started laughing again and Harley joined him, sounding just as free as she had before. They were both still laughing when they left the power station, running full tilt ahead as it blew up behind them.

The sounds of explosions and the smell of gunpowder made him feel so *alive* again, that he had to pull Harley into another passionate kiss.

“Where are we going now, J?” Her voice sounded just a little bit hoarse and he couldn’t stop a grin conquering his back-in-place lips because he was the reason for that huskiness.

“Oh, we’ve got lots of things to do, Harl-ey. *Lots* of things.”

Chapter End Notes

If you love getting a peek into J's POV just as much as I do, please consider leaving a comment. They really keep me going.
It didn’t take long to find the lunatic fans as Doctor Thompkins had described them. Well, they would have found them earlier if they hadn’t stopped for a quick … intermezzo.

Harleen still felt the ghost of his touch, his teeth scratching over her skin. She literally felt the bruises forming on her hips right now. It was a bit distracting - but also kinda exciting. Knowing what they just did, the evidence left on her body, while - at the same time - they were going about their business as if nothing had happened at all. No one else knew what they had done twenty minutes ago. Not that she wanted them to know. It was their dirty little secret.

The lunatic fans were exactly that and Harleen wasn’t sure yet if she liked it or not. Jerome loved every single second of their get-together though, demolishing a car or whatever met their way now and then, leaving spray-painted eyes and Ha-Ha-Ha’s everywhere. Meanwhile, Harleen wouldn’t leave Jerome’s side while they were headed through the darkened streets of Gotham.

When they arrived at their destination - a huge manor in the outskirts of Gotham - Jerome held out a crowbar to her, “Wanna do the honors again, Har-l-ey?” His battered lips turned up into a grin and Harleen’s own mouth followed suit immediately.

“I wanna do it together,” she answered with that slightly mischievous smirk still in place.

“Here’s a lesson for you, folks,” Jerome suddenly called out to his fans, “don’t deny ya gal anything at all. At least when she behaves.” If possible, his smile widened even further, then he was stepping behind Harleen and putting his arms around her so they could both grab the straight side of the crowbar. She could feel the warmth of his body against her back, seeping through her clothes and making her skin start tingling again. It was neither the right time nor the right place for this, but she didn’t really care.

“On the count of three,” he mumbled against her ear, his hot breath hitting her over-sensitive neck while she leaned back into his chest, “one … two … three.”

It took several attempts but the door finally opened before them. Jerome held it open for her and bowed, gesturing her inside the mansion in an elaborated way to tell her she should walk ahead - making her giggle again.

Harleen looked into the dark hallway of the manor, before she stepped inside, looking around herself like she had just entered wonderland. Another giggle escaped her lips at the thought.

“What’s so funny?” Jerome’s voice changed to her favourite baritone, making her weak in the knees, “c’mon, make me laugh, Har-l-ey.”

“It’s just … if this is our wonderland then you’re the Cheshire Cat,” her answer was accompanied by more giggling.

“’s that so?” Jerome’s grin almost split his face in half now while he was walking over to Harleen, a predatory aura surrounding him.

“Yeah, and he’s my favourite … just like you are,” Harleen couldn’t stop giggling, especially not when Jerome pulled her into a hug - and started to tickle her, turning the giggles into laughter.
“Stop it,” she managed to get out between two laughter-filled breaths.

“Why should I?” His breath hit her neck, making her shiver again.

“I thought,” she tried to get out a whole sentence at once, “you had,” she laughed, “things to do here …”

“Oh yeah, right.” He let her go and put on his most serious face. Considering the circumstances that was probably not the best way to put it but so what. “Alright-y, let’s turn this place into a mess, folks!!”

Though before anyone could fan out, they were interrupted by noises coming from one of the rooms on the ground floor. Jerome indicated them to be silent, before he told them to follow him into a study of some sort, the wooden shelves were packed with old books, taking up the two walls which didn’t consist of glass doors and floor to ceiling windows or a huge fireplace.

On Jerome’s command all of his followers hid themselves in the shadows of the study, just moments before the residents walked into the room trying to light the house with candles. Harleen was stood right next to her ginger when she finally realised who owned the manor. She should have noticed it earlier. Somehow. The chance that Jerome would break into some random rich person’s house was like non-existent in comparison to the chance that he would know the person he wanted to visit. And Harleen kinda doubted that he knew a lot of rich people.

She silently watched Bruce Wayne and his butler roaming around the study until the phone started to ring. Everything afterwards happened faster than Harleen would have expected and in the next moment the butler was down on the floor and Jerome made his entrance.

It was fascinating to watch him as it always was, but the academics loving part of her heart flinched slightly when some of the gang pulled out the books from the shelves to throw them all over the place. The poor books hadn’t done anyone any harm.

Harleen kept herself in the background to appreciate Jerome’s show - though she did notice Bruce’s dark eyes widen just a fraction when he saw her standing there.

She didn’t know why the barely hidden disappointment in his gaze got to her - and she didn’t like it either. What right did he have to judge her like this? They met once and got along quite well but that wasn’t a good enough reason.

Though she had to admit that Bruce showed a lot of guts when he demanded to be murdered in front of an audience. She knew just as well as Jerome that the billionaire wanted to buy some more time to escape - or to be rescued.

“Try not to get blood on the couch though,” Jerome told his boys after ordering the butler’s death, “I may come back for it later. Looks comfy, doesn’t it, Har-ley?” It was the first time that he acknowledged her in front of Bruce.

“It certainly does, J,” Harleen couldn’t stop the next giggle leaving her lips. Just being in Jerome’s presence had that effect on her.

Three of the lunatic fans were left behind to kill the butler, while Jerome and Harleen took Bruce to find an audience. On their way back into the city, she could feel Bruce’s eyes on her all the time but the billionaire didn’t say a word. He just stared and it nagged her.

Upon arriving at an indoor circus, Jerome told his followers to keep an eye on Bruce, while he pulled Harleen with him so they could get changed into show-worthy outfits. When he was fully changed,
Jerome looked like the ringmaster himself, though Harleen was still staring at the costume he had chosen for her.

“What are you waiting for, Harl-ey? I do remember that those are your two favourite colours,” Jerome snarled, stepping up behind her and starting to unbutton her shirt. This one had been white for a change since she had had an official meeting with Doctor Thompkins.

“I love the colours but … you look so good all dressed up like this … why do I have to wear … this? What’s it supposed to be in the first place?” Harleen still looked at the costume he had handed over to her, while he finished unbuttoning her shirt and started to shove it from her shoulders.

“Because it’s gonna hug your curves and gives me an excuse to kill every man and woman who looks at you the wrong way. It also fits the scenery. So get changed already. I’ve got billionaire boys to kill. Well, one at least.” He pinched her right nipple through the lace of her bra, before he stepped away to give her enough room to change into the jumpsuit.

“This looks ridiculous, J,” Harleen whined looking into the broken mirror before her.

“Yeah, because you don’t wear the hat yet. There you go.” His grin turned into a giggle while he placed a matching red and black hat on her blonde locks.

Jerome then stopped giggling and looked her over with a serious expression on his reattached face: “We need to think of a way to hide your hair next time. For now it has to work like this.”

~*~

Dying surrounded by all of these insane people wasn’t an option for Bruce. He was determined to find a way out of this mad situation. He trained himself for a moment like this and he wouldn’t go down without a fight.

His dark eyes took in his surroundings, looking for a way to escape Jerome and his henchmen. Any way to be honest. Maybe he could slip his guard before Jerome returned from his wardrobe change. But if he couldn’t … maybe, just maybe, he could convince Harleen to come with him.

He did remember her breakdown at the children’s hospital gala two years ago, but he would never have guessed her to be one of Jerome’s followers. Though maybe it was more than that. Bruce didn’t know, but he wanted to help her. She hadn’t done anything bad. At least he didn’t know of a crime committed by her.

His train of thought was interrupted when Jerome returned dressed as a ringmaster this time - Harleen right at his side and wearing a skin-tight jumpsuit as well as some sort of harlequin hat.

Bruce kept up his strong side. He wouldn’t show any form of weakness in front of the ginger maniac.

It was hard to remain unemotional when he had to watch Jerome dumping a business man into a giant fish tank filled to the brim with piranhas. That was when he heard her giggling again, like she had back at Wayne Manor - making him wonder if she just laughed to please Jerome, to save her own skin … or if she really thought it was funny to watch a person being eaten alive.

Bruce really hoped it was the first option. The thought of Harleen being capable of hurting people and enjoying it like Jerome did made him sick to the stomach. They’ve only met once and for a short amount of time during the children’s hospital gala, but he thought her to be a genuinely nice woman, someone who wanted to be a psychologist to help people. Not harm them.
Her acting as Jerome’s sidekick just wouldn’t fit into that picture he had of her.

But for now, he had to focus on Jerome and the actual situation he was in, which was a rather dicey one with him getting tied to a pole by none other than Harleen herself. Jerome was occupied telling his audience what was about to happen.

“I can help you get away from him, Harleen. Just open the handcuffs. We’ll get out of here, as soon as Detective Gordon and the GCPD arrives,” he whispered the words to make sure, Jerome wouldn’t notice.

Harleen just looked at him, irritation reflecting in her baby blue eyes. Though Bruce would never learn her answer due to the police announcing themselves in that very moment.

Everything else happened to fast to notice every single detail … but Bruce thought he’d heard a quiet voice beneath the evolving ruckus.

“I’ll never leave his side again.”

Chapter End Notes

I'm sorry you had to wait so long for this chapter, but the real life got to me. If you enjoyed the chapter anyway, please consider to leave a comment. I live to hear your thoughts.

I also hope to finish the epilogue before my vacation starts on Sunday.
Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

Every end is also a beginning ...

Epilogue

She really wanted to get out of the jumpsuit. It was humiliating, sitting amongst a group of people who just kept laughing under their breath and being stuck in a skin-tight one piece. Trying to feel just a tad less ridiculous, she pulled the harlequin hat from her head. At least she wasn’t handcuffed.

“Quinzel!” One of the officers unlocked the door and grabbed her arm roughly to yank her out of the cell. “The detective wants to see you.”

Harleen tried to free her arm from his bruising hold but to no avail. His massive hands held onto her in a vice-like grip, he was too strong for her.

That didn’t mean she kept her mouth shut though, “Let me go, you brute!”

She was pushed into the same interrogation room she’d been in during the raid two years ago. She remembered that day all too well. But this wasn’t the right time or place to think about her first time with Jerome. She was about to face Detective Gordon again - and she wasn’t sure what to expect of this interrogation.

“Miss Quinzel,” Detective Gordon entered the room followed by his partner Bullock, “I have to say … I wasn’t really surprised to find you on the crime scene with Jerome. Does he have something on you?”

Harleen looked at the detective for a few seconds, feeling irritated as hell. What was he hinting at with his question?

“Why are you wearing that catsuit, missy?” Detective Bullock didn’t give her enough time to answer Gordon’s question before he asked his own. Maybe they wanted to confuse her so much, that she’d start talking. Well, she wouldn’t allow that for sure.

“Seems like you don’t have much self-esteem, do you? Running around like that. And for what? To impress a mad man?” Bullock continued when she didn’t react to his first question.

Harleen kept looking at them stone faced even as her fingers clenched around the harlequin hat tight enough for her knuckles to turn white.

Before the two detectives could continue with their questioning, they were interrupted by a knock. The door opened, Doctor Thompkins entering the room with a knowing nod towards the corridor outside, “Jim?”

Gordon followed her out, leaving Harleen alone with Bullock. She looked him in the eye, determined to show nothing but strength. She wouldn’t break before the old man. She wouldn’t.

He didn’t say another word while Gordon was gone. He just stared right back at her - he was getting
on her nerves.

Harleen could tell that Bullock finally wanted to say something when Gordon came back into the interrogation room. Something in his gaze changed but Harleen couldn’t tell what was different exactly.

The young detective sat down in front of Harleen again, looking at her with pity in his eyes. She didn’t like that look. Not at all.

“You’re in love with him.” It wasn’t a question, so Harleen didn’t answer.

“You’ve been in love with him since the beginning, am I right? You already loved him when he murdered his mother. Is that why you lied to us back then? When you told us you’d been with him all day. It also wasn’t a coincidence that you were at the children’s hospital gala. You knew he would be there. You knew it and you accepted the possibility that everyone in that room could have been his next victim. Were you helping Dwight all along to bring Jerome back as well?”

“NO!” It was the first reaction she allowed herself, but she wouldn’t let him accuse her of helping that imposter. “If I had known that person beforehand, I wouldn’t have allowed him to take J’s face in the first place.”

She knew it wouldn’t help her to get out of this place but she also couldn’t let them think she would work with someone like Dwight.

Gordon remained silent and just looked at her again, the pity in his eyes being more obvious now.

“Jerome used you, Harleen. He made you think that he felt the same way about you but he just fooled you into helping him. He’s not capable of love.”

Harleen bit her lip to keep herself from replying to Gordon’s words. He wanted to provoke a slip in her behaviour. But she wouldn’t do him the favour.

It would be better to just lie about everything of course. To get herself out of the GCPD and back to her research so she could finish her studies and become a psychologist.

Another knock on the door interrupted Gordon’s attempt to convince her, an officer sticking his head into the room. Before he could say anything, Bullock yelled at the young man, “We’re in the middle of something!”

“It’s important,” the officer stuttered, “Bruce Wayne wants to talk with Detective Gordon. He said it concerns your case.”

Gordon and Bullock shared a look before they left Harleen alone in the interrogation room to talk to Bruce Wayne himself. She wasn’t sure what to think of it. If she liked it or not.

Five minutes never felt so long in her life but finally the detectives returned, looking quite indifferent. They sat down in front of her again saying nothing at all for a seemingly endless time.

“So we’ve heard what happened between you and Bruce Wayne inside the circus.”

Harleen tried not to react at all. Apparently something happened between her and Bruce Wayne. She didn’t remember interacting with the boy at all. Except for tying him to that pole. Did he tell them about that?

“You don’t have to act up any longer, Harleen. Jerome is back at Arkham and he won’t come out for
a very long time. You’re free to be yourself again.” Since the two detectives had returned to the room Gordon had done all the talking, Bullock just sitting there looking disappointed.

For another moment, Harleen remained silent trying to grasp the whole extent of the situation and wondering what exactly the billionaire had said. Obviously something other than what had actually happened. But maybe this was her chance to get out of here.

“Are you … sure about that?” She didn’t specify her question letting the detectives think for themselves what she was hinting at. That way, she didn’t have to lie. Not really.

“Yeah. We made sure of it. He’s gonna be transferred to Arkham as soon as they reattached his face for good in the hospital. You have nothing to fear anymore, Harleen.” Gordon put his hand on her own trying to reassure her.

“Thank you, Detectives. Thank you so much.” Most likely they thought she thanked them for her safety when in reality she thanked them for the information she got.

“There’s nothing to thank us for. You can go now.” Gordon told her without emotion while Bullock looked like he was about to protest. But he didn’t. “Try not to get into anymore trouble though, Miss Quinzel.”

“I’ll promise to behave, Detective Gordon.” This being said, Harleen left as fast as she could without looking suspicious.

Between all the officer’s tables, she met Bruce Wayne and his butler who looked rather healthy for a dead man.

“Harleen,” the boy approached her, “I’m glad to see you free to go.”

“It’s all thanks to you, Mr Wayne,” she replied politely.

“I just told Detectives Gordon and Bullock what I thought had happened between you two,” Bruce explained, looking her directly in the eye, “isn’t that right?”

Harleen looked right back at the teen. “Yeah, that’s exactly what happened.”

How could it be so easy to lie for Jerome, but at the same time so hard to lie about him?

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!