Summary

Bruce Wayne is harboring The Joker, a fugitive and his enemy-turned-lover. The Joker has a proposal for him. Fun times ensue.

Notes

From 2008, another story inspired by a prompt. This was based on an old Batman comic book, which depicted the Dark Knight wearing a rainbow-colored cape. Being Pride month, I decided to run with it.

Originally posted on LJ in a Nolanverse Batman/Joker group, slightly renovated.

“You’re even more insane than I thought,” Batman growled.

“Takes one to know one,” The Joker sang. He leveled his brown eyes at his other half, the smirk that accompanied his stare dangerous and challenging. “C’mon. I’ll do it if you do it.”

“Like you’d be making any major sacrifices,” Bruce Wayne muttered under his breath. How had his life come to this? Still in full armor from his recent patrol of Gotham City, he had returned to the penthouse where his lover had been living for the past year. While The Joker had yet to give up his real name, he had allowed Bruce to see him without his trademark clown makeup. The scars did not bother Bruce, and he had given up on trying to get a truthful answer as to how Joker came by them. Stalking across the room, Bruce dropped into an armchair with a weary sigh. “I don’t even know why I bother with this,” he gestured to his own mask, “anymore. Some people still believe I killed Harvey Dent, which I wanted, or they think I am Harvey.” He let out a short, dry laugh. “Some even
“Think I’m you.”

“No accounting for some people’s intelligence,” Joker said. “Or their sanity.”

“Hm,” Bruce agreed, with a nod. He glanced up at Joker and smiled. “I can certainly understand that, now.”

They both fell silent. Finally, Joker played the ace up his sleeve. “I just had a thought.”

“Treat it kindly, it’s in a scary place.”

“Ha!” Joker wagged a finger at Bruce. “That’s funny. Accurate, too. Hang onto that for later, though; it’s good foreplay material.” Strolling across the room, he dropped down in front of the chair, wedged himself between Bruce’s knees, and placed a hand on either of the arm rests before looking him right in the eyes. “If you agree to do this with me,” he said, in a low, seductive voice, “afterward, I will let you do anything you want. And I do mean ‘anything.’ Even if it’s sending me back to Arkham.”

That made Bruce start in surprise. He stared at the man kneeling before him. The green dye had almost completely faded from his dark blond curls. He looked almost boyish with the freckles sprinkled across his nose. Bruce fought a constant internal battle, asking himself how he could be in a relationship with this man, particularly when he began to humanize the monster who had once held all of Gotham in the grip of terror. It may have been a mistake, and he certainly questioned his own sanity on a regular basis ever since he decided to keep The Joker here at the penthouse and use sex to pacify him, but it seemed to work. Batman still had his fair share of bad guys to fight, but The Joker was not one of them. "Back to Arkham?” Bruce’s eyes narrowed in suspicion. “Right. Just so you could escape again. What’s wrong? Feeling like you’ve been out of commission for too long? Itching to get your hands on some explosives so you can blow up another hospital, or a school?”

“Are you kidding?” Joker spread his arms and looked around, gesturing to their lavish surroundings. “I’ve got the Life of Riley, here! No, my work in Gotham was getting rid of all the Mob bosses and crooked politicians, and that’s done. I’m officially retired.”

“I don’t believe you.”

“Aw, come on!” Joker drew an X over his chest. “Cross my heart.”

“You don’t have a heart,” Bruce said. “You’re also a compulsive liar.”

“About some things, yes,” Joker said, waving a dismissive hand. “But you should know by now that when I make a promise, I stick to it.”

“’A man of my word,’” Bruce muttered, remembering how The Joker had once given that statement before following through on his promise to kill someone.

It seemed to delight Joker to hear his words recited back to him. “Exactly!” he said. He propped his elbow on Bruce’s knee. “Look. I’m giving you a golden opportunity, here. You do this one thing for me,” he raised his index finger, “— one thing! And if you want to get rid of me, you can lock me away in some, ah, hidden room deep inside your Freudian Bat-cave. I won’t try to get away. I’ll stay there, forever.” He tilted his head and gave a coquettish flutter of his lashes. “Whaddaya say, Batsy? Do we have a deal?”

He rocked back and forth like a pendulum, each shift of his swaying body pushing Bruce’s legs further apart. His slender hands glided over the Kevlar-armored thighs, up and down in lazy counterpart to his hypnotic, cobra-like undulations, occasionally dragging long nails over the suit’s
impenetrable surface. They both knew who would be winning this match. Most of their battles – large or small – usually ended in a draw; more than not, Bruce would surrender first, just for the sake of his own already questionable sanity. It didn’t matter what Joker offered by way of compensation for his cooperation, either. They were just words, part of the routine, a necessary evil in this game they always played. Inwardly, Gotham’s Dark Knight cursed himself for his weakness when it came to this man, his greatest adversary…and his most unusual relationship.

With a heavy sigh, Bruce grimaced and looked away. “All right,” he muttered under his breath. “I’m sorry,” Joker said, cocking an ear at him. “I didn’t quite catch that. Could you repeat –”

“All right!” Batman snapped again, louder.

The Joker let out a squeal of delight that sounded like a teenaged girl who had just been asked to the prom. He leaped up nimbly and landed in Batman’s lap, threw his arms around the armored shoulders, and planted a very noisy, sloppy kiss right between the cowl’s eyes. “Mmmwah! Thank you, Batsy!”

“Please stop calling me that.”

“Oh, you like it and you know it.” Joker cackled and sprang to his feet. “Now, don’t you worry – I’ll make all the arrangements!” He grinned as he twirled and pranced around the room, headed for the door where he paused to give Batman a promising wink. “This is going so much fun!”

As soon as the Joker darted out of sight, Bruce reached up and removed his concealing headgear. He turned the mask around to regard the wet lip print glistening on the forehead. “When this is over,” he mumbled to himself, “I may be the one going to Arkham.”

* * * *

Over the next few days, Bruce saw very little of The Joker. He did, however, receive numerous reminders of their “deal” in the form of little notes – written, as usual, on various Joker playing cards. ‘One week from now!’ one read. ‘Looking forward to our little outing!’ read another. The last troubled him a bit. ‘After this, Gotham will see Batman in a bright new way.’

Bruce tried to ignore his growing dread as he went about his nightly patrols. He knew if he tried to back out there would be a price, paid in innocent lives as the Joker vented his disappointment. Once again, Bruce wondered about their relationship’s toxicity. This is what I have to do to maintain order, he thought bitterly. Gotham is about to find out how far I’ve gone to keep it safe…and while I’m not looking for their acceptance, will the people of this city ever truly understand?

If nothing else, the Joker’s latest plan would certainly open their eyes.

* * * *

It was a beautiful, bright summer day. Downtown Gotham had transformed from a canyon of stone, glass, and steel to a colorful celebration of freedom, love, and diversity as it marked its fifth annual LGBT Pride Week. Rainbow flags fluttered in the air while a crowd of nearly 200,000 revelers filled the cordoned-off streets. Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender citizens and their supporters swarmed for the event. Drag queens posed for pictures with leather boys. Hairy bears stepped out of the way for biker Lesbians passing through on their motorcycles. Straight parents stood proudly with their gay children, and gay parents pushed strollers with their own families. Vendors sold everything from clothing and jewelry to pottery and paintings, or passed out informative brochures and asked for help with petitions that would improve the community. There were food and beer tents erected around the
area, as well as plenty of strategically-placed port-a-toilets. Upbeat music poured out of speakers at one of many stages set up for the myriad of performances that would be taking place over the next few days.

Of course, a handful of protesters had shown up. The religious and political fundamentalists picketed with signs and shouted ugly words at anyone who condoned these “sinful” practices. Thankfully, Mayor Garcia had arranged for a police detail to keep that faction far enough away that there wouldn’t be any contretemps, proclaiming the city “hate-free” for the duration of the festivities. He reaffirmed the announcement from the grandstand located on the parade route – and even made a joke about his own penchant for eyeliner – before hopping onto one of the floats in a show of his support.

A gasp went up from the people lining the street when two figures appeared among the parade’s marchers. Behind his mask, Bruce could feel a cold sweat break out across his forehead. It was the Batman’s first public appearance in months. While his name had been cleared of all charges in connection to the events from the previous year, there were still those who sneered at the sight of him, who still considered him a danger to the city. He wondered how many of those people stood in this crowd now, and if they would try to take out their anger. He thought about all the citizens who hero-worshipped the Dark Knight, and how they would react to seeing him participating in this event, dressed in his usual armor…but with the exception of his winged cape, which had been reconstructed to resemble a rainbow flag, the symbol of the LGBT community. More particularly, he worried what they’d think when they saw who walked beside him.

“Smile, Batsy!” The Joker hissed through his own toothy grin. His trademark purple coat and pants had been replaced by a full-length, rainbow-colored evening gown covered in sequins. Atop his freshly-dyed green curls, he wore a rhinestone tiara. He waved a purple cocktail-gloved hand at the onlookers before reaching over to hook Bruce’s arm – a move that caused an even louder uproar from the audience. “This is your big Coming Out party; try to enjoy it!”

Just as Bruce felt certain the mob would attack, the wave of shock transformed into a cheer. People applauded, laughed, and whistled at Batman and The Joker as they made their way along the parade route. Despite the apparent acceptance – if that’s what it was and not, as Bruce suspected, a jeer at what they perceived as a parody of the vigilante hero and his great nemesis – Batman found it difficult to relax. “I still don’t see why you felt this was so necessary,” he grumbled to his companion. He couldn’t stop his eyes from darting to the many windows overlooking the street, trying to see if any enemies waited there for an opportunity to strike. “You better not have done anything with my regular cape.”

Joker clucked his tongue admonishingly. “Oh, don’t get your panties in a twist, cupcake. I only borrowed it long enough to make a pattern for the one you’re wearing now.” He cast a pouting glance at Bruce. “Y’know, you’re really hurting my feelings, here – you still haven’t told me how talented I am for putting together our little ensembles. At the very least, you could tell me how good I look.”

A far cry from his deceptively bulky trademark suit, it was not the first time The Joker had cross-dressed. Bruce had seen video footage of him in a nurse’s uniform, taken just before he blew up a hospital, and had felt an odd twinge of arousal. Not only am I sleeping with a madman, I have a kink for clowns in women’s clothing. The Joker had a nice body, and Bruce liked how the gown accentuated all the curves he had come to know so intimately over the past year. He grimaced. I wonder if Arkham can set up a cell for two… “The makeup clashes with the sequins,” Bruce said flatly.

“Keep that up, and you’ll be sleeping alone tonight,” Joker told him.
They managed to make it through the parade without any assassination attempts or riots breaking out. Bruce was ready to beat a hasty retreat, his public service done for the day, but Joker clutched his hand to keep him from fleeing. “Not so fast, Batsy,” he said. “There’s just one other thing we’ve gotta do.”

“The deal was that we’d put in an appearance,” Bruce said, cringing at the petulant edge to his own voice. God, he’d been hanging around The Joker too much – now he was starting to sound like him.

“The appearance isn’t over, yet,” Joker said with a mysterious leer. Seeing the tight line of Bruce’s mouth, he rolled his eyes in frustration. “What is this? Every party needs a pooper, so you might as well be it?” He huffed out an exasperated sigh. “Okay. Just, ah, humor me for a little longer, would ya?” His smile returned, stretching across his scarred face in a sly manner as he moved in close and walked his satiny fingers up the armored chest plate. “I promise I’ll make it all worthwhile, later.”

When Bruce glanced down at his hand, Joker suddenly flipped his wrist up and caught him under the nose. “Ha! Gotcha!”

Bruce scowled as Joker let out a burst of hysterical giggles. He opened his mouth to say to Hell with this, to announce that he couldn’t take it anymore. Arkham would have another inmate, tonight; fuck this ungrateful city, and fuck The Joker – although that’s how Bruce got into this ridiculous situation in the first place, damn his dysfunctional libido – when a group of young men approached them.

“Hey, Batman! Joker! Can we get our pictures taken with you?”

“Yeah! You guys are the absolute shit!”

One particularly swayback waif rolled his eyes. “Bitch, please.” He gestured to Bruce and Joker. “Can I get a reality check for table five, over here? Hello! This cannot be the real Joker and Batman, and you are crazy for thinking they are.”

“Well, I don’t care,” one of the others said. He gave Bruce a flirtatious wink. “I can have my fantasies.” He tossed his head and shifted his rainbow-colored feathered boa onto his shoulders. “Anyway, sometimes love and hate are just one and the same. I bet the sex between the two of them would be so out of this fucking world!”

Joker leaned forward and replied in a conspiratorial manner, “Trust me, it so fucking is.”

“Diva!” shrieked the boy, and he and his friends all sent up a series of whoops, finger snaps, and laughter. Turning back to the masked couple with a sweet smile, the more outspoken youth continued, “I don’t care if you’re them or not – you’re real, to me.” He held up his camera hopefully. “So, photo op?”

“We’d be thrilled to pose with you,” Joker said before Bruce could decline. The clown snaked one arm around his partner’s waist, beaming up at him cheerfully. “Wouldn’t we, Batsy?”

With the boys tittering over the nickname, Bruce smiled tightly but said nothing. He stood still as the young men took up positions around and in front of them, each taking turns shooting pictures and then flagging down a passerby to take another of the entire group. Joker camped it up, leaning into Batman’s side, or standing in front of him, drawing Bruce’s arms around, and placing his hands over his breasts. For another shot, Joker hiked up his skirt, hitched his hairy leg onto his lover’s hips, and arched his back like something right off the cover of a romance novel. Naturally, the young men loved it; they thanked the couple profusely before bouncing off to enjoy the festivities.

“That didn’t hurt, now, did it?” Joker teased.
Bruce responded with a noncommittal grunt. “How much longer do we have to be here?”

“What’s the rush? Someone threatening to blow up your city?” That earned The Joker another scowl. “And here I thought I’d replaced that stick up your ass with something more enjoyable.” Without warning, his hands shot up and caught Bruce’s face. All the mirth fled from his expression and his voice dropped to an icy purr. “Now, look,” he began, tongue flicking out at the corners of his painted lips, a tic that surfaced whenever he began to grow anxious or agitated. “I’ve been a very good boy for you over the past year. I’ve kept my nose clean and even broke my own rules in order to play by yours. And y’wanna know why? Hm? It’s not because I find it preferable to being left to rot in some loony bin, doped to the gills every day for the rest of my, ah, unnatural-born life…no.” His eyes seemed to spark with fire. “I do it for you. To be with you. I gave up what I do, what I am, just so I can feel like a whole person. Which is how I feel when we’re together.” His hands slipped down to Batman’s shoulders. “Although if you really want to get technical, I suppose I can sum it up for you in three simple words.”

Bruce frowned. “What words?” he asked, wary.

Joker leaned in close, disfigured red lips next to Bruce’s cheek, and there was a slight quaver to his voice when he whispered, “I love you.”

He didn’t pull back right away; he just stood there, still except for the imperceptible drumming of his fingers on Bruce’s shoulders. Another nervous habit, one of many Bruce had come to know over the past year as he studied this man intimately in every way. He knew how Joker fought and he knew how he fucked. He’d seen him in fits of rage, glimpsed rare moments of confusion, saw the genuinely funny side of his personality, and once – after waking from a particularly violent night terror that resulted in a wet mattress, a lot of shame and some misdirected anger – Bruce had seen him cry. He still didn’t know The Joker’s real name, and he didn’t know his background; all things considered, he could be a combat veteran. Something made him this way, Bruce thought. Deep down, he’s just like the boy who was scared of bats and still dreams of the night he watched his parents gunned down in front of him. But could someone like The Joker be capable of loving anyone?

Until this moment, Bruce had never heard those words come from that scarred mouth. Such a powerful and often misused statement; just the root of it – love – did not seem to fit with The Joker’s character, and therefore Bruce never expected it to be part of his vocabulary. Which was just as well. Bruce himself avoided the word as much as the emotions associated with it. It wasn’t that he didn’t know what it meant. Bruce loved his parents. He loved Alfred. Once, he had even loved Rachel, but that brand of love could not be compared to the all-encompassing, unexplainable, highly questionable, and indefinable feeling Bruce had come to experience in the presence of the person standing before him right now. How could he love this man, this despicable entity who had once orchestrated so many deaths – including Rachel’s – and who had succeeded in destroying a good man like Harvey Dent? In the beginning, a day did not pass when Bruce didn’t ask himself why he could bear to touch the Joker, let alone look at him, knowing all the horrible things he’d done. He wanted to hate him, he did hate him with a passion, but somewhere along the way, during endless, restless nights, as they lay concealed by total darkness and talked for hours about pain and life and despair and fear…somehow, Bruce came to identify with Joker, and in doing so, allowed him access to his heart.

He remembered what one of those young men had just said. ‘Love and hate are just one and the same.’ Perhaps, then, this was the definition of what Bruce felt for The Joker: his hatred for him was also his love for him. From what Bruce understood, love was also about sacrifice, about giving up one’s self for another. He often thought about Harvey and how losing Rachel had destroyed the man he used to be. It took a while for Bruce to acknowledge that Harvey probably wished he could have
died instead and that once he had succeeded in avenging Rachel’s death, he fully intended to join her. *He loved her so much, he couldn’t live without her.*

The Joker had made a similar sacrifice, for Bruce. He still caused mayhem here and there – “just to keep things interesting,” as he would say – but nothing like when he first came on the scene. Of course, that had all been to get Batman’s attention. Now, he had what he wanted. And he had changed. For Bruce. It hadn’t been easy for him, either. Instead of blowing up buildings, whenever he felt that particular urge, he turned to Bruce. They would fight, beat each other bloody, and conclude the obliteration with brutal, phenomenal sex. A strange therapy, but it worked.

So, it must be true: The Joker loved him. And he, in turn, loved The Joker. Each in his own very warped way, of course, but that still didn’t explain why the clown wanted to parade arm-in-arm with him down Main Street, putting their private relationship on display and giving the public a chance to laugh at their expense. Unless he had something else planned, a little surprise in the form of an incendiary device located under a bandstand and timed to go off at just the right moment…or maybe he got Jonathan Crane to cook up another batch of his fear toxin, and had used it to fill the balloon archways that decorated the vending area.

The crackle of a loudspeaker derailed Bruce’s train of thought. “Attention! At this time, will couples please report to the dance area at the south bandshell? Again – all couples, please report to the south bandshell.”

The Joker glanced up, and his face bloomed into a new smile. “Ahh!” he said. “I believe that’s our cue.”

“‘Our cue?’” Batman repeated. “For what?”

“You’ll see,” Joker said with a mischievous wink that made Bruce’s stomach flip. He caught one Kevlar-gloved hand. “Come on, we’d better get over there. Don’t want to be late!”

Reluctantly, Bruce followed the other man’s lead even as his trepidation grew. They threaded their way through the crowd until they joined the flow of other couples – pairs of men and pairs of women of all walks of life, young and old, a few in wheelchairs and some with little children – so many potential casualties, all gathered in one place. The anticipation quickly became too great. In his gruffest Batman voice, he demanded, “Joker, what are you up to?”

“About five-foot-ten, without the heels.” Joker stopped and faced Bruce again. “You really ask too many questions. So how’s about I ask you one for a change, hm?”

On the stage, a woman in a white robe with a lavender sash draped around her neck stepped up to a microphone. “Good afternoon!” she said cheerfully. “Is everyone here? Good! Thank you all for coming out today – no pun intended!” She grinned as laughter rang through the audience. “Okay! I’m Reverend Jennings, from the Gotham Unitarian Church, and I’m being joined here today by Father Theodore of St. Michael’s, Rabbi Blumenthal, and First District Judge Kevin McIntyre, in performing today’s mass civil union ceremony.” This elicited another cheer from the crowd.

When Bruce heard the announcement, however, his eyes widened. *Civil union?*

“About that question, Batsy…”

He looked at The Joker, surprised to find him now dressed in a white tuxedo with tails and sporting a purple rose in his lapel. From experience, he knew the clown could shuck every stitch of clothing
from his back in under three seconds – faster if he was really horny. But a quick-change, in the middle of a public event, left the Bat completely baffled. “When did you…?”

“While the reverend was giving her speech,” Joker replied with a casual shrug. He cast a glance at the sky. “Somehow, I just couldn’t envision getting hitched in sequins.”

Bruce blinked at him. Reality – or what passed for it – quickly settled back into place around him. “You…you want to…”

“Ah-ah!” Joker cautioned, shaking his head and wagging a finger at Bruce. “I got this all planned, so don’t go spoiling it.” With a smug smile, he dug into a pocket and pulled out a small, blue velvet box. “If you’re gonna do something right, you better do it right the first time.” He took Bruce’s left hand and placed the box in his upturned palm.

“I…” Bruce licked his lips, just as he’d seen Joker do so many times, and gulped dryly. He stared at the box. “This is…”

“C’mon, c’mon!” Joker muttered, bouncing on his toes impatiently. He raked his wild green curls back from his face. “They’re gonna start without us! Open it, already!”

Numbly, Bruce complied. He pried open the box to reveal a pair of simple gold bands, nothing fancy – although Joker could have easily afforded top of the line, given his penchant for acquiring large quantities of explosives, gasoline, camera equipment, and whatever else he needed to create chaos. He also had access to Bruce’s bank account, as he once proved when he hacked into it and shifted every penny to a different institution as a joke. It didn’t matter, though. He could have presented Bruce with a pair of paper cigar bands, or some cheap plastic ring purchased from a vending machine for a quarter – either way, Bruce would have felt just as moved.

“Whups! Almost forgot…” The Joker cleared his throat before he dropped to one knee. He spread his arms wide and, with a coy tilt of his head, delivered that familiar grin. “So, what’s it gonna be, Batsy? Will ya marry me?”

It was ludicrous. It was unthinkable. It was insane. But so are we. A smile tugged at Bruce’s lips. He looked at the rings again, sunlight gleaming off the polished metal. Once upon a time, he thought he would settle down someday, raise a family, grow old and live a long, happy, normal life. That dream ended when he saw his parents murdered. He had passed up his chance with Rachel because he could not give up the cowl. He played the part of Bruce Wayne, billionaire playboy, but he had no interest in any of those women. Deep in his heart, he knew his life would never be “normal.” He had come to accept that he would spend the remainder of his days alone, a schizophrenic crime fighter living two distinctly separate lives, unable to get close to anyone and share his secrets without risking that person’s safety.

But Joker knew all about his dual personalities. Knew and could differentiate between the masks he wore. Accepted both unconditionally. And there was no need to worry about safety – anyone stupid enough to threaten The Joker wouldn’t be able to live long enough to regret it.

The clown, still on his knee, waved his hands expectantly. “Well?” he prompted.

Bruce shook his head. I wonder if Arkham gives couples discounts? At last, he sighed heavily. “Alfred is going to shit himself.”

Joker arched one eyebrow and smacked his lips. “I, ah, take it that’s a ‘yes?'” he drawled.

Bruce didn’t answer. Instead, he held out his free hand. Joker cackled as he took it and let the taller
man pull him to his feet. He whooped louder when Bruce yanked him in close, twisting his arm up around behind his back, and smothered his laughter with a hard, hungry kiss.

* * * *

Sometime later, after the ceremony and a few more obliging photo ops with admiring fans, the Batman and Joker decided to take their leave and get started on their impromptu honeymoon. As they walked away from the ongoing celebration, the clown held up his left hand to admire the gold ring. He sighed happily. “I knew you’d say ‘yes,’” he said smugly.

Arm draped loosely across the Joker’s shoulders, Bruce gave an amused snort. “Really.” He marveled at how genuinely relaxed he felt. Maybe it was a sign, that the darkness which seemed to hang over Gotham City had begun to recede at long last. He cast an affectionate glance at his companion. “And what made you so sure – Jack?” After a year of fighting and fucking, Bruce now knew the name of his lover. Of course, he could be lying, which is why Bruce planned to run the name ‘Jack Napier’ through his computer to see if it came up with any hits to prove the claim.

“Oh,” Jack responded absently, “just a hunch…and a backup plan that included fifty tons of C-4, twenty-eight barrels of gasoline, and two pounds of dynamite I might have stashed under the south bandshell when they were setting up this shindig a few days ago.” He looked up at Bruce, his painted grin wider than ever. “Adds all new meaning to a ‘shotgun wedding,’ hm?” He barely got the last word out before erupting in a peal of high-pitched giggles.

Bruce, on the other hand, failed to see the humor. He stopped in mid-stride and stared at Jack for a moment, trying to gauge if what he said was the truth. Once again, experience told him never to take such a chance. He spun around, ready to fly back toward the festival area.

Jack grabbed his colorful cape at the last second and jerked him back. “Oh, fer cryin’ out loud! You didn’t actually believe me, did you?”

“You always have a way of showing your true colors,” Bruce growled. He didn’t find any of this very funny.

“Hm,” Jack agreed thoughtfully. “Yeah, I guess you do know me pretty well.” He licked his lips slowly as he drew the reluctant Bat toward him. “But all, um, joking aside? I knew you’d say yes… because it’s what I would’ve said. You and me, we’re two halves of the same whole. Remember?” He moved in closer, arms sliding up around the Dark Knight’s shoulders, and smiled seductively. “Now, be a good hubby and take me out to eat. Someplace nice – and I don’t mean one of those five-star dives you own.”

“Fine,” Bruce conceded – again, giving in because he knew it was pointless to argue. He’d never win. “And after that?”

“After that?” Jack traced Bruce’s mouth with his fingertips. “Well, I seem to recall promising that you could do anything you wanted with me if you went along with my little plan.” He pursed his lips and lifted his eyebrows suggestively. “Think you’re up for that?”

“After what you put me through today?” Bruce grumbled in Batman’s voice, which made Jack close his eyes and shiver with delight. “Count on it.” Taking advantage of the clown’s moment of euphoria, Bruce grasped him by the hips with one hand and yanked him in tight against his body. His other hand found its way into the tangled mass of green-gold curls, taking the hair into his fist and tugging sharply. The Joker made a noise at the pain that was part yelp, part giggle. Batman pulled The Joker’s head back to expose his pale throat. He ghosted his lips along the slender neck and felt the smaller man quake harder. “And I want my regular cape back.”
“Aww, I really thought the new one looked so good on y— okay!” Jack yipped when Bruce’s teeth found his earlobe. “Hey,” he said breathily and started to squirm. “How’s about we just skip dinner and go straight home?”

“Mm,” Bruce murmured in agreement, and with a bit of triumph. “You’ve got yourself a deal.” Reaching the alley where he had stashed the Batpod before the parade, Bruce climbed on and waited while Jack mounted up behind him. The Joker’s arms wrapped around him, and Batman smiled. Yes, they made a strange, dangerous pair. Maybe it was wrong, or maybe it was always meant to be. *Everyone has a soul mate*, he thought. *For better or worse.* Starting the engine, Bruce steered them out onto the street, making their way through the purple twilight that began to embrace Gotham City like the arms circling his waist.

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