Phobias

Summary

A series of one-shots revolving around Jonathan Crane.

Notes

Ahh. Now that you've gotten the backstory out of the way, mostly (you DID read 'All Those Things You Fear, right? 'cause that may be mentioned at points), we can get on with life. This is a collection of my general one-shots: I have others that I will begin posting on as time goes by, but this is the catch-all, evil-genius-Scarecrow lot.
Scarecrow has never been one for games. Ever. So when some teenager comes around a corner and slams into him, he is not amused. The only thing that keeps him from gassing the little punk then and there is Jonathan.

*Broad daylight! Behave!*

*Don’t get your panties in a twist, Jonny.*

“Sorry, Mister.” Oh, he doesn’t realize whose ribs he nearly re-broke? Hm. “We were just playing a game.”

“What sort of game?”

*There, see? I can behave.*

Jonathan snorts and Scarecrow wishes he could elbow himself in the ribs.

“Tag.”

“*Tag, you’re it, Scarecrow!*”

*Nevermind. Gas him.*

Oh, he will. With relish.

“Would you like to see my mask?”

Delicious fear begins to creep over the boy’s face. Scarecrow doesn’t wait for an answer, instead putting on his face and stalking towards him. If he runs, he’s not giving chase, but if he’s paralyzed by fear…

It’s his lucky day. The boy is too terrified to run. Scarecrow raises his arm and a white cloud slams into the boy’s face. Three…two…one…

The boy drops down screaming. Scarecrow would love to stay here and savor the sound, but Jonathan’s nagging at him to get out of there before his friends come running. He can’t resist one parting line, though.

“You’re it.”

THE END
Insomnia

Sleeping in Arkham isn’t easy. Across the way, you’ve got the Riddler, who can’t shut up even in his sleep. If he has to hear one more, “Four across is minotaur…” he’s going to kill him. Or commit suicide, whichever is easier.

A little ways down the block is that damned clown, who giggles all night long. All Night Long. He suspects that he does it on purpose, because he would find that sort of thing funny. It’s a nightmare if they’re in medical together.

In the cell next door is Harvey Dent, who doesn’t sleep at all. All he ever does is lie there, flipping that coin. Sometimes-usually right as he’s dropping off to sleep-the coin falls onto the floor and there’s a flurry of panic.

Jervis snores. You wouldn’t think a small man like that could make so much noise, but he does.

Between the giggles, the crossword, the snoring, and the fwap-fwap-CLATTER, he doesn’t sleep. The doctors are idiots. They accuse him of denying his ‘childhood trauma’. Yes, he has nightmares-not that he’ll ever admit it-but who needs nightmares when you have roommates like these?

“Eight down is…feline…”

Enough is enough.

He weighs a small pebble—not big enough to do damage, but big enough to sting a little—and flings it through his cell bars and into the Riddler’s. It smacks him in the eyeball and he starts up, clawing at his face.

If he can’t sleep, he can at least be entertained by Edward’s sureness that a giant spider is in the cell with him.

THE END
The old man with the grizzled beard and the wooden teeth has seen many things. He’s a native Gothamite, for crying out loud! There’s things in this city that would have driven a lesser man insane. Take the fuckin’ crocodile man. *That’s* a nasty piece of work.

His name is Harry Race, and he has fished these waters for thirty years. He has no wife or kids, but he is the much-beloved uncle of his sister’s boys. He takes pleasure in the fact that someone will miss him if anything should happen.

So far, though, he’s avoided seeing any of these flashy upstarts that rob banks and blow shit up. He considers himself lucky.

There’s a pull on his nets and he hauls them up, expecting one of the freakishly large fish that swims in the river. He’ll throw it back if it is.

It’s not.

It’s two scrawny, shivering people, their clothes clinging to their bodies. Before he can yank them aboard or throw them back, the taller one is getting to his feet and helping his companion up. They work their way out of the nets and the old man’s breath catches. Only one person has a mask like that.

The Scarecrow is standing on his boat. The fucking Scarecrow is *standing on his boat*.

“Ah.” he says, striding forward. “You are the owner of this vessel, I take it.”

Harry says nothing. The Scarecrow doesn’t seem to care.

“You will get us some blankets, and then you will go where I direct you. Do as I say, and you may survive with both your sanity and your limbs intact.”

“I-I…”

“Or will I have to do it myself?”

“I’ll do it.”

“Then do so.”

Harry goes below for a pair of garish orange shock blankets. When he returns, the sack-faced man is leaning on the railing, looking at the cold water. The woman he has with him is shivering, her arms wrapped tightly across her breasts. If this is who he thinks it is, it’s best to keep his eyes downcast. He remembers the story of the ogler, and how he ended up ripping his own tongue out.

“Here.”

The Scarecrow says nothing, simply taking the things without a word. One arm is pressed to his chest and two of his fingers are bent wrongly. Someone gave the sorry bastard a good thrashing, then. At least some people are still up for beating down these punks.

The orange seems somehow sinister with *him* wearing it. Harry will have to burn these when this is all over. If he survives, that is.
“Turn it around.”

“What?”

“Now.”

He starts up the engine and brings her about, hoping he doesn’t have to go far.

“Good. Now go straight until I tell you otherwise. If you do anything to make us look suspicious…”

He doesn’t continue. He doesn’t need to.

Silence settles over the boat. The only things Harry can hear are the engine and his own raspy breathing. He’ll be okay as long as he doesn’t deviate from his orders. God, he never thought he’d see the day! Taking orders from a kid, a kid that probably could have done with a whipping in his youth! Oh, if Momma could see him now…

“Turn left. Go slowly.”

The raspy voice frightens him and he can’t stop himself from flinching. The Scarecrow chuckles, a sound that quickly turns into a badly-muffled cough. Maybe he’ll get pneumonia and die.

“Slowly, I said.”

He slows the boat down to a poke. A moment later, the keys are yanked out of the ignition and tossed into the water. What the hell?

“Thank you for the lift.”

“My keys!”

The mask turns to look at him and Harry swears he sees it frown.

“Would you rather let me hear you scream? That can be arranged.”

“No.”

They stare at each other before there’s the *thwap* of wet blankets hitting the deck.

“Wise choice.”

They ease themselves over the side and wade to shore, disappearing in the blackness of the narrows.

THE END
It’s cold, his entire left arm is numb, and he is generally miserable. He barely remembers the hot shower he took to warm up and now he’s lying on the grimy mattress they found. He can’t see—his glasses were lost earlier tonight.

“Sit up, love. I want to look at your arm.”

She slept a bit on the boat. He somewhat remembers her sitting down and leaning against his side, the top of her head brushing against his ribcage.

“Jonathan.”

He pulls himself up, the pins-and-needles feeling fading. Kitty settles down beside him and hands him a spare set of glasses. How did she find those?

“Okay…um…I think it’s dislocated.”

Ouch. This isn’t going to be fun.

“Is it?”

“Yeah. Ready?”

“As I’ll ever be.”

He whites out for a second but stays upright. Ohh, he just wants to sleep. His arm doesn’t hurt any more, but his fingers do and he’s exhausted.


“You’re all right?”

“Not a scratch. Just a bit tired and cold. They always seem to go for you.”

“Chivalry’s not dead.” he murmurs. She frowns at him.

“Go to sleep.”

He falls back and closes his eyes.

“Night, Kitty.”

THE END
Late Night

Kitty sits on the grimy mattress and watches her hair drip onto the equally-grimy carpet below. Beside her, Jonathan is asleep, his breathing soft. Lucky.

Tonight was an absolute mess, had been from the beginning. First their client was late, then it turned out that somebody had tipped the police off to the whole thing. If she ever gets her hands on that little snitch…

Oh, never mind. He’s long gone, if he’s got any sense. For his sake, he’d better be long gone.

Jonathan groans and she glances at him, wondering if he’s waking up. He doesn’t seem to be. Probably for the best.

Idiots. They’d had to jump into the filthy, god-knows-what-lives-in-it water or be shot. Ugh. She’ll never be clean again. They nearly drowned in that current and now her hair refuses to dry. That long, hot shower probably isn’t helping the latter problem.

She napped on the boat and now she’s too awake to sleep properly. Or maybe she’s took cold to sleep properly. She can’t tell.

She fumbles for the towel and wrings her hair out a bit harsher than necessary. They have to move tomorrow, just in case that boatman remembers where he took them.

She scrunches down under the sheet—it needs a wash, but it could be worse—and closes her eyes. She will sleep tonight, god dammit.

There’s a noise and she’s up in a flash. Croc hasn’t been around recently. Or maybe it was the police? Or Batman? Just their luck it’ll be Batman. Can this night get any worse?

It’s a rat. One of the nasty sewer rats that grows to obscene sizes. She sighs and throws her towel at it. It doesn’t even flinch. She gives it the two-fingered salute and settles back down. If it comes too close, she’ll gas it.

It turns and scuttles back down the way it came. Wise choice.

“Kitty?”

“Mm.”

“Is someone here?”

“Just a rat. Go back to sleep.”

She doubts he was really awake to begin with.

“You’re sure?”

“Yes.”

He twitches one of his fingers and grimaces.

“That hurt.”
“Then don’t do it.”

“If it gets stiff, it’ll hurt more.”

Gah! Why can’t he go back to sleep? Is that too much to ask?

“Just go back to sleep, love.”

“How’d I dislocate my shoulder, anyway?”

“Ask Scarecrow. He was there at the time.”

He’s quiet for a few minutes and she guesses he’s doing exactly that.

“Apparently we gassed somebody and they got violent.”

Great. Now will he go back to sleep?

“Mm.”

“Night, Kitty.”

“Night.”

Finally!

For a minute or two she’s expecting the rat to come back, but it doesn’t. She keeps her eyes closed and hopes nothing else comes in here.

She’s still hoping when the Narrows starts to come alive for the day.

THE END
Scream With Me

Chapter Notes

This is the closest I will ever come to a self-insert. Yeah, I harbor no happy delusions here. Title from the Mudvayne song of the same name. Mudvayne always seems to trigger ideas—either angst of some kind or WHAT-THE-FUCK-IS-WRONG-WITH-ME ideas.

Gotham was just one of those towns that had a ghoulish streak. It couldn’t be helped, really—with nuts like the Joker running around, it was a defense mechanism.

A side effect of that ghoulish streak was the influx of ‘Rogues Biographies’ (all unauthorized, of course) that had been hitting the bookshelves. These ranged from erotic novels with a few half-truths sprinkled throughout, complete lies, or actual, researched biographies.

Most of the authors, unsurprisingly, met with painful demises. A few didn’t—the ones that did the researching, mostly—but people still spoke (in hushed tones, naturally) of the poor soul that had written some sort of bondage erotica starring the Riddler.

Jolene Day had read every single one of these, taken note of which authors were dead and which had moved to a safer town, and decided to write her own. And she wanted to try something new. Everybody and their mother had written something about the Joker, or Harley Quinn, or even the Penguin, but there weren’t too many things about the Scarecrow.

There was a reason for that—everybody else’s records were public. Well, the Joker’s weren’t, but nobody knew what had caused that. Writing about him was just a leap of faith and hope he approved.

But the Scarecrow…

Once, three years ago, his records had been public. Unfortunately, everybody that might have told her what was in them was either dead or insane. Funny how that kind of thing happened, really.

Nowadays those records were tucked safely away and any request for them got the standard response: “Are you fucking crazy?”

But Jolene was determined to find out, by hook or by crook.

What could possibly go wrong?

* * *

She was at home one night when the power went out. Okay, nothing to worry about. Cheap apartment, nothing to be frightened of. Perfectly normal. She’d just sit here for a few minutes and wait it out. She had candles somewhere if it didn’t come back right away.

Nothing to be scared of. Nothing at all.

Why weren’t the lights coming back on?
Oh, god, what was going on out there?

The hairs on the back of her neck prickled and she blinked. It was nothing. She was just paranoid because it was dark, that was all. She was fine. There was nothing to worry about. The lights would come back on any second…

Something long and sharp and thin brushed against her cheek.

Just a bug. Some kind of…large insect…had to be…

The object tapped her on the shoulder and this time she screamed and tightened her grip on her book, intending to hit the intruder with it.

Warm fingers grasped her wrist and bent it backwards until the book fell to the floor, its pages squashed under the heavy spine.

“Shh, shh. No reason to struggle.”

The voice was soft, belaying the bruising grip on her wrist. She tried to pull back, only wanting to free her wrist, and he yanked her over the sofa and pulled her up against him, the sharp object pressed against her neck.

She froze at once.

“Good girl.” he breathed, his voice muffled by the mask. “Now…do I have your promise that you won’t make this difficult?”

She nodded, biting her lip hard enough to make it bleed.

“Very good.”

He shoved her away from him. She fell over the back of the couch and hit her head on the coffee table.

Despite the darkness and her now-fuzzy vision, she could make him out a little. She could see his outline—tall and thin—and she could see what he’d been holding against her neck—some sort of glove with needles on it. But the mask was what really unnerved her.

It was nothing but a burlap sack with (and she only knew this from seeing pictures of him) haphazard stitches on it. But the eyes…he’d done something to give the eyes an eerie yellow glow.

He crossed the room without a sound and settled into a chair across from her, resting the needle-clad hand on the arm. The needles made a gentle clicking as they brushed together.

She didn’t want to look at him, but she didn’t want to let him out of her sight, either. Who knew what he’d do then?

“You can make yourself comfortable, dear.” he said. “I don’t want you passing out just yet.”

She blushed despite it all and pulled herself onto the couch and off the coffee table. There was a low laugh—more of a hissing noise—from the monster across from her. His head lolled to the side and now he looked like a puppet

*scarecrow*

that had been tossed aside.
“Well, well. Jolene Day, twenty-six, graduate of Gotham Community College, works at…dear me, *The Daily Gossip*. Tell me, Miss Day, does the *Gossip* have interest in me? Or have you developed a,”-he spat the word out like a piece of rotten fruit-“*crush*?”

“N-no.” she whispered. Her throat was dry and her words came out cracked. “I-I was writing a book, that’s all…”

He did not move, but she had the nasty feeling that he was looking at her, looking inside her head.

“A book?” He sounded a little more awake this time. “What about?”

“Y-your early life.”

“Stop stammering, it’s very irritating. I haven’t even done anything to you yet.”

That was the problem. If he’d just get it over with, that would be better.

“Sorry.”

“Better. See what you can do if you try?” There was that hissing laugh again. “My early life? Whatever for?”

She had no answer to that.

“I don’t know…”

Wrong answer.

Before she could prepare herself, he’d stood up, folded his fingers around the neck of her shirt, and dragged her over the coffee table.

*There are things man was not meant to know.* he rasped. *You have no right to go digging.*

She choked and risked trying to push his hand away. That only got her jerked across the room and slammed against the wall. A picture cracked and she felt the shards of glass cutting through her shirt and into her skin.

“What do you think gives you the right?”

“I’m sorry…”

He pushed her against the shattered picture, driving at least one piece of glass into her back.

“I’ve heard that one before.”

“Please…”

He let her drop in a sobbing heap and turned away from her, his hand clenching and unclenching by his side.

“Forgive me.” he said, his voice hoarse but quiet once again. “Sometimes I…lose control.”

She had nothing to say to that.

“So. You thought you’d dig up my childhood, did you?” He settled back into the armchair and let his head fall back. “What a horrible idea.”
“I’m sorry.”

“Don’t.”

She shut up. She could feel sticky blood oozing against her shirt, gluing her to the wall. There was no pain. She was too scared to feel pain.

“I could feed you one of the stories I tell my doctors.” he mused. He seemed to have forgotten how angry he was at her. “But I don’t think that would work with you.”

She said nothing.

“I don’t think it would do any harm…it isn’t as though you’ll be repeating it…”

She moved, peeling herself from the wall, and felt a stinging sensation in her lower back.

“Oh, very well.” He made himself comfortable. “Once upon a time, a child was born out of wedlock in Georgia. The mother left the child in the care of its great-grandmother, never to see it again. The great-grandmother-let’s call her Granny, for ease of storytelling-wasn’t very pleased with this turn of events.”

She didn’t want to know, she didn’t want to know, if she didn’t know he couldn’t kill her please somebody…

“Granny was a creative old dear, like most grandmothers. But most grandmothers are only moderately creative-cookies and crafts and what-have-you. Granny went above and beyond all that.”

“She whipped him and she slashed him, she rode him through the mire…”*

“Shut up, Scarecrow.”

What was that?

“Ignore him. He’s upset that he’s not allowed to strangle you.”

He? What he? Who else was here? Oh god, what was going on?

“Where was I…ah. Granny’s creativity. One of her more interesting achievements was training a flock of crows. Quite impressive, even I must admit that. Time-consuming, too.”

“Four-and-twenty blackbirds baked in a pie…”**

“Shut up!”

Who else was in here? Why weren’t the lights coming back on?

“She had a method of punishment that involved dressing the little boy in his Sunday clothes and sending him to a dilapidated chapel to think about what he’d done. Nothing particularly scarring-an improvement on the old ‘go to your room’.” He turned his head to look at her. “Are you following?”

She nodded, somehow certain that he could see her.

“Good. Now, that chapel was home to a flock of crows. And for whatever reason, those crows took a strong disliking to the little boy. Every time he went inside, they would down in a shower of feathers and caws and *stabbing beaks and grasping claws.”
She shuddered at the rasping voice.

"Those are the important bits, the ones your readers would surely enjoy." He chuckled. "Such a shame they won't ever know."

"I won't write it."

"I can't trust you." He seemed to rouse himself a bit, unfolding himself from the chair and coming towards her. "Shame, that. This has been a very therapeutic evening. We should do this again sometime."

She swallowed a sob and hid her face against her knees. Somebody…please help…

"Shh, shh. There's no reason to cry. Deep breaths, I don't want you having a panic attack."

He stood her up and she fell against him, horrified to be close like this but unable to move away.

"Quid pro quo, my dear," he murmured. "I have answered your question. Now you need to answer mine." One of the needles slipped into her jugular vein. "What are you afraid of?"

THE END

* From 'I Had a Little Pony'

** From '4&20 Blackbirds'. Obviously.
Kitty knows your ways, Jonathan. You'll learn to be careful one way or another.

CHRIST!

Broken glass. He should have gotten a towel to pick it up, but...fine. He mostly tried to grab it to prove to Kitty that he doesn't need a towel to pick up something as common as broken glass. He's cut his fingers more often that way...

Eh. It's just a little cut. It's stopped bleeding now.

There's another white shirt to the rag pile.

He'll just find a Band-Aid and continue what he was doing. She'll never know. He'll just say he burned himself or something, if she notices.

Band-Aids, Band-Aids...hm. Gauze, superglue, duct tape, needle and thread...Band-Aids!

Really?

Oh, come on!

There is one box of Band-Aids in the first aid kit. And of all the cutey designs they could have on them, it's...the Batman.

I'll use a towel from now on, I swear!

Superglue it shut.

He goes to try that, but the cap won't come off. Typical—it's glued on. Superglue really is forever, it seems.

He'll just stick it on and hope for the best. But he doesn't have to like it.

It burns! Take it off us!

That's it, no more Lord of the Rings for you.

It's hideously distracting, this yellow and blue Band-Aid. Why did they have Batman Band-Aids, anyway? Surely he hadn't put them there. Unless...

He opens the box again and spots a folded-up piece of paper amongst the white strips.

I told you to be careful around broken glass! -Kitty

She's good.

That's not fair.
He scowls and shoves the note back in the box. Batman Band-Aids…humph.

THE END
Chapter Notes

Takes place at the beginning of 'The Dark Knight'. The Batmen got off easy in this one, really-that little smirk there? Yeah, I'm betting at least one went to the mental ward after being alone with him for who-knows-how-long.

Sometimes Jonathan Crane wishes he was still employed at Arkham. He doesn’t wish for it very often, but right now he’s tired and more than a little grouchy.

“Look what your drugs did to my customers!”

*You’re buying from a man with a sack over his head and a nasty criminal history, cretin.*

“Buyer beware. I told you my compound would take you places. I never said they’d be places you wanted to go.”

The men he brought with him crack their knuckles and scowl. Is it so hard to get semi-educated help in this town? Really?

“Repeat customers!”

He shrugs and glances at his watch. The man’s dogs growl at him and he narrows his eyes. He likes dogs, but not these ones. They tore his sofa apart *and* knocked over his tea. Ill-behaved little monsters.

“If you don’t like what I have to offer, you can buy from someone else. Assuming the Batman left anyone to buy from.” Idiot. The first chance he gets, he’s gassing both him and his dogs.

*His little dogs, too? Jonny, Jonny…*

*If you quote that movie one more time, just one…*

“My dogs are hon-gray!”

Oh, he’s incapable of pronouncing ‘hungry’? Dear god…he’ll never work with mob members again.

He catches sight of something that may or may not be the Batman. Fantastic. He’s beginning to develop a sinus headache.

Gunfire rings out and he ducks behind the hired help. That’s not Batman. Batman doesn’t shoot at people. Time to leave.

Not-Batman makes the mistake of grabbing him and he sprays them in the face, allowing himself a small smirk when they go down shrieking.

*Vroom!*

Oh, yes. That’s the real Batman, make no mistake. How he got up here is, of course, another matter.
Real Batman or not, he’s not sticking around for this.

He hits something but shakes it off just as quickly. Just a few more turns…

_Fwam!_

What the…drat.

Batman has landed on his van. The van was ugly, but still. No vehicle should have to suffer a flying rodent landing on its hood.

His mask is yanked off and he is dropped with the imposters in the garage. He’ll only be here for a few minutes, but Batman doesn’t need to know that.

“I don’t need help!”

“Not my diagnosis.”

All right, maybe that wasn’t the smartest idea, but he couldn’t resist.

He sits there for ten minutes or so, listening to the complaining Not-Batmen, before the sound of a car reaches his ears. Ah. His ride is here.

“Aw, shit, it’s the cops.”

Oh, they’ll only wish it was the cops.

The black car parks in front of them and opens up.

“Hot cop.” one of them breathes. He makes a mental note to give this one an extra dose of toxin.

“O-officer…”

“Shut up, you.” Kitty Richardson gives him a peck on the cheek and takes a bobby pin to his handcuffs. “Batman?”

“Of course.”

“Typical…there.”

He stretches and puts his glasses on. Much better.

“Aw, shit.” a Not-Batman whimpers. It’s the cheeky one that has to ogle. He won’t make that mistake again.

He gasses them and walks away, listening to the horrified wails.

“Sorry I’m late, traffic was a mess.”

He takes the keys and slides into the driver’s seat, more than ready to go home and take a nice, hot shower.

THE END
The Dark

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

He isn’t sure what woke him, only that he is lying on his back with his eyes closed. For some reason—was he dreaming, is that what woke him?—he is filled with…fright. Shame he’s in no shape to enjoy it.

He is not alone. Something is kneeling by the bed, near his head. He can sense it. It isn’t breathing, or moving, but he knows it’s there. Batman? No, Batman would have woken him breaking down the door.

Scarecrow?

The straw man doesn’t answer. He tries to take a breath and finds that he can only take a little one. Oh, god. He’s got a collapsed lung, the thing by his head did something…

“Jonathan.”

He should look and see what it is. He’d gas it, but it’s between him and his nightstand and he has no intention of putting his hand out of bed.

“Jonathan Crane, look at me.”

He knows that voice.

No. He won’t look at her. She’s dead, this is a bad dream. Any minute Kitty will wake him.

“Jonathan!”

Against his will, his head turns and his eyes open. At first, even the blackness is fuzzy. Then he blinks and sees her face, inches from his own.

She’s rotting. Her hair has clumps gone and what little skin remains is beginning to peel off. She doesn’t have eyes any more—those chilling blue eyes that he inherited are pecked out, with bloody sockets to show where they were.

He squeezes his eyes shut but can’t turn his head away from her. He can’t breathe he can’t breathe god Jesus somebody please…

He feels a long, sharp talon—her fingernail? a crow?—scrape from his forehead to his lips. This is no nightmare. She’s finally come back, like he knew she would.

“Jonathan.” She sounds just as he remembers her, harsh and unforgiving and heartless. Her hand comes to rest on his chest and presses downwards, making him wheeze. “Look at me, Jonathan Crane.”

Somebody…please…

He opens his eyes again, hoping against hope that facing her will make her disappear. She’s out of his line of vision now, mostly—all he can see of her is the top of her head. Her skull is shining through amongst the bloodstained hair clumps.
He tries to open his mouth to speak but can’t get the oxygen to do it. She knows—God help him, she knows everything!—and he hears a rough cackle from the floor.

“Stupid boy.”

No, please…

Then there’s blinding light and someone-Kitty, it’s just Kitty, with her soft hands and mercifully short nails—is shaking him.

“Jonathan. Jonathan, wake up, you’re having a nightmare.”

Like hell. He’s had nightmares, and that wasn’t one.

He can breathe! Shuddering, feeling like he nearly drowned, he pulls himself up and out of bed. She’s here, she’s still here somewhere…

“Jonathan?”

He doesn’t answer her.

Under the bed? That’s a logical place. But the only under there is a herd of dust bunnies. Maybe the closet…no. Nothing there at all. The door’s closed, and there’s nowhere else to hide…there’s no loose floorboards in here?

No. Not even a creaky one.

He falls back on the bed, breathing hard, still feeling that claw running down his face. That was no nightmare. He can tell the difference.

“Jonathan?”

He squeezes her, feeling his heart pounding against his ribs. She was here, he saw her…

“What’s wrong, love?”

“Granny was here.”

“That’s not possible.”

He shakes his head. With Granny, anything is possible.

“Saw her. Felt her.”

She tries to pull back—probably to check him for fever—and he tightens his grip. Not now.

“Please.”

“You’re safe, love, you’re all right. She wasn’t here. She’s dead.”

She may be dead, but she was here.

“Kitty…”

“You probably had an episode of sleep paralysis.”

No. He’s had that before, too, and it wasn’t like this.
He lets her pull back and feel his forehead. Her hand is cold.

“Just a bad dream.” she says firmly. “I am going to get you a glass of water. You are going to get into some fresh pyjamas and then get back in bed. You are all right, I promise.”

He doesn’t want her to leave. What if Granny comes back? What if she’s in the hall, waiting?

“Kitty, please…”

“Shh. Two minutes, love. You’re all right. Deep breaths.”

She disappears into the dark hallway and he sits up to dig out a fresh shirt and pants. Maybe she’s right…Granny is dead, after all, he checked…

He’s just pulling his shirt off when he spots something outside on the sill. He can’t see much, because of the rain, but it looks like a human…Batman?

He blinks and it’s gone, just as Kitty comes back with a glass of water.

“Feeling better?”

No, not at all, but he forces a smile anyway.

“Yes.”

“That’s good. Come on, back in bed.”

He forgoes the shirt and settles under the blankets after downing the glass. Maybe Kitty’s right. Just a dream. Just a bad dream.

“Sweet dreams, love.” She kisses his forehead and settles down with her arms around his ribs. Safe. He’s safe and Granny’s not here.

He clicks off the light and closes his eyes, determined not to open them again until morning.

God dammit it…there’s something under his lower back. This mattress is falling apart, it’s probably part of the spring.

He rummages around until his fingers close around something sharp and pointy. Hm. Feels like he can pull it out. Maybe it’s something else in the mattress?

He draws it out and fumbles for his reading light. What is this…oh, dear god.

Held in his trembling fingers is a long, black crow feather.

THE END

Chapter End Notes

AN: Supernatural? Unhappy coincidence? Up to you. Jonathan’s ‘sleep paralysis’ episode is based on my own experiences. Most unpleasant, I assure you. Pleasant
dreams.
Nighttime

Chapter Notes

Directly related to 'The Dark'.

He can’t sleep. He hasn’t slept for several nights, and Kitty’s beginning to notice. But there’s nothing he can do.

Maybe he’s crazy, maybe he’s sleep-deprived, or maybe she did come back from the dead. He doesn’t know and he doesn’t care. All he knows is that he does not want to sleep by the edge of the bed. Or, for that matter, sleep at all.

He’s lying here, in the dark, listening to Gotham’s nightlife on the street below. He really is tired… was that the door opening?

No. No, the door is closed. Good.

There’s several inches between him and the edge of the bed. If she really is over there, maybe she can’t reach him.

There’s a horrid fluttering noise outside and he flinches. Bats. Just bats, Gotham is infested with them.

Kitty moves a bit and he tries to slow his breathing. She’s not awake anyway. Thank goodness for that.

He risks a quick look over, just to make sure she isn’t there. She isn’t. Nothing is there but dust particles.

He lets his eyes wander up, up, and onto the resting place of his mask. That thing really is creepy, now that he thinks about it. That is the point, but…

What was that?

Did something move in the corner?

He blinks and tries to focus. No, nothing, but he could have sworn…never mind.

God, he could do with a glass of water. He forgot to grab one before coming in here and his tongue feels like sand. He’ll just go downstairs and get one. With the lights on.

He puts his glasses on, feels his way out into the hall and goes downstairs. Ahh. Light. Safety.

He chugs the water-blegh, Gotham’s tap water is awful— and refills the glass to take back with him. He’s just turned off the tap when the lights go off.

“Kitty?” She isn’t the type to play tricks on him. Not like this, anyway. “Not now, Kitty, I’m tired.”

She doesn’t answer. Maybe the bulb blew. He flicks the switch and the light comes back on. Faulty wiring, then. How odd.
“If someone’s in here, I poison first and ask questions later.” Or, more accurately, never. Hopefully they won’t know he’s bluffing… “I mean it, Batman. Grow up.”

No flying rodents hit him in the chest or anything. Yes. Faulty wires. He flicks off the light and starts back up, wishing he had eyes in the back of his head.

This apartment building reminds him of Keeney Manor. Maybe that’s why he can’t sleep. If he’s unsuccessful tonight, he’ll ask Kitty about moving.

It feels like someone’s behind him. He turns, though, and there is no one there. He’ll be glad to be back in bed…

Something touches his shoulder and he turns sharply, scanning the blackness for any sign of an intruder. There is no one there.

“Hello?” He knows there’s someone there, he felt them. “Who is it?”

There’s a thumping-dragging sound from the end of the hallway and he feels the blood drain from his face. He knows that sound. Granny made it when she walked—she’d broken her foot when he was a boy and it had never healed straight, necessitating the use of that horrid wooden cane.

“This isn’t funny.” Why won’t his voice stop shaking? “Whoever it is, knock it off. Now.”

The thumping-dragging sound happens again and he backs up. It’s just rats or a homeless person downstairs or

“Jonathan?”

JESUS FUCKING…

“Kitty.”

“Are you all right, love?”

Didn’t she hear it?

“Fine.”

“Sleepwalking?”

She didn’t hear it?

“I…”

“Come on. Back to bed.”

She takes his sleeve and tugs him back into their room and tucks him into bed—well away from the edge.

“Thought I heard something.”

“Batman?”

“Could have been.”

She shuts the door and slips under the covers with him.
“Something outside. Sweet dreams, Jonathan.”

He shudders and keeps his eyes shut. After about an hour, he’s just drifting off when he hears The Noise again, this time right outside the door.

He doesn’t sleep after that.

THE END
He sits on the bed, staring at the rain, and remembers another time, in another world, when he did the same thing. It was different then—he was usually locked in, waiting for her to make up her mind—forgiveness or birds?

Even now he can hear her coming down the hall—the heavy **thump** of her cane, followed by the soft **shwosh** of her left foot, the one she’d broken chasing him through the cornfield one night.

The door opens and he turns, half-expecting to see her standing there to tell him her decision. She isn’t there—of course she isn’t, her bones are still in a rotting chapel hundreds of miles away.

“Jonathan?”

He can hear her voice, raspy and cold, like a witch from a fairy tale. Maybe she was a witch.

“Are you all right?”

But she never said those words to him, not that he can remember.

“Yes.”

“You look off, love.”

Something moves in the shadows behind her—a long black skirt, maybe?

“It’s nothing.”

She shuts the door and comes over, the clack-clack of her heels oddly reassuring. **She** never worse them, not after she fell. Maybe never before that, either.

“You haven’t been sleeping well.”

“No.”

“Is something worrying you?”

He’s never believed in ghosts, but he always knew he’d never get away from her.

“No.”

“You know you can talk to me, right?”

He knows that, but how is he supposed to bring **this** up?

“Yes.”
She hugs him, pulls back, and begins to undress. He drops back onto the bed and watches her start on her shirt buttons.

*She* would be less than pleased to know what he’s doing. Why she would have cared for his spiritual well-being is beyond him.

“Eyes on my face.” He jumps and she grins. “Only joking, love. Close the blinds though, will you?”

He reaches up to grab the cord. When he looks again, she’s pulling a loose t-shirt over her head.

“*You’ll go to Hell, boy, mark my words!*”

He blinks and shakes his head. No, no, she’s not here, she can’t hurt him anymore.

“You okay?”

“Yes.”

“Bad dreams?”

“A little.”

“Is it her?”

How does she do that?

“Yes. Sometimes.” *Every night, she’s here, she’s come back for me.*

She sits next to him and makes him look at her.

“You tell her, if she comes back, that she had better march herself back where she came from or she’ll be answering to me.”

He appreciates the sentiment, but the fact remains that she isn’t all that…well…impressive.

“Um…”

“I mean it! I have a baseball bat and I’m not afraid to use it!”

He raises an eyebrow and wonders *why*.

“Mm-hm.”

“Don’t make me prove it.”

“Oh, I believe you.”

He believes she’ll use it. He doesn’t believe it’ll do any good.

“Good. Try to get some sleep, Jonathan, you’ll hurt yourself one of these days.”

Then the lights are off and her arms are around his neck. Once upon a time that would be enough to make him feel safe, but not tonight.

He can hear breathing in the corner of the room. He knows it’s coming from there—it’s the one place the bedside lamp won’t quite reach.
You're not here, you're not here.

He hates that noise, that soft, death rattle-y noise. He remembers finding her asleep in her armchair once, and she made that noise. He’d run upstairs and hidden under the covers after that.

It stops eventually and he drapes his arm across Kitty’s waist. There’s nothing here, he knows there isn’t. There can’t be.

Kitty murmurs something and moves a bit. Yes, he’ll be all right. Logically, he knows that.

But logic doesn’t help him sleep.

THE END
Hopeless

Chapter Notes

Yep, continuation of the last one. But you knew that already, didn't you?

God, he’s exhausted. Between his sleepless nights and busy days, he’s nearly dead on his feet. But sleep is a dangerous thing these days.

“Jonathan?”

“Mm.”

“How is that comfortable?”

It’s not. She’s short and they’re both skinny, but he’s tired and she’s warm.

“I don’t know.” He readjusts himself a little and rests his head on top of hers. Sleepy…

“I worry about you sometimes, love.” Mm-hm. “You’re going to hurt yourself if you don’t get a full nights’ sleep.” No, he won’t. “Maybe you should take a nap.”

He shrugs and closes his eyes. He’ll just stay right here, thank you very much…hey!

“Come on. Off to bed with you.”

No. No, no, he doesn’t want to go upstairs!

“But…Kitty…”

“Now. And you are not sleeping in that shirt.”

What’s wrong with the shirt? It’s a nice, normal, button-up shirt like all the other ones in his closet.

“Why not?”

“Because you always complain if you fall asleep in it by mistake.” So? That’s by mistake. He won’t be sleeping anyway… “Come on, take it off.”

No. And she can’t make him.

“No.”

“Why not.”

“Because.”

“We can do this the easy way or the hard way.”

Pfft. What’s she going to do, jump on him?

Scratch that—yes. She will. She’s done it before. Damn.
He sighs and shrugs his jacket off.

“That’s better. Try to sleep, okay? I don’t really fancy you dropping a vial and collapsing into a fear-induced coma for a week.”

That only happened once, and it wasn’t a week, it was two days. Accidents will happen, after all.

“I won’t.”

“Good.”

She waits for him to get out of his shirt before leaving the room and shutting the door behind her. If he leaves the room now, she’ll drag him back in. He’s stuck here for at least an hour. Joy.

He falls onto the bed, not even bothering with the blinds. The more light there is in this little wooden room, the better.

God, it’s bright in here. He rolls over, grudgingly grateful that there aren’t any buttons pressing into his ribs.

Maybe he’ll just close his eyes for a few minutes…just a few minutes. What harm can that do?

* * *

“Jonathan. Jonathan! Wake up.”

He feels his entire body twitch. Where is he, what’s happening…right. Apartment complex. Nap. God, never again.

He gives himself a minute to try and relax, fails miserably, and tries to sit up. He meets with no resistance.

“Jonathan?” Oh, boy. Here they go. “Are you feeling all right?”

“No.” Water, water…ah. Water. It’s cold in here. Why is it cold in here?

“What’s wrong?”

How can he phrase this, exactly? ‘Oh, nothing much, just that my dead grandmother has come back to haunt me.’

Yes. That’ll go over so well.

“Jonathan?”

“I don’t know.” He settles back under the covers. It’s freezing in here! “Just insomnia. Forget I said anything.”

She looks at him for a long moment. He wishes she wouldn’t. She used to look at him like that, when she was debating what to do with him.

“All right, love.” But she never called him that. “You know you can talk to me, right?”

She’s going to drop it? Really, truly, drop it? She’s never done that before!

Who is this and what have they done with Kitty?
“Yes.”

“Good. Go take a shower and maybe go back to bed, all right? Maybe you’re coming down with something.”

Yes, like death.

He shakes his head and burrows further under the covers. He’s somewhat safe under the covers.

“Come on. Out.”

“No.”

She pulls on his blankets and he squeezes them. He is not getting up, and that’s final.

“Out.”

“Never!” She pulls harder and he feels himself slide towards the edge of the bed. “Kitty!”

“Shower.”

Fine. But he doesn’t have to like it.

* * *

Two hours later, now rather sleepy from his shower, he’s curled up on the ratty sofa. They forwent dinner in favour of Dairy Queen, but that’s over and now his mouth is cold.

“Kitty?”

“Yeah?”

He could tell her right now. She might believe him, his sleep-deprived mind suggests.

“Never mind.”

“I am going to grab a shower.” she says. “Be right back.”

He watches her leave before settling back under the blanket. It’s warm down here now, the blanket is soft—it used to be fluffy, but that’s a long time ago now—and he really could fall asleep.

He’s drifting off when the light goes out. Faulty wiring…it has to be…he’ll just get up and flick the switch down and then go on up to bed.

He gets the switch and is nearly out of the room when the light goes back on, just for a second, and then back off.

“I didn’t see that.” He swallows hard and starts upstairs. They really should move—faulty wiring leads to fires, and fires are bad.

* * *

Midnight. It’s raining, as per usual. Kitty fell asleep a while ago, pressed up against his back with her hands locked in front of his stomach. He’s still awake, trying very hard to keep his eyes closed.

The rain picks up and there’s a flash behind his eyelids that says there’s lightning now. Great. Maybe the Batman will be struck down mid-swoop. That would be funny.
He stretches a bit and wishes he could just go to sleep already. Maybe if he looks and reassures himself that there is nothing in that corner, he’ll be successful.

The God of Fear, scared to look into the darkness! If this ever gets out, he’ll have no choice but to go on a killing spree. He’s never liked killing sprees—too messy, too Joker-esque.

Okay. He’ll look. There’s nothing there, and he’ll prove it to himself.

Three…two…one…

He looks, just as a flash of lightning hits the room. He has never been so wrong.

She’s there, standing in the corner with her can held primly in front of her. She isn’t doing anything, she’s just…staring at him.

She’s not real. She can’t be real, she’s dead, he made sure of that…

So why is she standing in the corner, watching him?

Everything around him seems to disappear and for a long moment he’s a little boy again in trouble for something.

She’s not real. She’s a hallucination. I’m overtired and overworked and maybe I inhaled a little too much toxin this afternoon.

Lightning flashes again and it seems to him that she’s moved. A few more flashes and she’s standing beside him, laying one birdlike hand on his head.

God help me.

He can’t move, not that it will help him anyway. He has the sinking feeling that his toxins will not affect her, and Kitty’s baseball bat is on her side of the bed.

“Jonathan.”

What does she want, after all these years? Was she sent to drag him down with her? Is that even possible?

“Jonathan.”

He tries to take a breath and finds that he can’t. Then he tries to move—something, anything, even a finger—and can’t do that, either.

The hand on his head moves and for a minute he thinks she’s gone, but then it’s on his throat, squeezing, squeezing, squeezing…

Then she’s gone. Just…gone…and he’s coughing, struggling to catch his breath.

He was right, all those years ago. She’d never let him leave.

THE END
Confession

Chapter Notes

Yup, still going. Almost done with this arc, though.

He lets his breath out in a long, slow *whoosh* before he opens his eyes. They’ve been lying on the couch for the past hour or so. He doesn’t want to go to bed.

“I wish you’d tell me what’s wrong, love.”

“Nothing’s wrong.”

“You’re a terrible liar.”

He shrugs and closes his eyes again. Maybe he is a terrible liar. That doesn’t mean he’s going to tell her the truth.

“It’s nothing. Just a bout of insomnia.”

“A bout of sleep paralysis, more like.”

“Mm.”

He can hear her walking up there, up and down, up and down, just waiting for him to come within grabbing range. He can hear fluttering up there, too, and sometimes he can hear her voice calling his name.

He misses Scarecrow, as strange as that sounds. Scarecrow would protect him. But Scarecrow has been gone ever since this all started.

“Maybe you should take something to help you sleep.”

NO. No, he is not taking anything that will make it easier for her to get him.

“I’m fine.”

She sighs and ruffles his hair before getting up. Where is she going? Why is she getting up?

“Kitty?”

“All I’m going to get in pyjamas, okay? Relax.”

How can she not hear the noises upstairs? He knows she’s up there, just waiting…watching…

But she won’t believe him. He can do nothing but watch her go and hope she comes back down.

He shivers and gets up to get a cup of tea. He won’t be going upstairs tonight, he decides. He’ll tell Kitty he has to work or…something. Anything to avoid going up there. Not that it really matters…

The kettle’s just going off when the noises stop. That is either very good or very bad.
“Kitty?” he calls. She doesn’t answer. “Kitty, are you all right?”

The silence is starting to get to him. Why won’t she answer?

“Kitty!”

“Yes, what is it?”

He jumps and spins around, one hand pressed to his chest. She’s standing behind him, giving him a very strange look indeed. He slumps back against the counter.

“Jonathan?”

He opens his mouth, intending to reassure her that nothing’s wrong. He’ll just say he heard a noise and thought she’d walked into the doorknob again. What actually comes out is, “I think I’m going crazy.”

She doesn’t say anything. She just looks at him and he can see her running through her mental checklist-fever, injuries, lab accident-and coming up blank.

“What’s going on, love?”

He can’t get out of it now, no matter how much he’d like to.

“Either I’m going crazy or she isn’t dead.”

“Your grandmother?”

Right on cue, the wind picks up outside. When did his life turn into a gothic novel?

“Yes.”

“Jonathan…”

“I mean it. I told you she’d never let me leave, and now…”

“Shh.” He reaches for his mug and wraps his icy fingers around it. “She’s dead, I promise. You checked, remember?”

Vaguely. He remembers finding a skull, but who’s to say it was her skull? And what does it matter? He knows what he’s been seeing at night, in the shadows…

“But…”

“Come on.”

“Where are we going?”

“The couch.” Good. “You’re going to tell me everything that’s going on.” Not good.

“Kitty…”

“It’s for your own good.”

Maybe. But he doesn’t think so.

* * *
“Sounds to me like you’re having a bout of sleep paralysis.”

He shakes his head and burrows further under the blanket. Sleep paralysis is a nighttime thing, and this is happening all the time. Besides, he’s had sleep paralysis before. It was nothing like this.

“I mean it. It just isn’t possible for her to be here.” Since when did Granny ever care about possibility? “You’re overtired, that’s all.”

He shrugs. It doesn’t matter now. He’s comfortable right here, and here he will stay until morning.

“Come on, love. Up you get.”

What? No! He’s comfortable! Doesn’t she want him to sleep? Earlier she was telling him to take something, for heaven’s sake!

“No.”

“Yes. You’ll get a crick and so will I.”

Humph. He’ll just go down to the lab, then…hey! Where is she taking him?

“Kitty?”

“Come on. Bedtime.”

No. No, no, no. He’s not going up there, no matter what she says.

“Kitty, please…”

She sighs and turns to look at him. Something’s not right about her eyes.

“Come on, Jonathan.”

“No.”

Her grip on his wrist tightens and he tries to pull back. Her nails were never this long before…

“I said come on!”

“Granny, please…”

She was always strong for a crippled old woman. Death hasn’t changed her much.

“I didn’t…”

“I could have left you outside to die, and I didn’t! And this is the thanks I get?” One wizened old hand gestures towards her bloody eye sockets.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t…please…”

She shoves him into the room and slams the door.

“You can rot here, for all I care. Like me.”

He can hear her cackling outside, but that’s far less interesting than what his room has become.

It’s a rotting, circular room with a dirt floor and a heavy wooden cross where the window was. And
sitting in the rafters are his old friends, the crows.

He just has time to curl into a ball before they come spiraling down on him.

THE END
Jonathan listens to the raspy breathing in the far corner and tries to concentrate on the feeling of Kitty’s arms around his stomach.

She didn’t believe him—of course she didn’t, he sometimes doesn’t believe himself!—but he’ll prove it. Tonight, when she comes over, he’ll grab her. He killed her once, he’ll do it again. With relish.

The breathing stops and he wonders if she’s gone, if some higher power has intervened and made her go away. Then he hears it again, on the floor by his bed. Okay. He’ll just reach down there and…

His fingers are not moving. He’s fairly certain that he is willing his fingers to move. Why aren’t they moving? Oh, god, he can’t move at all!

1. says Kitty’s voice in his head. Breathe.

He can’t breathe, he can’t do anything but lie here and listen to her breathe!

Concentrate on your breathing.

Okay. Maybe she’s right. It worked when he’d been disemboweled—god that had hurt—maybe it’ll work now.

Okay. Now try to lift your finger. JUST your finger.

His breathing is a little too fast and shallow for his liking, and for a minute he doesn’t think he can move anything, but then he feels his finger twitch.

Open your eyes and move your finger.

Why is Kitty’s voice giving him instructions for breaking out of sleep paralysis? Never mind—it’s working, and if he keeps it up he can grab the lurking thing by his bed.

He can see the top of her head, strangely foggy in the blackness, and he can still hear her down there. It sounds like she’s laughing.

He can move! Before she can go away, he reaches down and grips her bony wrist and pulls her up, intending to drag her downstairs. He never gets the chance.

She twists her own wrist around and shrieks, an unearthly noise that sounds like every nightmare he’s ever had in his life. His vision blurs and he feels her pull her wrist out of his hand and grip his neck.

No, please…

Then there’s nothing at all.

* * *

“Jonathan. Jonathan, love, wake up.”
Kitty?

Really, honest-to-god, not-Granny-in-disguise Kitty?

He tries to sit up and finds himself on the bed again. Huh? How’d he get up here?

“Kitty?”

“Hey.” She ruffles his hair and helps him sit up. “How are you feeling?”

Feeling? What happened, what’s she talking about?

“Huh?”

“I think I know what was going on with you.” So he did tell her? “One of your aerosol cans was damaged.” Oh, boy. “You were probably getting a pretty steady stream of the stuff every time you went down there.”

Toxin? The past few days have been…toxin?

Oh, come on!

“Really?”

“I think so. Makes sense, doesn’t it?”

Yes. And now that he knows what a small, steady supply will do, he has a new experiment to put together.

He goes to get up and she pushes him back.

“Hey!”

“No work for a few days, all right? For your own good.”

“But…”

“It’s for your own good.” she says firmly. “I mean it. I am going to bring you some oatmeal, and you will eat it.”

“Thanks, Kitty.”

“Sure, love.” She leaves and he settles back against the pillows, watching a weak ray of sunlight come in through the blinds. Toxin. Everything was just…not real. Thank god for that.

His shirt is sticking to his collarbone and he pulls it off and throws it onto the steadily-growing pile of clothes in the corner. He’s just about to drop back when he sees it.

A black feather on the floor.

THE END
AN: It’s really done now, I promise. As for that feather…there’s plenty of ways it could have gotten in there. You decide.
Southern Gothic

Chapter Notes

AN: Written while listening to Midnight Syndicate’s The 13th Hour. I guess growing up in a Halloween shop will mess with you a little…I must be honest, this is one of my favourites. :)

The old house has stood there, empty, for at least fifteen years. Apparently it was decaying for longer than that, but finally the boy that lived there had left-gone off to college or some such nonsense-and let it fall to rack and ruin.

These days, it’s rumoured to be haunted. They say an old woman with a heavy cane wanders the halls and that late at night, you can hear a child crying. It’s become a game to see how close you can get to the front porch.

Nobody has ever gone inside.

Until now.

Jessica Hart, sixteen year-old daughter of Ryan and Isabella Hart, stands on the front porch, her hand resting on the door handle. She snuck out after a fight with her parents.

She’s been here many times, but never inside. She’s only ever been out in the rotting cornfield. There’s an old chapel out there, but she’s never been inside. Crows nest there and she doesn’t want to make them mad.

But now…she can’t go home, but the rain has started to fall. Besides, it’s just an old house. Dusty and dirty, no doubt, but there’s no such things as ghosts. It’s probably locked, though…

There’s a rumble of thunder and she twists the knob. It catches for a second before giving and the old wooden door swings open for the first time in too long.

The hall is dusty. There’s an old rug on the floor that might have been red at one time. Now it’s grey with dust and there are holes all over it.

Old portraits of people long since dead line the walls, their unblinking gazes making her feel very uneasy. Why would anyone leave a place like this? Yeah, the pictures are creepy, but they could be taken down.

A gust of wind slams the door and the hallway is plunged into darkness. She makes her way further inside, into a sitting room with wide windows. The windows are cracked.

The room is circular, with plush couches and armchairs sprinkled throughout. There’s an empty wine glass and an old, old bible on a table by a loveseat. God…it looks like whoever lived here just left.

He had left, hadn’t he? He hadn’t been murdered or something? Although that would be sort of tragically romantic…a young lord, cut down in the prime of his life…maybe he haunts the house.

She goes back into the hall and up the stairs. So far, she hasn’t seen anything. No ghosts, no dead
mice, no nothing. There isn’t even a moth in here. It really does feel like someone was just here.

Most of the doors are closed, but a few are open. One leads to what must have been a nursery, and another leads to a small, barren room that looks out at the cornfield. She can see the rotting cross that once held a scarecrow from here.

The final open door leads to a plush bedroom. The bed is neatly made and the drapes are tucked aside like someone had opened them to let in the light. Outside, the rain begins to fall.

There’s an old photograph lying face down on the dresser of an old woman and a young boy with bright blue eyes. The woman looks relaxed, carefree. The boy…does not.

There’s a noise in the hall—footsteps—and she sets the picture down and goes out to look. There’s no one there.

She’s about to go back into the room when a voice says, “Good afternoon, child.”

She spins around, her sneakers upsetting the rug. Not five feet from her is a tall, thin man with cold blue eyes.

“Well, well, what have we here?” A small smile flickers over his face but doesn’t meet his eyes. “A trespasser.”

Hey! He isn’t supposed to be here, either, so there.

“This house has been empty for years.” she says, her voice only a little shaky. “What are you doing in here, looting it?” She points to the book in his hands.

He smiles again, a proper one this time, and shakes his head very slowly.

“I’ve only come back to collect what’s mine.”

His?

The boy, the boy who left and never come back…what was his name?

“I-I…”

“You, on the other hand, are not supposed to be here. I suppose it’s my own fault for leaving the door unlocked, but I hadn’t expected the nosey townsfolk to come in.” The smile turns bitter. “Some things never change.”

There’d been something about him…they said he was insane…but…

“Why are you here, child?” he continues, beginning to close the little distance between them. “What possessed you to come inside? Curiosity? Vandalism? A mixture of the two?”

“I-it was raining, and I…”

“I don’t believe that to be a very good excuse, do you?” His eyes…something’s wrong with his eyes. “No matter. I know how to deal with little brats like you.”

She runs, runs down the stairs and tries not to hear him whistling Three Blind Mice.

Where to go, where to go…this way?
It’s only when she sees the plush chairs and the old bible that she realizes that she’s gone the wrong way. He’s down the stairs now, though, and she knows he knows she didn’t leave.

She dives behind a couch and holds her breath, trying not to sneeze and hoping to God that he doesn’t come in here.

“You can’t hide from me, child.” he says from the doorway. “I grew up in this house, and there is nowhere to hide.”

She squeezes her eyes shut, trying not to cry and hoping that he’ll go away.

Her wish is granted. One long, torturous minute later he leaves, whistling Ring Around the Roses.

She waits another minute to make sure he’s left before creeping out from behind the couch and running towards the front door. She flings it open, her hands slick with sweat, and rushes down the front steps.

He’s waiting for her, still smiling that cold, polite smile.

“Leaving so soon?”

She screams and dashes around the house, into the cornfield. He follows her, his pace as relaxed as if he was taking a Sunday stroll.

The field has been dead for a long time, but the stalks are still tall and she crashes into them, clawing them blindly out of her path and trying not to stab an eye out.

There! The old chapel, the one that the crows nest in. She’ll hide in there.

The wooden door sticks and won’t budge and for one horrible minute she thinks she’s trapped but then

FWOOM!

She’s inside.

The ceiling has fallen in and the remains of a wooden cross lie on the floor. She eases the door closed and looks around. There are no crows here right now—come to think of it, she hasn’t seen any all afternoon—and she breathes a sigh of relief.

She slumps against the wall, breathing hard, and feels something under her butt. Ow! What is that?

She rummages around and feels her fingers hit something hard and smooth. She draws it out and promptly flings it away from her with a small cry.

That was a human femur.

There is a body in here with her.

She hears him whistling outside and shrinks against the wall and tries not to breathe or think about the…gulp…the bones.

London Bridge stops abruptly and she dares breathe a sigh of relief. He’s leaving. He’s going back to the house, maybe, or out to search the field.

There’s a low, steady, creak as the door opens and a ray of dim sunlight splashes across the floor.
“Oh, there you are!” He sounds rather surprised. “I must say, this has to be a first-someone looking for shelter in this place.” He closes the door and leans against it, looking at her. He sees the bone and chuckles softly. “You’ve met Granny, I see.”

“G-Granny?”

He nods.

“My dear great-grandmother. Very pious. Very insane. Very dead, obviously.” His features twist into a look of utter hatred for a moment before going back to that playfully neutral expression. “I put her here one night. Threw her in and let the crows tear her apart. Do you know what it’s like to be attacked by birds?”

She shakes her head, feeling a few tears slide down her face.

“No.” she whispers. “I’m sorry, I don’t know.”

“It’s not very pleasant. They scratch and they rip and they tear into you with those sharp beaks and long talons. And all you can see is a wall of black feathers.” He points to one such feather on the floor. “And their caws…let me tell you, you don’t want them to be angry with you.”

“I-I…”

“No, not a pleasant way to go, is it?”

“No.”

He pushes himself off the doors and stands in front of her. She should kick out, like her mother always tells her she should, but she can’t. She’s too scared to even breathe. All she can do is sit here and shake like her biology teacher’s Chihuahuas.

“Oh, you are afraid.” He sounds delighted. “Very good. You should be.”

She turns her head away from him and hopes that this will turn out to be a bad dream.

His hands-surprisingly warm-brush against her throat before suddenly moving to her head and twisting.

She will never be found.

THE END
I don't write the Joker very often. This might be why. I'll let your imaginations decide if the song is...erm...accurate. I don't really want to know, thanks.

"JON-NY BOY!"
The door flew open. He looked up and promptly wished he hadn't.

"What do you want, Joker."

"To show you the new surprise I got for Batsy."

Harley squeaked. That never boded well.

"I'm busy. Come back later."

"I'm already he-ere."

"Regardless."

Unsurprisingly, the Joker paid no nevermind.

"Harley!"

She'd brought a tape deck. Why had she brought a tape deck?

She set it down, turned it on...and AC/DC's 'Big Balls' blared forth. No. No. Not today. Not ever, if he had a say.

"Get out of my lab!"

The Joker bared yellow teeth, put his hands in his pockets, and spread his arms, taking his coat with them.

He got about two seconds' worth of a look before squeezing his eyes shut, but those two seconds were more than enough.

The Joker, somehow, had gotten hold of a thong with the Bat-signal on it.

He would never be able to unsee this.

Never.

THE END
Revenge

Chapter Notes

The unfortunate Bolton is from the cartoon. I never liked him.

He was happy to wait. He'd always been patient. He had to be, waiting for hours in that crumbling chapel, knowing that the slightest move would bring Hell and damnation down upon his head.

They'd brought him back, locked him up with the very inmates he'd tormented. They'd quietly drawn straws—well, pieces of plastic fork, really—to see who got him first. He'd technically drawn the longest, but with Harley in the cell next door...he could almost feel bad for him. Almost.

He'd a while to think about this, about how it would go. They wouldn't let them in the same room together—had some ideas of him 'talking the patient to death'. To be fair, they weren't unfounded. He'd done it before, twice. That had been an interesting mental exercise...

But no. It was time to go back to basics. He'd been wearing his needle glove when they brought him in this time. It was so much fun, that needle glove. The mere sight of it set his victims to quaking. (Granted, Kitty thought it was a little over-the-top, but...)

The lights go out. It's showtime.

The Riddler had hacked the system and set it to shut down at midnight, right before the guard's coffee break. Since the Joker wasn't in at the moment, they could rely on Batman being busy this evening. (That damned clown, maybe tonight would be his last laugh!)

He slipped out of his cell, taking care to be quiet. He'd just take a shortcut to the lockers...turn left, left, right...ah. Here they were. And there was his faithful glove, just the way he'd left it. They'd even been too scared to empty it! He couldn't blame them. There'd been an accident the first time they tried—he could hear the screaming for hours Lovely, lovely shrieks, they'd been. All about angels. How interesting. But he wasn't interested in a lowly guard, not tonight. He had plans for tonight, thank you very much.

Once he'd gotten out of the itchy jumpsuit, he strolled back down the hall, grateful for the darkness. Funny thing, darkness. One could never pinpoint a sound's origin in the dark.

"Sing a song of sixpence, a pocket full of rye..." Was that a whimper from the cell at the end? Surely not, not from big, bad, Lyle Bolton! "Four-and-twenty blackbirds, baked in a pie." Oh, it was a whimper! How marvelous. "When the pie was opened, the birds began to sing..." And here was the door handle. He slid it open and locked it behind him, listening to the faint sounds of the ruckus behind him. "No one is going to help you, Mr. Bolton. There's no one to hear you scream."

Well, maybe not no one. He was here, wasn't he? And he did so love the sound of screams.

It was very sudden—a quick lunge from the darkness, a small prick, and a flood of toxin entered the idiot's arm. He got out of the cell before Bolton could grab him, but he stayed there, by the glass, watching. And waiting. He could practically taste the hopeless terror.

The screams began—short, sharp shrieks of earsplitting terror. He grinned behind his mask and leaned
against the window, drinking it all in.

When no words came, he turned away and disappeared down the corridor. The guards would be coming soon and he wanted to go home and take a real shower.

"Wasn't that a pretty dish to set before the king?"

THE END
I have never, and will never, go to a high school reunion. I think they're only fun if you liked the people you went to school with. AND I DIDN'T.

Alexander Smith doesn't recognize Scarecrow...Jonathan Crane at first. He wasn't expecting him to show up, and the guy has honestly changed. Gone are the taped glasses and nervous posture, the hand-me-down clothes and the constant bruises. (He feels a little guilty for some of those, not that he'll admit it.)

He wouldn't have recognized him at all if it weren't for those creepy blue eyes and Kitty Richardson. She hasn't changed all that much-still short, still skinny, still with Crane.

Lucky bastard.

He bustles his way through the crowd, wondering why they came in the first place, and pops up front of them.

"Glad you could make it!" He sort of means it. "How's life been treating you?"

"Alexander." He ignores Smith's outstretched hand. "How are you."

"Oh, fine, fine." He forces a laugh and reaches around them to get a cup of punch. Ugh. There's not enough sugar in it. He should have known not to ask Sherry to make it. "How are you? You're looking...well."

_Now that you're away from us._ he adds silently, feeling another little twinge of guilt. He brushes it off-kids are naturally mean little shits. They outgrow it. That's life.

"Fine, thank you."

What's sure to be an awkward silence is interrupted by Bo and Sherry Griggs. They married right out of high school-unplanned pregnancy. No one was that surprised.

"Scarecrow!" Griggs laughs and claps Crane on the shoulder. "Surprised the name still fits you, after all these years!"

Crane's smile is tight, forced.

"Yes." He glances at Sherry. "How are you?"

"Fine. Three kids at home and another on the way."

"Ah."

Griggs gets a cup of punch, downs it, and makes a face.

"Sher, this is terrible."
"Sorry." she whispers. She spends half her life apologizing these days.

"So, Scary, what brings you back to little ol' Arlen? Last I heard, you were in Gotham."

"Call it a fit of nostalgia." Crane's voice is quiet. "Thought I'd come back to see what became of everyone."

It's hot in here. Maybe renting the gym was a mistake. He takes another swig of the bitter punch.

"I must say, I'm not surprised." Too hot, much too hot. "You, with your trembling hands...alcoholic. And you," he continues, turning to Smith. "Your wife left you after...three affairs? Things haven't changed much since the high school dating scene, have they?"

No, they haven't. He's still the annoying little prick he always was.

Griggs goes to take a swing at him and he steps back, grinning.

"I wouldn't do that."

His voice is changing. What the hell?

"Don't blame Sherry for the punch, by the way." Dear god, what's wrong with his face? It's..."You'll forgive me, I hope, for showing you what I do for a living." It's a goddamn scarecrow.

"Whatever is the matter?" The scarecrow's head cocks to the side. "You look as though you've seen a ghost."

"S-S-Scarecrow..."

"But of course." It laughs. "You really should read something besides the Bible, Alexander. You might have noticed my name in the newspaper."

The walls are melting and the scarecrow is beginning to walk around the room, its scratchy voice growing louder.

"How is everyone this evening?" It laughs. "I must say, I haven't missed you much."

At least one woman is crying. Smith squeezes his eyes shut and sinks to the ground in the fetal position.

"Hello, Mr. Griggs." The voice is a few feet to his left. "My, my, how the tables have turned. You remember, I hope, how I pleaded with you not to hurt me anymore?" There's a low whimper. "What was that? Stop?" The laugh is cold. "Why should I?" There's the unmistakable flick-flick of a lighter. "You never stopped for me."

There's nothing but silence for a second, then he hears it-flame beginning to devour fabric. And he remembers.

"The book or you, Scarecrow?"

"Hold 'im down!"

As one, the room begins to scream.

THE END
Nomophobia, the fear of being out of mobile phone contact. Yes, really.

It started out as a run-of-the-mill experiment. Tie the unfortunate lab rat to the chair, take his initial vital signs (keeping in mind that he were already frightened, of course), and pick one: injection, or inhalation?

Today was injection. It may have taken a little longer to start working-only a minute or two-but it always produced such a strong reaction.

Normally, of course, the Scarecrow would have been drinking in the shrieks while Jonathan made little notes about what the subject was seeing, taking his vitals again, et. cetera.

But not today.

Today, they had run across a much-mocked, surely-not-real fear.

Nomophobia.

The fear of being out of mobile phone contact.

"Give it back!"

Really?

People disgust me.

This is hilarious and pathetic.

Mostly pathetic.

"I need it! What if my mom calls?"

Both sides gave into the need to facepalm.

I can't study this.

His screams are annoying.

A conclusion was reached. They'd found a dud.

Kill him.

Fine.

Scarecrow dug out a scalpel and yanked the lab rat's head back. One quick SLICE! and a spatter of blood later, the screams were silenced.
We did him a favor. We cured his fear.

Indeed.

Jonathan cleaned his scalpel, put it back, and made a few more notes before heading towards the stairs. He’d get the men to clean this up—what was he paying them for, after all?

Nomophobia, indeed. Humph.

THE END
Jingle Bells

Chapter Notes

For your amusement (or, more likely, your confusion), this bad poem.

Speeding through the streets/fleeing from the Bat/o'er the potholes we go/screaming whose idea was that!

Pedestrians all shriek/making Batman mad/oh dear god this is not fun/hey, is that a Santa hat?

Jingle bells/Batman smells/Robin laid an egg/the Batmobile lost a wheel/and the Joker got away!

THE END
Skating

Chapter Notes

Happy Holiday Season (read: happy pie season). May your relatives not suck as mine do and may you not be snowed in with no internet. Written entirely because I had the mental image of Crane in a Grinch beanie. He didn't find that funny.

"Come on, it's not hard once you get moving!"
"Kitty-hey!"

She yanks him onto the ice, gloved fingers tight on his wrists. He'd like to pull back, but his balance is precarious enough and he'd like even less to fall and die.

"Why."
"Because it's fun."

It's windy and cold and she insisted on 'disguises', which means she shoved a Grinch beanie on his head.

In a nutshell, this is ridiculous and not fun.

"Kitty..."

She moves back, dragging him along with her.

"Oh, come on, love, it won't kill you."
Yes it will.

"No."

She lets him go and he wobbles frantically before latching onto the wall. She laughs at that and whirls away from him, scarf slipping off her head to lay around her neck.

"Come on!"

"Are you insane?"

"Supposedly..." She comes back and pries his hands off the wall. "Come on, trust me."

"It's cold."

"Of course it's cold, it's ice." She tows him towards the center at a faster rate than he'd prefer. "At least there's no one in the way."

Want Black Friday* all to yourself? Need to get somewhere in a hurry? Doctor Crane's Fear Toxin
to the rescue!
"At least they've stopped screaming."
"You weren't enjoying it?"
"I have a headache."
"You're a lousy liar."

Before he can grab her, she releases him and speeds away, effectively abandoning him in the middle of the ice.

"Kitty!"
"Come and get me!"
"Are you trying to kill me?"
"Don't be so dramatic." She coasts around him. "Come on, it's not hard**."
"Yes it is!"

She laughs at him and moves back, arms spread out.
"Come and get me!" s he mocks. "If you can."

Is she crazy? If he moves, he'll fall and die.

If there's such things as ghosts, he's coming back to haunt her for this.

"Kitty..."

She laughs, but then her face goes blank.

"Um, Jonathan?"

"What."

"About that new batch of toxin..."

"Yes?"

"Is it fatal?"

"Usually."

She coasts towards him, takes his hand, and turns him around.

Standing on the edge of the ice is Batman. He does not look at all cheerful and Jonathan's fairly certain he won't take 'they were annoying' as an excuse for poisoning civi lians.

"Why isn't he coming out?"

He'll probably break the ice. Or he can't skate, but seeing as he-somehow-can form antidotes with amazing regularity, Jonathan doubts that he can't skate. The man is the most prepared being on the planet.
We're so screwed.

"What now?"

The path of least pain involves going over there like naughty children and being thrown into the back of the tank. The path of broken ribs and concussions involves staying right here and -WAUGH!

They fall, landing hard, and begin sliding across the ice thanks to the cables around their ankles. He knew it. He knew ice skating was a terrible idea.

He hates the outdoors.

THE END

*Gotham does not do Black Friday. Too much of a risk.

**Must be nice to be you, Kitty. I can't skate. Then again, my balance is poor. (Unless I'm climbing on the counter or on a ladder, then I'm a ninja.)
For those who have not played, GO AND GOOGLE 'Arkham Asylum Scarecrow'. That said, it did not look spectacularly warm...as Nolanverse Crane is about to find out.

"I like it!"

"You look ridiculous."

"You haven't even looked!"

"I saw the prototype, which looked ridiculous."

"It did not!"

"Yes it did. Now go put a shirt on. You won't look particularly frightening when you have goosebumps."

"I will not get goosebumps."

Kitty snorted. Ever since they'd gotten that silly game, he'd been barricaded in the lab with a bunch of burlap and needles. For heaven's sake! She'd admit that the needle glove was rather frightening, but running around in nothing but tattered pants and a gas mask was just asking for trouble. Besides, he was a wimp in the cold.

"You look very silly." she told him. "Now go on, take that thing off."

"Aw, come on, Kitty."

"Now, Scarecrow."

"No, and you can't make me!"

And her mother said she didn't have children! Scarecrow was worse than the average four year-old!

"Don't make me get up."

"But it's scary! They'll run in fear at the sight of me!"

"No, they'll realise that you're fragile and rush you. I can count your ribs, you know."

"I am Scarecrow! People fear me!"

"Go stand on the porch for a few minutes, then we'll talk."

He left, grumbling about being nagged. Too bad. Master of Fear, indeed...more like Master of Vanity.

Three…two…one…
"It's cold!"

"I told you so."

"Why didn't you tell me it was going to be cold?"

She rolled her eyes and wished he'd shut up.

"Strip and get into something warmer."

"Warmer?"

"Sweater. Now."

"But, but…"

"March!"

He left again, this time grumbling about women and their hormones. Humph. She was not going to be cold just because he wanted to get warmed up.

Honestly. What kind of moron thought it was a good idea to run around in a gas mask and half-dead pants? Really? Whose idea had that been, anyway?

"Whose idea was that, anyway?"

"S-Scarecrow's." Ah, the nasty Gotham winter had set in.

"That doesn't surprise me."

"C-cold."

"I told you so."

"Keeping the glove."

Well, she couldn't win everything.

THE END
Granny used to tell him that they'd hoped for a stillborn, and that his grandmother had been all for burying him in the compost heap. He isn't sure how much of that was true and how much of that was her insanity. He suspects most of it probably was true.

His classmates never wanted much to do with him—from the time he was a little boy they kept their distance. It was only later that they learned how fun he was to play with. Fun for them, anyway.

He has a vague memory of his first-grade teacher giving him a hug when he came in one recess, but he's not sure of its reality. In any case, that teacher moved halfway through the school year. Shame, that. She might have noticed his suicidal period in freshman year. Or perhaps not.

He still has nightmares about the things Granny used to tell him when he was a little boy, things designed to cut any fire out of him. 'Your mother never even held you, Jonathan. She didn't even want to look at you.'

"Jonathan?"

He blinks and wonders how he's been standing out here.

"Mm?"

"It's late and it's cold. Come in before you catch pneumonia."

"It doesn't work like…"

"In. Now."

Well. He can't argue with that.

Seventeen years of isolation have taken their toll, there's no doubt about that. The past fifteen years, though, have balanced out some of the damage.

"Jonathan." He hasn't moved. Whoops. "Come in, it's cold and it's late."

A small hand yanks his sleeve and he finally turns away from the little patio. It really is cold out here. Why didn't he notice that earlier?

He's heard the 'come in, it's late' line before, from other people, but they usually weren't concerned about his well-being. They usually just wanted him to come in and shut up already. Or, in the case of Granny, get cleaned up before he could bleed on her furniture.

"God, you're an icicle." He finds himself being squeezed. Once upon a time he'd have jumped out of his skin at that. Before, he was only squeezed to make him hold still for something painful. "You really need to dress for the weather."

"Mm."

She tugs him over to the couch and plasters up against his side. He sighs and leans back against the slightly-scratchy cushions. Those days are behind him now.

"Thanks, Kitty."
"For what?"

That's a good question. There's no way to word the answer.

"I don't know."

"You are a strange one, love." She says it fondly and he finds that he's still not immune to her nickname for him.

"I suppose."

"Devil's spawn! I should have agreed to have you buried out there!"

He shakes his head. She's dead now, she can't hurt him anymore. There's no reason to be afraid of her.

"Yeah, his ma's a whore and his dad ran off."

There's no reason to be afraid of them, either. If they're not dead, they're still stuck in that miserable, dying town where they belong.

"They won't miss me...maybe I can scar a few of them for life if they find me."

There is a reason to be afraid of himself. For all of Granny’s punishments and his peers' games, he came the closest to taking his own life. The scar on his wrist is still visible despite its age.

Kitty jumps and tightens her arms around his ribs. That's right, she hasn't seen this yet. She doesn't know all of the little jump scares sprinkled throughout. This could be interesting.

"Scared yet?"

She nods. He represses a grin and makes himself comfortable, the ghostly voices from his past fading away into nothingness. Those days are over now.

THE END
It was inevitable. PROTIP: just send them with the empty box. It'll make life easier for everyone.

He supposed it had to happen sometime, but that didn't mean he had to like it. And why were there so…many? Honestly, what was the difference between these things?

Jonathan Crane stood in the women's health section of the store at a complete loss. He was surrounded by twitching, whimpering victims—he'd forgotten his wallet and been forced to resort to robbery.

Really? What idiot insisted on making a thousand different types? They were cardboard and cotton. How many types were really necessary?

There was an annoying jingling noise and he made to put his mask back on. It was only Joker, who looked a little the worse for wear.

"Jonny-baby! What brings you here at this time of night?"

Jonathan raised an eyebrow and gestured to the Aisle of Confusion.

"Guess."

"You too, huh?"

"Yes."

Joker joined him in staring at the brightly-colored boxes. Jonathan was slightly gratified to see that the clown looked just as confused as he was.

"I'm surprised you're bothering."

"She won't shut up." Joker grumbled. "Why are there so many of these things?"

Jonathan shrugged. After a minute, he went up to the front and came back with a large bag. He was not going to stand here all night wondering.

"Not bad."

There. One of everything plus chocolate ice cream and tea.

He was halfway down the block when there was a KA-BOOM! Joker must not have wanted anyone to know about this errand. He couldn't blame him.

"Kitty?"

"Hi, love."
She looked awful, but at least she wasn't homicidal anymore. That was good.

"I wasn't sure...so...um...here." He dropped the bag at her feet and stepped out of grabbing range. Usually once the murderous urges were gone, she turned into a crier. He didn't want to be cried on right now. Or at all, really.

"Ta." She dragged the bag into their room and shut the door. Jonathan let out a breath he didn't realize he'd been holding.

If he never had to make that errand again, it would be too soon.

THE END
A lot of these are like...four years old now, give or take, so forgive me any early-installment weirdness.

He could do this! He drank the stuff every morning—or else—how hard could it possibly be?

Tea he could make, no problem. Kitty had made sure of that. 'I want to have a sick day that I don't have to make my own.' she'd said. 'God knows I've made it for you enough times.'

Coffee, on the other hand…neither of them had seen any reason for him to be near the machine. He injured kitchen devices. Their first microwave, for instance, had somehow caught fire when he tried making ramen in it. After that, he was allowed near the kettle and one burner—the front left—and that was it. Everything else, he was banned from.

But now Kitty had broken ribs—the Batman's fault, as usual—and was forbidden to do much movement. Doctor's orders.

More like doctor's pleas, eh, Jonny?

It was more effective than pointing and intoning.

Coffee…

I'm working on it! God!

Scarecrow made a groaning noise and Jonathan sighed. Okay. Water first. Than coffee grounds. A spoonful should do it. Really, how much could it possibly take?

It took three attempts before he was satisfied with what came out. And look at that, nothing was on fire!

Now what? He knew she took sugar in it—two spoons. Problem was, her definition of 'spoon' was not the same as his. To hell with it. He would just take the sugar bowl with him and she could put her own sugar in.

"Kitty?" He nudged the door open. Maybe she'd gone back to sleep.

"Hullo, love."

"Coffee?"

Her eyes lit up and she put a hand out, but promptly drew it back.

"You didn't drug it, did you?"

God! Drug a drink one little time and never hear the end of it!

"No."
"Promise?"

"Yes."

"Thanks, love."

He was right. Her spoonfuls were rather large. Ick.

"Not bad."

"It took a few tries." he admitted. That got a laugh out of her.

"Not bad, love."

"How are your ribs?"

"They hurt." she acknowledged. "I'll be fine."

"You're sure?"

"Yeah." He would believe her when her breathing wasn't so shallow. "Sit down."

"Kitty, I…"

She set the cup down, leaned over, and placed a kiss on his nose.

"I'll be fine. I promise. Don't fuss."

Well, maybe he'd believe her now.

"All right."

Well, he didn't really need to be down there for another hour or so. Maybe he'd settle back down and enjoy his coffee this morning, instead of just gulping it.

You just don't trust her not to get up.

No.

Something was off about this coffee…oh, no.

"Kitty."

"Yes?"

"I think I made decaf by mistake."

THE END
Rubber chickens are serious business.

Harley Quinn was the only person that could get away with calling the Joker "puddin'". Unfortunately, such privileges came with drawbacks. Namely, the frequent break-up-make-ups.

Jonathan Crane didn't care if they were breaking up, making out, or killing each other. He just wanted the girl to shut up.

"I-it was just a rubbah chicken!" she was wailing. "But it was the cheap kind and the head fell off!"

What a shame. Now would she go home?

"I didn't mean to make him mad!"

Of course not. But she was driving Jonathan crazy.

"Of course not, sweetie." Kitty soothed. "It'll work itself out in the end."

Who cared if it did?

"What if it does-ent?"

She was making his head hurt.

Kitty rubbed that spot between his shoulder blades and he sighed. He had been enjoying his night in until she showed up, barreling in and making all that noise. Scarecrow had been all for gassing her, but with their luck Joker would take it as an insult.

"It'll turn out fine," Kitty said again. "Doesn't it always?"


"H-he was really mad this time!"

As he had been last time. And the time before that. And probably every other time.

"Everyone has arguments."

"Even you and the professah?"

"Sometimes."

Honestly, he couldn't remember the last really bad argument. Little spats about what to do with the subjects didn't count.

"Really?"
Ah, that was the Real World sinking in—that she wasn't the only one with relationship problems.

"Mm-hm."

"But I've never seen you argue!"

Because they had the sense to keep it to themselves. What a novel concept.

"We do, I promise."

"Is she kiddin', professah?"

Damn. She'd remembered that he was there.

"No, she's not."

That shut her up for several minutes. Then…

"I'm goin' home now. Thanks!"

And she was gone.

THE END
Domesticity

She gathers up the mugs and carries them to the other room. She'll scrub them out tomorrow, maybe, if they're still here tomorrow.

She gets the coffee ready for tomorrow—surely they'll be here long enough for that, or else—and gets the kitchen light. It feels like she's forgetting something...maybe it's the other lights.

She gets them, too, leaving the hallway and the bedroom. No, it's not the lights. Let's see...lights are off, mugs in the sink, coffee's semi-prepared...doors! Like they'll do anything against Batman, but they have traps set up for that.

She locks the door, hesitating a minute to watch the rain. It makes the streets look a little cleaner. Well, for Gotham, anyway.

Doors, mug, lights, coffee...oh. There's just one more thing.

She goes downstairs and pushes the laboratory door open. Jonathan Crane is asleep at his desk—she knew he would be—one hand dangerously close to pushing a vial off the edge. She moves it out of reach and goes over to his current subject. The woman is lying unconscious on the ground, her hands bound behind her back. Her gag has fallen off—or been pulled down, more likely—and she tucks it back into place. Once she's satisfied, she grabs the woman's ankles and pulls her into the makeshift cell in the corner. Better safe than sorry, after all.

There. All secure. Now she can go to bed. She's tempted to just fetch a blanket and let him sleep down here, but he'll wake up with a crick and besides, she hates sleeping by herself. What can she say? She's never liked to share him, even with a desk.

"Jonathan? Wake up, love."

He's not awake, not really, but at least she can guide him upstairs and into bed. Well, somewhat—the second she lets go of him he drops down and refuses to move.

"Jon-a-than." she grumbles. "Wake up, you're not sleeping in these." For heaven's sake... "Fine. But don't you dare complain, it's your own fault."

Why does she always have to do everything?

"Ki-Kitty?"

"Mm." Is it really necessary for him to wear the button-ups all the time? What's wrong with a t-shirt?

"What are you doing?"

"What does it look like?"

"Not now."

"Yes, now." Where did he get this? He didn't have it yesterday. If she has to tell him to be careful around broken glass one more time... "Wait...no. I'm just getting you into pyjamas."

"Oh."

He makes no move to take over. Whatever.
It takes longer than she would have liked to strip him and get him into pyjamas, but that's because he's being uncooperative.

When she comes back from washing her face, he's still semi-awake. She wishes he'd make up his mind.

"Go to sleep, love."

"Trying."

She shoves him over a bit-like it matters, she's going to sleep on him anyway-and settles under the covers.

"Sweet dreams, then."

"Lights off?"

"Mm-hm."

"Coffee?"

"Mm-hm."

"Door locked?"

"Mm-hm."

She clicks off the light and he shuts up. Well, for a few minutes. Then…

"Oh, god, there's a subject…"

"I got her. Go to sleep."

Surely that's not wonder in his voice when he says, "You got her?"

"Yes. Go to sleep."

"Oh."

Goose. She shakes her head and settles down. Bedtime. At last.

THE END
Eyes

Chapter Notes

I'll be honest here-I spent a good part of Batman Begins going, 'ohh, pretty!'

She thinks it might have been his eyes that first caught her attention. It must have been-if she hadn't asked for the problem number, she wouldn't have paid him much mind. He'd been tucked up in the back of the class, apparently trying to disappear into the wall. But she had to ask him, and he'd given her that sharp look.

If she was going to be honest, his eyes were creepy. They had no business being that blue, none at all. She'd vowed then and there to leave the boy with the scary eyes alone. He was probably going to be a serial killer or something.

Shame he had to offer to rescue her, though, because then things spiraled out of control.

Falcone doesn't like to admit it to himself, but he doesn't like the director. He looks fragile enough-a regular stick of a man-but something about him is just off. Maybe it's those eyes. If this goes wrong, he's having those gouged out.

He isn't at all surprised when one of his boys comes back with stories of Arkham nights, of a Scarecrow that sets even the most hardened inmates to shrieking. He knew there was something wrong! And now he can get whatever he wants out of the little man with the scary eyes.

It doesn't occur to him that maybe he shouldn't bring it up while he's in a padded room with no bodyguards.

Rachel Dawes has never been more tempted to engage in childish behavior. Doctor Crane is, without a doubt, the most annoying man she has ever had to deal with. Ever.

She's willing to admit that he creeps her out. It always feels like he's probing around inside her head. Maybe he is. Those eyes just aren't natural, not at all.

She tries very hard not to show it, but she's relieved when he finally disappears from view. If she can get him put away, she'll be thrilled. And she'll sleep better at night, knowing that he can't see inside her head anymore.

If they didn't get him things, he would have worn contacts. Unfortunately, they'd gotten him more than a few things. In college, he could usually get a discount if the clerk was female. (Although a few males had done the same.) Later, in Arkham, he'd successfully convinced the night nurses that he was just working late, and that he had nothing to do with the rash of terrified patients. Nope, nothing at all. Hell, he'd even managed to convince the prison worker that Falcone was insane, despite the lack of screaming until he went in.

But oh, they made his life miserable at other times. He was lucky Kitty wasn't a jealous woman.
THE END
I really, really tried to make this all nice and sappy. As someone who hates sap writing about someone else who hates sap, that didn't go so well. Sorry. Wait…no, I'm not. If you want sap, write it yourself.

Jonathan Crane really doesn't like kissing. First off, it's a good way to get sick. Second off, it serves no purpose whatsoever, especially in public. Third-and most important-he has never been able to get used to the idea of a foreign tongue in his mouth. Ugh. What is the attraction?

He supposes his dislike stems-mostly-from lack of experience. He's kissed two people in his life, one drunk girl and Kitty. And the drunk girl didn't give him much choice.

She'd been a classmate of his that lived in the same apartment building. She'd come up one night to ask if they had any alcohol. They did, but he didn't want to share it. She was drunk enough. When he said no, she sort of…lurched at him and tried to bite his face off. Even Scarecrow had threatened to throw up a little.

Kitty's the exception to the rule. She never gives him much choice, either, but she usually gives him some sort of warning. Sometimes, anyway. Occasionally.

Yeah, not so much. Like now. One minute he was dozing off on the sofa, and the next minute he was wondering what to do with his hands and unable to ask.

"Hi."

Um. Right. Say something.

"Hello."

"How was your nap?"

Nap? She'd just…but, but…really?

He will never understand females.

"Fine."

"Will you do something for me?"

"Anything," he breathes.

"Run out and get me half a dozen eggs, I want to start supper."

Reason four he doesn't care much for kissing: it's usually used as leverage. That's just not fair.

Although…if she can do it to him, who's to say it doesn't work both ways?

THE END
I don't see why this is necessary. They already stalk me. Why should I make it easier for them? You owe me at least one favour—you tell them.

What? Fine. But one day you will wake up to a tall figure looming over you. And before you get excited, that tall figure will be carrying a large knife.

You fanfiction writers will be the death of me one day, I swear. Well, some of you have been already. What is that? Are you all death fetishists? Actually, don't answer that. I don't want to know.

I do!

Shut up, Scarecrow. I am the narrator. You can't be trusted.

I have a request. A small one. You should be happy to honour it, since you all apparently love me so much. God knows why, I go out of my way to be unloveable.

It's the face. Or the eyes. Or the backstory.

Shut up, Scarecrow!

PLEASE. Stop writing about me. Stop flinging me into nonsensical situations, or pairing me up with that damned clown, or...anything, really. It's bad enough that I'm at the mercy of my own creators, but to deal with you lot...it's too much!

That felt good.

Please think it over. I beg of you. There, you see what you've done? You've got me to beg. Are you happy now?

Hopefully we won't have this discussion again. Good bye.

THE END
He considered himself lucky. The Scarecrow was a difficult bastard to track down, and it was even more difficult to get an audience with the guy. Admittedly, he wasn’t exactly for hire, but maybe with enough money…

"What do you want."

The masked man was sitting very straight and very still. He was reminded of his cat when she saw a mouse. He didn't like being the mouse.

"I want to buy something from you. Your drugs."

"No."

"I have the money."

"I don't sell my services to any idiot that waltzes in here with a stack of counterfeit hundreds." There was a smirk in the man's voice. "The only thing I offer is a taste of them."

"No! No. Please. It's my boss…"

"Are you deaf, or just mentally incompetent?" Hey! "I don't sell my services. No, no, don't get up. We haven’t finished our chat."

He didn't care. He had to get out of here, had to get out of here…

"I said, don’t get up."

The masked man stood and stepped in front of the door.

"We still have things to discuss. Namely, your potential as a test subject."

"Wha-…no!"

Then the screaming began.

THE END
Check-Up

Chapter Notes

Related to 'Revenge'. Somewhat. Lyle Bolton is still employed at Arkham at this time.

Out. Safe. For the time being, anyway.

They undress in silence by the light of a single, flickering lamp. Never mind the bruises, never mind the fact that their ribs are far too visible, even for fresh out of Arkham. Never mind everything.

They'll have to go back eventually-ring around the roses, isn't that how it goes?-but not tonight. God, hopefully it won't be tonight.

"Let me look you over."

Five little words that shouldn't have to be said right now. But that's their lot in life, for better or for worse. Although this is a bit more than they're used to.

They sit on the bed-they need a new one, big surprise-and he pulls the shade off the lamp.

She could be worse. Bruises, yes, and a couple of cuts on her face, but nothing life-threatening. He's more worried about her emaciated appearance, but there isn't much that he can say about that.

He makes her tilt her head back to get a look at the bruises around her neck. They're fading, but they'll be there for another week or two at least.

His turn. Her fingers ghost over the bruises on his stomach. He's fine-sore and hungry, but fine. He really could do with a Big Mac, of all things, but he doesn't want to go back to Arkham tonight. It can wait.

Her fingers have left his stomach and moved instead to his face, smoothing a few strands of hair away from his eyes. Her fingers are warm against his skin.

"You're warm."

"So are you."

It's likely a common cold-they're in no shape to fight it off. They'll probably be worse off tomorrow, once the adrenaline wears off. Maybe they should risk a McDonald's run, before they're too sick to move.

No. Not tonight. Tomorrow morning, when they serve orange juice.

He replaces the shade and falls back on the mattress. The light stays on tonight-they've spent too much time in solitary, in the dark, to turn it off.

"Something has to be done." Her voice is hoarse. "The man's a menace."

That strikes him as hilarious, but laughing hurts and it makes him cough.
"Oh, the irony." He closes his eyes, relishing the comforting glow of the lamp. "The guard is worse than the inmates."

She takes his hand and leans up to kiss him. He should pull back—he is contagious, after all—but she's sick too and it doesn't really matter.

"Night, love."

"Night."

The light stays on. Outside, police sirens speed down Fourth. It begins to rain.

He sleeps the sleep of the dead tonight.

THE END
The Boogeyman

"Jonathan, what are…Jonathan?"

"Down here."

"Why are you under the bed."

He backed out, dust bunnies clinging to his hair. He looked ridiculous.

"My mask has disappeared."

"Why would it be under the bed?"

He shrugged.

"All sorts of things are under there. I found an old notebook."

"I don't want to know."

Oh, god, she didn't like the look on his face. Not one bit.

* * *

He'd found his mask, in the end-in his lab, where it belonged-and shut himself in there for the rest of the day. She'd tried to go in, once, and found the door locked. Fine. She'd just enjoy his share of the ice cream.

He should lock himself in there more often!

She was getting ready for bed when it struck her that he was probably asleep at his desk again. She tried the door, failed, and shrugged. Fine. He could get a crick. It would serve him right. How did he think he got upstairs, anyway? By sleepwalking?

"Night, Jonathan."

"Mm."

She got the coffee ready, checked the door, and went upstairs to bed. She sprawled out on the bed, feeling guilty for enjoying all the extra room. Light was off, coffee was ready, door was locked… ahh. Bed.

She was just drifting off when she became aware of the fact that the window was open. Why the hell was the window open? God! Now she had to get up, and close it, and get back to bed without hurting herself.

She was just getting out of bed when she spotted it. A small, brown mass in the middle of the floor.

Roach!

Well, she wasn't getting up now. She was just going to lay here and stare at it, lest it move. Ohh, she hated the Narrows!

It wasn't moving. Maybe it was dead. Or dying-the stupid things took ages to die. Maybe she could
squish it…no. What if it wasn't dying? Then it would rush her and maybe be on her!

Had it moved? Oh, god, it wasn't dying!

She became aware that the low whining noise was coming from her. That had to stop.

Okay. She was just going to get up and go downstairs. Just downstairs. She wouldn't even go near it.

She had both feet on the floor when it darted towards her. She shrieked and tried to clamber back on the bed when something shot out and grabbed her ankle.

"Motherfucker!" Wait. "Jonathan Crane, come out of there!" It had stopped moving—probably frightened by the commotion. Good.

He let go of her and she scrambled back and huddled against the wall, watching the brown blob.

"Scared?"

"Kill it!"

"What, this?" He picked it up and held it out to her. Ohgodohgodohgod…wait. Was that a rubber roach? And fishing line? Oh, she was going to kill him!

"You asshole!" Why wouldn't he stop laughing? "One of these days, god help me…"

"I couldn't help it, Kitty, I'm sorry."

"You are not!"

"No." She reached for her pillow and got up. "What are you doing?"

"Killing you," she seethed.

"Don't do anything you'll regret…"

"I'm not." She was gratified to see him back away and reach for the doorknob. "Hold still!"

He flung the rubber roach at her and ran for it. Oh, hell no!

"Get back here!"

"Have some work to do, sorry!"

"Get back here and let me kill you!"

Why did he have to have long legs? Why?

He barricaded himself in his lab before she could catch him—dammit! Well, she'd just get comfy. He had to come out sometime, didn't he?

THE END
They're tired, feverish, and starving. Nevermind walking scarecrows-they look like walking skeletons.

Hence the McDonald's. Yes, it's vile. Yes, it always makes them sick. But they serve drinkable orange juice.

They can't draw attention to themselves, not yet. They'll have to do this the legal way.

Damn.

"Welcome to McDonald's."

"Two egg McMuffins, four hash browns, and two orange juices. To go."

The apathetic clerk doesn't notice the bloodstained quarter. Probably for the best. They may be paying for this, but they got the money from some poor sap that they found in the alley next door. For once, they didn't do it-he was dead when they found him.

"Thanks."

Once they're safe in their little hidey-hole, he falls back on the bed, his throat feeling like nails have been driven through it. Orange juice. Food.

"How are you feeling?"

Ugh, she sounds like death. Probably feels like it, if her pale face is any indication.

"Not very good." He looks at her. The bruises on her throat seem darker now. "You?"

"Terrible."

He forces down a bite of the McGreasy and rubs the bridge of his nose. He can feel the fever coursing through his body and he just wants to go back to sleep.

The food doesn't last long and soon enough they're back in bed, shivering and hacking and generally miserable.

"Blegh."

"It was necessary."

He sighs and closes his eyes.

"We can't go back to Arkham."
"I know." She snuggles up against his side. "Worry about it later, all right? We're tired and sick."

He nods and rests his head against the top of hers. Sleepy.

He yawns and feels her take his hand. He'll sleep again, and maybe later they'll go out and find more food. Food and maybe some cold medicine.

He comes to with dry lips and a raging headache. She's still asleep next to him, clinging to his hand. He fumbles for his now-warm, watered-down orange juice and downs it. Blegh. It doesn't help anything and he closes his eyes again, exhausted and feverish.

"Jonathan?"

Not asleep, then. She sounds as bad as he feels.

"Kitty." She moves and sits up a bit. He looks at her. She's blurry. "How are you feeling?"

She shakes her head.

"You?"

"Mm."

He coughs and wishes she'd lie back down. It doesn't really matter now, though—he's fully awake.

She settles back down and he closes his eyes again. He needs a drink. And maybe something else to eat... is there any Chinese nearby? Let's see... they're on Fourth... factoring in illness and malnutrition, they can maybe make it... yes.

"How does Panda Express sound?"

"Do they have Sprite?"

He doesn't remember.

"Maybe."

"Good enough. Come on."

Oh, oww. He's gotten stiff since this morning. Never mind—Panda. Orange Chicken.

They're on the television. The pictures are awful. The pictures are always awful.

"Now what?"

"I don't know."

He takes a long drink of his soda and turns the TV off. They can't stay here for too much longer, not when everyone's still looking for them. There's another lair, across town, that might be safe. Tomorrow. They're safe here for another night. Besides, he's tired again. Making his way all the way over there is too much work.

"It's inevitable."
"Mm?"

"Going back." She sounds more than a little 'out of it'. "Isn't that it always goes? The Bat kicks down the door and drags us back with broken ribs?"

"Not this time." Soda. "Not until he's been dealt with."

"When will that be?"

"I don't know."

His eyes ache. He needs a shower, a really hot one. Does this one still work? Only one way to find out.

Eh, it only sort of works. It could be hotter. And the water pressure is horrible. And there's a black patch of something in the upper right-hand corner. And the shower mat is gone.

Whaa.

Bed. It feels grimy now that he's clean, but it's still soft and warm.

He really should consider finding more food, but he's tired. He doesn't want to get dressed again, either. It took too much work to put on sweats, thank you very much.

At some point-minutes, hours?-the shower goes on again. Too much noise. Head hurts.

She's right-their return is inevitable. Whether he likes it or not, they'll end up back in there very soon. And Bolton will not be happy to see them.

They could leave Gotham, he supposes. He doesn't know how far they'd get, or what they'd do, but...no. It really isn't an option, is it.

"Jonathan?"

"Yes?"

"Will you come see what this is?"

That doesn't bode well.

All the same, he gets up and shuffles into the bathroom to see what's going on.

"You rang, Madam?"

"I think it's a bruise. Between my shoulder blades?"

He looks. Ouch. Looks like a door hinge.

"Yes."

"Lovely." She pulls on a tank top-when did she get that? He likes that-and promptly starts to cough. "You look terrible."

"So do you."

He makes his way back to bed and nestles under the blankets.
Bed time. Maybe he'll feel better when he wakes up in the morning.

THE END
Title and idea come from a song called 'Hiding'. I kind of hate it, because it's sappy and I normally don't do sappy. BUT it came on and I was just like, "KITTY AND JONATHAN NEED TO HAVE THIS SONG."

I'm sorry in advance.

He never broke a promise to her before. Not once.

But he did tonight. He didn't come back.

It was supposed to be a fairly routine pick-up. But the police were tipped off-or got lucky, she doesn't know which-and the warehouse went up like a flour mill. The news said that three people were presumed dead-Police Sergeant Alex Bell, civilian (their contact, actually) Charles Klinger, and the Scarecrow.

Somebody got footage of the explosion, and they've been playing it on and off for the past half-hour. She finally ended up muting the stupid thing, but she can't turn it off, just...just in case they're wrong.

But they're not wrong. He'd be back by now if they were wrong. She knows it, way down, but there's still a smidge of hope at the bottom of Pandora's Box.

She hates it.

Her hands are shaking. Her whole body is shaking, actually, but she doesn't want to get up. She doesn't think she can, actually, and she doesn't want to try. It's not worth it.

She wishes she could feel something besides numbness. Surely she should be feeling...something. Why can't she feel something, anything?

"Want me to go with?"

"No need. I'll be back in an hour, it's nothing exciting."

"You're sure?"

"Yes. I'll be back in an hour, I promise. You're not missing anything."

But he hadn't kept that promise, had he?

Something-sadness or shock or god-knew-what-bubbled in her throat and choked her, forcing her to bend over and cough. The bubble broke, but another came in its place.

"Why the concern?"

"I've never liked this guy."
"It can't be helped." He kissed her forehead and straightened up. "Don't wait up."

"Jonathan." He turned, looking exasperated and a little worried. "Be careful."

"Sure."

She chokes again and curls up in the armchair.

*You promised you'd come back.*

Her stomach clenches and she coughs, tasting bile. She's going to be sick.

She tries not to breathe for a few minutes and the sick feeling fades. The bubble in her throat does not.

She draws her knees up to her chest and digs them into her eyes. Now she *can't* breathe, no matter how hard she tries.

Salt water forms a puddle on the knees of her jeans and she forces a breath through her mouth. Then the dam breaks.

*Jonathan*…

The door doesn't open and the only thing the news will play is the thirty-second mobile phone footage.

THE END
Hiding, Pt. 2

Oh, god. That was an ordeal.

He's exhausted and more than a little shaken by his close call. He would have been killed if he hadn't gassed a cop and ducked out of there before his followers could come. That had probably triggered everything—his toxins are very flammable, even one little spark, from a round fired at the right time...

Never mind. Home at last. He pushes open the door and shuffles inside, wanting little more than a good nights' sleep.

Kitty's balled up in the armchair, sobbing. Not the 'Boromir died' type of sobbing, either—these are full on, near-silent sobs. What on earth happened?

"Kitty?"

She doesn't answer him. He drops his mask on the table and wonders what he should do. Screams he can understand, but tears just confuse him.

"Kitty." He doesn't really want to shake her, but... "What's wrong?" He puts his hand on her shoulder. "Kitty?"

She starts up, her breath catching in her throat.

"Jonathan." Why is she looking at him like that? "You're...you're not..."

"Not what?"

She's hugging him. Why is she hugging him? He was only two hours late—not at all unexpected, given the circumstances. There is absolutely no discernable reason for her to be squeezing him and sobbing into his shirt.

"Kitty." He pokes her shoulder. "Kitty, you're shrinking my shirt."

That doesn't stop her. That doesn't even annoy her. All it does is make her cry harder.

Help.

"Kitty?"

Then he spots a 'breaking news' report. And, more interestingly, the fact that he is presumed dead in the explosion.

Oh.

Well. This is awkward.

"You can stop now."

"I thought you were dead, you idiot!" She hits his shoulder. "Dead! Forever gone! Great gig in the sky!"

Well, at least she's stopped sobbing hysterically.
"I'm not dead."

"I can see that, thank you very much!" She shakes him a little. "I'm not blind, you know."

He'll just shut up now.

Well? How much longer is she going to take? They've been here for five minutes already!

He starts playing the Jeopardy theme in his head. The news replays some footage of this evening.

"Kitty." The sobs have slowed a little. That's good. He tries again. "Kitty?"

He looks appealingly at the ceiling. For heaven's sake…

She's not going to let go of him, is she?

He ends up just standing there and watching the muted news. Sooner or later she'll calm down and let go. He has half a mind to feign a faint, just to see what she'll do, but she might kill him for it.

"Kitty."

"Don't do that again." Her voice is muffled and hoarse. "Please."

He sighs. It isn't as though he did it on purpose. He doesn't much like to be cried on and yelled at, thank you very much.

"I won't."

"Promise?"

He can't promise. That kind of promise is one he can break.

"Kitty…"

"Please."

He'll regret it, he knows he'll regret it.

"Promise." He kisses the top of her head. "Come on, let go."

"No."

God.

Really?

It takes some maneuvering, but he manages to pick her up.

"I am going to wash up. You are going to calm down."

"I am calm."

Yeah, now. Now that she's cried herself out.

He goes to set her down and she grabs his shirt and refuses to release him. Fine. He'll just wait for her to pass out.
He can't blame her too much for being irrational, he supposes. She should know better than to believe the news, but at the same time…

He leans against the headboard and wonders if he should try moving her. It sounds like too much of a risk and he resigns himself to a long night.

"Kitty?"

"Mm."

"You know I can't guarantee that promise, right?"

"Mm."

She's falling asleep. Good.

Five minutes later, she's out cold. At last. He tucks her in before getting up to grab that shower.

THE END
This is what writing feels like. 'Is that necessary?' 'Why there?' 'I want a sandwich.'

Gotham city is quiet tonight. Nothing stirs…wait.
Not quite nothing.
There, on the roof! Do you see him? It's…um…surely that's not a…scarecrow?
"Oh, come on."
You don't see me.
"I'm not blind. You stick out like the Joker at a funeral."
Oh. Carry on with your…whatever you were doing. Pretend I'm not here.
"Is this really necessary?"
Shh! Do you want to bring the Batman over here?
"If it'll get me away from the mob of fangirls you brought with you, yes."
He's kidding.
"I am not. Go away."
Just ignore me. ANYWAYS, what's he doing up there, this fearsome member of the Rogue's gallery? What dastardly plan does he have in mind this evening?
"Do you really have to be so dramatic?"
I'm the narrator. Of course I have to be dramatic. Where was I…right. Who shall be the victim of…THE SCARECROW?
"At least be quiet, I'd like to not be shot at today."
No one's around here for miles. You'll be fine.
"Just shut up and let me work."
He moves, spider-like, across the rooftops, clambering up drainpipes and dropping onto balconies. Where is he going? Why is he here?
"If you don't go away, I will be forced to gas you, stealth be damned."
The only thing between you and the hordes is me, so you'd better be nice.
"I'll gas them, too. And probably kill a few to make a point."
Such a kidder…I hope…let's see what he does, shall we?

There he goes! Down another drainpipe and into an open window…hey! Why are the drapes being pulled? What the…yes, I hear screams. Let's go shadow someone safer, shall we? Like the ice cream man.

THE END
All right, maybe they shouldn't have broken out within two days of being put back in. But the timing was just so perfect! They'd have been fools not to take advantage of it.

Unfortunately, now the police are spitting mad and Batman is...well...Batman. And both parties are right behind them.

Crap.

There is nowhere to run except down a dark alley, but that won't help them for long.

"Now what?"

"Come here."

"What?"

She kisses him. *Hard.* Now? Now is not the time for this! What the hell is she doing?

Wha?

Um...

He tries to pull back-what the hell is she *thinking?*-and she drags him a little ways into the alley instead.

"What are you..."

Then she's kissing him again, the kind she usually reserves for...other occasions. Wait...no, there's no mind control cards on her. What is she doing?

"Just go with it." she breathes into his ear. "Trust me."

He does, but...now? Out here? *With the entirety of Gotham's police force AND the Batman looking for them?*

And they call him the crazy one!

He tries to move away and she pushes him against the wall instead.

"Kitty..."

"Shut up and kiss me."

*I feel like we're in a bad rom-com.*
There's good rom-coms?

*We shouldn't know what 'rom-com' even means, should we.*

No.

He's not expecting her to suddenly release him and begin straightening herself out.

"All done."

"Wha?"

"Police are gone. No one's going to suspect the couple making out in an alley." She bites her lip and rubs her sleeve across his mouth. "You had lipstick on you. Sorry."

*Not sure if I liked that or not.*

*I have no idea.*

"Um…"*  

"We can't stand here all night. Come on."

*I don't think I can move.*

*Heh.*

*You want to try?*

No.

Well. This has certainly been an eventful evening.

THE END
I have this mental image of him going, "Thou shalt not analyze me!" Sorry, nameless Arkham doctor. It's a risk you take when you apply for the job.

He hates therapy. It was amusing at first, but now, on this hot summer day, he's sleepy and bored. The doctor is irritating him. He shouldn't have picked apart the last one so quickly. But it was so much fun to watch him crumble…

"Mr. Crane?"

He looks over at the idiot they've put in charge. Sentimental fool—he's got a CD collection, a small library of Wilde, and two pictures of himself and a red-haired woman. Wife?

He glances down at the man's left hand. Yes. Married. Hm.

"Yes?"

"Are you listening?"

"No."

"I'm trying to help you."

"You're dismal. How did you even graduate?"

That silences him for a brief moment and he closes his eyes. It's too bright in here.

"I think that'll be all today, Mr. Crane."

Cheeky little upstart. Well. It seems that he's gotten a new toy.

"How's your wife, Doctor?"

That's all he says. The fact that he knows about the man's wife will be enough for today.

Let the games begin.

THE END
In Year One, there is a panel involving Crane restraining someone with duct tape. He hadn't quite learned how to duct tape yet.

"I need more tape!"

What the hell was he doing down there, lining the walls? Oh, never mind…

The last roll. If he needed any more, he could go out and get it himself. Honestly, how much duct tape did a person need?

She picked up the roll and went downstairs, wondering what exactly he was doing down there.

"Jonathan?"

"Just drop it on the table."

Where is he…what the hell is he doing?

"What are you doing?"

"Tying him to the chair, what does it look like?"

"Four rolls of tape!"

"What? He's not leaving the chair."

"Four. Rolls. Have you ever even used duct tape before?"

He shook his head, picked up the fifth roll, and got to wrapping. Really? Really? One roll should have been enough.

"There. That should keep him in."

"Jonathan, love…"

"What?"

"You really need to take duct tape one oh one."

He grinned, patted the subject on the head, and threw the empty cardboard tube in a little box. She sighed, shook her head, and went back upstairs.

Five rolls. Dear god.

THE END
He watches her with fevered, tired eyes. Without his glasses she's a blur until she gets close enough.

The smell of NyQuil hits him and he grimaces. Other people have gotten used to it, haven taken it from childhood. Granny never bought into 'modern medicine' (the old hag) and his first sample was in college. It was vile then, and it's vile now. Especially the green kind.

"They were out of cherry." Damn. "Come on, drink it down." Does he have to? "The faster you do it, the faster it'll be over."

He takes the cup from her and the thought crosses his mind that it could be poison. Were it anyone else, he wouldn't take it.

God, it tastes awful.

He drops back, coughing thickly, and watches her leave the room. When she comes back, she has the Listerine.

"Here. It'll help the taste."

Not much. Now his mouth tastes like chemicals. But it's better than straight NyQuil.

She rubs his head-only one other person has tried that, and they got a dose of toxin to the face. He didn't feel at all sorry, either.

"Try to get some sleep, love."

"Mm."

He leans into her hand, wondering how long this stuff takes to work. Hopefully not long.

"You'll feel better after a good nights' sleep."

Hopefully, anyway.

"Maybe." She gets up and he wonders where she's going. "Kitty?"

"I'm just going to brush my teeth."

He yawns and pulls the blankets up to his neck. He's starting to feel a little loopy now. At last...a full nights' sleep.

Kitty comes back in, turns off the main lamp and snuggles up against his side.

"You're going to get sick."

"I won't get sick."

Good. He still has chills and she's warm.

"M'kay."

"Sweet dreams, love."
"Mm."

He lets his eyes slip closed. Sleep. At last.

THE END
Bleeding

Chapter Notes

Feliz Cinco de Mayo!

He pries a sticky hand away from his side and fumbles for the knob. His fingers, slick with blood, can't close around it. He's going to pass out-spots are eating away at his vision. God…Jesus…somebody…

He tries to grip the knob again and manages to turn it, but only a little. It's locked. Fuck.

Please…

He's shaking. He's going to vomit. The only thing keeping him upright is his grip on the knob, but that's slipping. It's cold. Why is it cold?

His fingers can't do this anymore and he feels himself wobble, struggling to stay on his feet.

The door opens just as he loses his fight with gravity and he plummets downwards.

But he doesn't reach the floor.

Someone—he knows them, he must—catches him and calls a name that must be his.

"Jonathan!"

They can barely support him—he can feel the tension.

"Come on, love…work with me, just a few more steps…"

Kitty. That's her name.

He can't make his mouth work anymore than he can take a few more steps. It doesn't matter, though—he ends up being half-carried, half-dragged out of the hallway. The carpet's pattern was not designed to move and watching it makes him nauseous.

"Here we go, love…"

He winds up on a hard surface—coffee table?

"Look at me. Please." His eyes are closed? How funny, he doesn't remember them doing that. "Jonathan."

He blinks—bright, too bright—and tries to focus on her.

"Hey." She's blurry. "Do you remember what happened?"

He can't answer her. If he opens his mouth, he'll puke.

His eyes slide closed again and he feels his hand drop down, his fingers brushing the carpet.
"Jonathan." Not now. "Jonathan, don't do this. Please."

Her voice fades. Time stops.

THE END
Awake in the Dark

Chapter Notes

In the comics, Granny used a chemical cocktail to incite the birds.

Fifteen year-old Jonathan Crane is startled awake by a bone-rattling BOOM of thunder.

He lies there, heart pounding, and opens his eyes. It's too early-or late, or whatever-to be awake. His eyes hurt from being awake too soon.

Rain taps relentlessly on his window and he reaches up to rest his fingers on the cold glass. Then he hears a noise downstairs.

He shouldn't, he knows he shouldn't, but curiosity gets the better of him and he gets up, fumbling for his glasses and shuffling to the door. God, he's tired. His wrist is a little sore tonight-it hasn't quite healed from his stupidity.

There's a light on in the kitchen. Granny? What in the world is she doing at this hour?

Quietly, hoping to god he doesn't get caught, he slinks to the door and peeks inside. What he sees makes him sick.

She has his suit-that one-laid out on the kitchen table. On the counter is a cutting board and a sharp butcher's knife. In her hand is a dead rat-a fat one.

She lays it on the board, picks up the knife, and lops its head off. She then picks up the body and begins to pour the blood onto his clothes, pausing every now and again to squeeze it or rub the blood into the fabric.

Once she's through, she picks up the rat's remains, carries them to the door, and collects her umbrella.

He goes to a front window and watches her go out to the old scarecrow. She drops the rat across its shoulder.

WHAPWHAPWHAPWHAPWHAP.

He shrinks back, his hands going to his face on instinct. But they're outside, not inside...attacking the scarecrow.

She turns away and he sneaks back to bed, badly shaken. He hears Granny come inside and begin her trek upstairs. Oh, god, she'll check on him, she's always trying to catch him doing something...

He gets under the covers and closes his eyes, trying to even his breathing. Sure enough, his bedroom door opens and he feels her come inside. Even breaths, even breaths...

His door closes and he rolls over. He won't sleep tonight.
BOOM!

Where is he? What's going on?

Lightning flashes behind his eyes. Is he in Arlen or Gotham?

There's a warm weight on his chest. Wherever he is, he's safe for the moment.

More lightning. Gotham. He's in Gotham. What time is it, anyway? God, what a nightmare…

BOOM!

Kitty moves a bit and he rubs her shoulders, half-hoping she'll wake up. She does and he runs a hand through his hair. Hopefully he'll be able to go back to sleep.

The storm is keeping him awake. He keeps expecting to hear a noise downstairs.

"Jonathan?" She sounds groggy. "Jonathan, love…" Yawn. "Is everything all right?"

"Mm-hm. Did the storm wake you?" Talking is harder than it is in the daytime.

"Mm-hm." She sighs and her fingers tighten around his shirt. "Nightmare?"

How does she always know?

"Uh-huh." He closes his eyes again. "Nothing interesting."

"Night, love."

He moves his hand to her lower back and concentrates on the rain.

Within five minutes, he's fast asleep once more.

THE END
Easter

Nobody cared when a doctor came into the rec room. They were only ever there to pick up someone for therapy or to observe. Nothing exciting.

So when Dr. Young stepped inside, nobody even looked up.

"May I have your attention?"

Nope.

Jonathan settled further into the sofa, determined to ignore her whiny voice. He hated her more than he did some of the others. Know-it-all. One of these days, he was going to have to do something about her. She was single and lonely, a little bit of charm might just…

"Oi! Doc wants to speak to ya!"

But he would listen to Wells.

The only people who didn't at least pretend to pay attention were Joker and Harley, but that wasn't surprising. Nobody said anything, either.

"This year, we are going to have an egg hunt. Won't that be fun?"

Egg hunt? Really? How old did she think they were, five?

Her statement was met with either blank stares or muffled giggles. Served her right. Egg hunt… humph. He was not getting up at the crack of dawn to look for little plastic eggs. Not unless he could somehow shove one down her throat.

"Wha's she goin' on abou'?"

"Nothing interesting. Go back to sleep."

"Egg hunt?"

"I said it was nothing interesting. Go back to sleep."

"Crazy bitch." she mumbled. "Stop moving."

He rolled his eyes and dropped his head against the arm of the couch. A few minutes later, the Riddler strolled over and sat down.

"What do you think?"

"I think she's crazier than we are if she wants to host an egg hunt."

Edward shrugged.

"Sometimes I wish stupidity was painful. It isn't her fault she's not as smart as me, but…" Oh, no. He'd never shut up now.

"I mean, not everyone can make a virtual reality game that kills…"

"Eddie…"
"Not even you could do that, Jon, really…"

"Eddie, if you don't shut your trap, I'll rip your tongue out and shove it up your nose."

That shouldn't have been funny. It really wasn't all that funny, but it shut him up.

"Someone's cranky."

Or at least changed the subject.

"Joker wouldn't stop giggling all last night. Now shut up and let me sleep."

"Jon?"

"I'd shut up and let her sleep, Edward."

And that was the end of the discussion.

"Wakey, wakey."

No. It was too early to be out of bed.

"Come on, Crane, egg hunt."

Oh, dear god, she'd actually done it. Too bad, he was not going to play along.

"M'religious."

The guard scoffed and dragged him out of bed. Cretin. He still wasn't going to play along, and that was final.

Nobody else looked very happy, either. Well, the Joker, but that was his own fault for getting his mouth slashed open.

"I can't believe you woke me up for this."

"Look, Crane, no one's happy about it."

"Least of all me." he grumbled. "I hate holidays."

"Yay you."

"Now let's all play fair, okay?" Oh, he hated that woman's voice. It grated on his nerves… "Aand… go!"

Nobody moved.

Then the Joker spotted a polka-dotted egg in an empty cell and dove for it.

All hell broke loose after that.

Dr. Young just stood there, shouting for the guards to leave them alone, that it was all in good fun. He wondered if it would be 'all in good fun' when somebody got a broken nose.

Wait. These were real eggs. How very interesting indeed.
He picked one up, eyed the distance between Dr. Young and himself, and flung it. It smacked her in the face.

The week he got in solitary for that was very, very worth it.

THE END
Sherry Squires was Crane's high school crush. There was a prank date. She died in the comics, (hm, wonder how that happened?) but since I don't always follow canon, she made it to adulthood here. Let's presume that the disastrous prank date occurred when he was sixteen, shall we? *Takes place during 'Prodigal Son'.

She didn't drink the punch. It had too much alcohol in it and she didn't want to hurt the baby. Perhaps that was why she was left standing while her former classmates sank to the floor, screaming in terror.

Bo didn't like it when she read the news, especially the national news. But she did it anyway, and a snippet of something came into her mind. Something about a human scarecrow that frightened people to death.

"Hello, Sherry."

She turned and tripped over somebody. He watched her struggle to her feet, his face expressionless.

"Jonathan…"

"Oh, so you do know my name." His voice was light. "I always wondered. You never used it."

No, she didn't, and she was so, so sorry. Maybe if just one person…just one…his grandmother was certainly no help…

"I'm sorry."

"I'm sure you are. Everyone's sorry when death is staring them in the face."

She turned and ran—well, waddled quickly—and he followed her. She had to get out, one of the doors…there!

It was locked.

*God help me!*

"You didn't think I would overlook something so obvious, did you?" His voice was still light, chatty. "Come now, Sherry, I knew you were an idiot, but I'd hoped you weren't that much of an idiot."

He was too close now. There was no getting around him.

"I'm sorry." she whispered again. "Please…"

"Do you remember our sophomore year?" Yes, yes she did, she'd regretted it ever since. "I thought so. I always wondered why."

She never knew. It had seemed funny at the time, it really had, but not for long. But by then it was too late to take it back.
"I don't know."

"Typical."

She pressed against the door and wiggled the knob, hoping against hope that it would open. It didn't.

"I suppose it all came back to bite you in the end. Abusive husband…what a pity. Can't say I'm surprised." He shook his head. "I would be sorry for you if I didn't consider it a fair trade."

God, what had they created?

He closed the distance between them, his face still horribly blank. She could reach out and touch him.

"What a pity." he said again. "Sorry about the punch, by the way. My toxin doesn't always react well with alcohol—probably had something to do with the bitterness."

"T-toxin?"

"How did you think I drugged them? The fog machines?" He laughed, but there was no mirth to it. "Do you see any fog machines, Sherry? No?" He snorted. "I wasn't expecting you to abstain. More fun for me, I suppose."

Oh, god…

She was sweating and her hands were freezing yet dripping. There was nowhere to run and nowhere to hide.

She thought about her little sister.

No.

She would get out of here, for her children and her sister.

Crane was looking at her again. She felt like a bug under a microscope. She'd always hated biology…

She staggered forward and he stepped back in surprise. Surely there was some trace of the shy bookworm she used to know, the one that offered to help her study.

The one she'd fucked up beyond belief.

She grabbed his shirt and kissed him for half a second, tasting coffee and…mimosa?...before he shoved her back into the door, the knob digging into her back.

No. There was nothing there at all.

He was laughing at her and this time there was mirth there, mirth and insanity and utter heartlessness.

"Well, well. I wasn't expecting that from you." He wiped his mouth off and straightened his shirt. "Well, my dear? Any more bright ideas? They won't help you, but I've always been fascinated by people's refusal to die."

"You sick bastard, you're enjoying this."

"What ever gave you that idea?" He fussed with his glasses and sighed. "As entertaining as this
evening has been, I would like to be done. It's a long trip back to Gotham."

"Jonathan, please…"

"That won't help you. Shame I can't take you with me-I've always wondered what my toxins will do to a woman in your condition." She was going to vomit. "Good-bye, Sherry."

SSSSPPPPRRRAAAAYYY!

THE END
He's attempting to hack up a lung when the door flies inwards and the doorknob imbeds itself in the wall. Their time has come to return, hasn't it. He knew it would, in the end. He won't fight it. He's too sick to put up much resistance, anyway.

"Crane." Surely his voice doesn't sound like that all the time. Someone would notice.

"Yes."

For once, the Bat is puzzled. Ha.

"You have to go back to Arkham, Crane."

"It's your fault if I don't come back out." he snaps. "Have you met the madman they put in charge of us?" Maybe it's a long shot, but Batman might be able to help them. "I didn't do this!" He gestures towards the bruises on Kitty's throat. "We had to get out or he was going to kill us both. You have to understand…"

He begins to cough again. His lungs ache and he suspects the common cold has become something a little more dangerous.

"Bolton."

"Yes." he wheezes.

"Come on, Crane."

"No, please…"

The black hand grasps his right arm and pulls him up. He can barely stay on his feet, let alone make a break for it. They can't go back, Bolton will be furious, and in this state…

Batman hauls Kitty up and drags them both to the tank outside. This will be the second time he's ridden in it, and the first time that he'll remember.

They're shoved into the back seat-no handcuffs, how nice. It doesn't matter. He's not going to add Batman-inflicted injuries to his list of problems.

He rests his head against the cool glass window and hopes that something terrible has happened to Bolton while they're away. Maybe he fell down the stairs, or was eaten by Croc, or something equally unpleasant.

Kitty leans against his side and he supposes this will be the last interaction with her for some time.

Outside, the streetlights grow few and far between and eventually they're gone altogether. Five more
minutes and they'll be back in Arkham.

Bolton is waiting for them-Batman must have called him. That's it, then. There goes the last (thin) ray of hope.

"So you're the Batman." God, he hates that voice. "Thanks for bringing back our runaways."

"They need to be in Medical." Yes, but that doesn't mean that they'll end up there. Solitary, here they come. "I'll take them. Save you the effort."

"No need."

"I insist."

Well. Maybe they'll end up in Medical, after all.

Batman escorts them down the too-bright hallway and into a familiar room. Bolton is nowhere in sight.

Batman disappears-one of these days, Crane will figure out how he does that-before the doctor on duty finds them.

"Back so soon, Doctor Crane, Miss Richardson?" It's the motherly one, Annie Wilkes. Her name never ceases to amuse him. "Let's take a look at you two."

Once she's done and they're settled into two uncomfortable but warm cots, she turns off the light and goes to her little office.

Tomorrow's going to be hell, but at least he can get a good nights' sleep before the storm hits.

THE END
Hide and Seek

So help him, when he gets his hands on that little slip of a thing…

No matter. There's nowhere to run and very few places to hide. He'll find her.

The narrow upstairs hallway is lined with doors. All of them thus far have been dusty and unwilling to open. He never comes up to this part of the lair—there's no point. But now he has to check every blasted floor for his little escapee. How very irritating.

It's cold up here. It may make him a rather frightening figure, but burlap is not at all insulating.

He rubs his hands together and strolls towards a door at the end of the hall. He knows she's up here. He'll find her, make no mistake.

"Come out, come out, wherever you are."

She doesn't answer. Humph. The least she could do is play along.

This door? Could be. It looks a little less grimy than the others.

He flings it open and is greeted with a shower of dust. Damn. Wrong room.

He shakes himself off and resumes his stroll down the hallway. There's a soft creaking coming from up ahead.

Well, well, what has he here? Not as quiet as she'd like to be, he's sure. And the door's ajar. What a shame.

His fingers fold around the knob and he pushes the door open, whistling the tune to 'London Bridge'. The room is empty save for an old bed and a crumbling suitcase. What a pity.

She's under the bed, he's sure of that. He'll just reach under here and drag her out…

He pulls her out and drops her on the dusty bed, frowning.

"Where is it, what have you done with it?"

"Done with what?"


Kitty grins at him and shrugs.

"It was grimy. It needed a wash. You may have it back after I get it sparkling clean."

"It's burlap! It doesn't get sparkling clean!"

"It has a giant bloodstain on the eye!"

"It adds character!"

She groans and rubs her face.

"Everything else you touch had better be sterile, but when it comes to that grimy mask…"
"Where. Is. It."

'I'm not telling."

He'll make her tell if it's the last thing he does!

"Kitty…"

"You have to catch me first."

What is she…

She streaks past him and he hears her sprinting down the hall, no doubt to hide his precious mask once again. God dammit.

He turns around to go after her with a low groan. One of these days, so help him…

"Kitty! I need it to work!"

"Never!"

They'll be at this all day.

THE END
Finally! This is the beginning of 'Check-Up' and the stories related to that. I didn't mean for that to go so far, I just wanted an 'interim fic' for the episode. But it got out of hand and then I thought I may as well carry on.

His first run-in with their new head of security is not pretty.

He doesn't know quite what sparked the man's ire-maybe it was snipping at the Joker during group therapy?-but he finds himself escorted out and being hauled up by the throat.

"I don't know all the crap you got away with before, but you're dealin' with me now. Understand?"

He is shaken like an errant dog until he nods his head.

"Good."

They don't go back in the room. Instead, he's dragged down the hall to his cell, tossed in, and left there. What was that? None of the guards-not even the nastiest-have ever acted like that.

He'll have to be careful around this maniac.

What time is it? What day is it?

He's been down in solitary for who knows how long. It's dark, cold, and generally miserable. Bolton threw him down here for something or other-he doesn't know, honest he doesn't-and he's starting to wonder if he's been forgotten about.

The cell next door opens and closes and a minute later someone says, "Jon?"

"Hello, Edward."

"What'd you do?"

"I don't know."

"Neither do I."

Knowing Edward, he probably opened his big mouth.

"Bolton?"

"Who else?"

They sit in silence. Jonathan, at least, is listening for any hint that Bolton might be nearby.

"The man is a maniac."
"I know."

"You've been lucky to be down here." As much as he appreciates the company, he really wishes Edward would shut up now. "Not even Ivy talks back to this guy."

"No?"

"Uh-uh. Not after he sprayed one of her plants with weed killer."

Sadist. Not even the Joker touches Ivy's plants.

"How's Kitty?"

Now Edward shuts his mouth. That is not helpful…were those footsteps?

No. They're still alone down here. Good.

"Edward."

"I haven't seen her for a few days. The last time anybody saw her, she had these big bruises on her neck. You know, the kind Harley gets sometimes?"

"I see."

"Yeah."

They sit in silence again.

Well. He hasn't been quite forgotten, but the main asylum is not at all like he left it.

Everyone's quiet. No laughing, no crying, no screams of 'I'm not crazy'!

No nothing.

At rec room time, everyone just sits quietly, watching cartoons. For once, there is no argument about what to watch. They watch whatever gets picked up first.

Their cells have changed. The doors are electrified-Jervis was kind enough to warn him ahead of time. Not that it matters-they're either handcuffed to their beds or bound up in straitjackets.

Arkham was never Disneyland, but it was never like this.

He can't stay here.

Kitty is in Medical. It took a combination of bribes, threats, and one or two pleas, but one of the guards-one that he actually doesn't loathe with a flaming passion-lets him see her. He makes a note not to gas this one unless it's really necessary.

Edward wasn't exaggerating about the bruises. These are obvious-how do the doctors not see? Do not they not care? Even he would have initiated inquiries, to avoid a lawsuit if nothing else. Imbeciles.

"Kitty?"

"Hi." Her voice is raspy and he cringes. She really shouldn't be talking. "How'd you get in?"
"Bribery." He glances at the door. No Bolton. "What happened?"

"I tripped."

"I mean it. What happened?"

"Bolton and I had a row." She coughs. "You shouldn't be here, he'll be upset…"

"Nothing's broken?"

"No."

"Okay. Go back to sleep." He presses his lips to her forehead and stands up. He'll be back later. Hopefully.

---

Enough is enough. He is not going to stay here to be tossed around like a rag doll. He's had enough of that for one lifetime, thank you very much.

Ahh, solitary again. His favourite place.

He sinks onto the cot. His body aches from being thrown against the wall. He's lucky he doesn't have a concussion.

There has to be a way out. He's gotten out of here in the past, he can get out of here now. He has to, before this gorilla breaks his neck.

God, he could do with some painkillers…

He curls up under the scratchy blanket and closes his eyes. There has to be a way out.

Somehow.

---

He has found a way out. It's risky and probably won't work, but he'll give it a shot. What else can he do?

Arkham being such an old building, there's all sorts of hidden rooms that aren't on the current blueprints. One of which is directly above his cell.

It was walled off years ago—he found it by taking a wrong turn last year. It can be accessed via air vent—one is in his cell, and one leads to Medical. From there, he decides, he'll borrow a set of scrubs, slip into Cell Block C, and take the Janitor's Closet Passageway to the grounds. After that, well… jump the wall and hope for the best.

What fun this is going to be.

---

He's in a straitjacket tonight. He'll have to make his move now, before he's cuffed to the bed again. Straitjackets he can handle.

Okay…right arm in, left arm presses against the seam…success! And two sore shoulders, but they pale in comparison to the bruises on his ribcage.

Hopefully Bolton hasn't electrified the ventilation system.
He has not. He tucks the straitjacket into bed, clambers into the old shaft, and pulls the grate shut behind him. So far, so good.

He has to sacrifice an earpiece of his glasses to remove the screws on the exit grate, but it's worth it. They're already damaged, after all. Now! Onto Medical, and then, hopefully, freedom.

The nurse on duty is already snoring and she doesn't notice when he slips into the lockers and puts on a pair of extra scrubs. There. The casual onlooker won't recognize him now. What's the name, just in case…Johnson. Orderly Johnson it is.

"Kitty." He hates to shake her, but they can't stay here all night. "Come on, we're leaving."

"Mm?"

"Shh. Just come on."

Cell Block C, Cell Block C…ah. Cell Block C. That janitor's closet should be right…here.

__________________________________________________________

Fresh air has never been so nice. It's cold out here, and he can hear a pair of guards not too far away, but he doesn't hear Bolton yet.

Now, to climb over the wall and run like hell. Normally he'd borrow somebody's car, but he doesn't want to borrow Bolton's by mistake. Maybe they can hitchhike. Or something.

"Come on."

"Where are we going?"

"I don't know."

The guards are still a safe distance away, and no alarms are going off yet. It's now or never.

"Go."

He's scared to breathe, and it seems to him as though their footsteps are much too loud, but no one comes to investigate and three minutes later, they're over the wall and crouching behind a brown car, wheezing.

They're out.

They're out.

How long they'll be out is another matter, but he'll worry about that later. Right now they need to get out of the parking lot before somebody notices they're gone.

THE END
Impress

He never can say no to her. He's tried-halfheartedly, yes, but he's tried-and it never works.

Sometimes it's to his detriment.

"No one ever died from NyQuil, Jonathan."

And sometimes it's very much to his benefit. Like now.

"Jonathan," she says, winding her arms around his, "you haven't shown me this new toxin of yours."

"No?"

"So?" She gives him the Bambi eyes. "Impress a girl?"

Well, when she puts it *that* way…

"Any preferences?"

She bites her lip and points to the guard cowering in front of them.

"That one?"

He never can say no to her.

"Of course."

THE END
Arkham Asylum for the criminally insane is known for its state-of-the-art treatments, affordable treatment plans, Rogues gallery, and its utterly terrible security. It says something about the place that the only effective security guard they had is now an inmate.

Really, there should just be a sign outside that says, 'Arkham Asylum, home of the craziest motherfuckers in Gotham! All are welcome! Come into the light!'

He shouldn't be so snide. After all, it is, technically, his home. It isn't that bad. Sure, the food sucks and the uniforms are itchy, but hey-free flu shots!

He sinks comfortably into an armchair in his old office. The new head has painted the walls a hideous green and there's a picture of a swinging girl who's lost a shoe. He wonders if the good doctor realizes he's hanging eighteen-hundreds porn in his office.

Oh, never mind.

He toys with the mask in his lap and wonders when the Batman will get here. These little takeovers never last for long-the longest one that he can remember was only overnight. But, oh, they're so much fun while they last. All that fear…best medicine in the world.

He stands up and wanders out into the hall. Two guards are lying by the door with their brains blown out. That will stain…

He can hear laughter a little ways away. Some of his fellow inmates are harmless, sent here for lack of anywhere else to go. He considers paying a few of them a visit and decides against it. He has someone else to look for today, a certain Todd Wallace.

Mr. Todd Wallace, recently hired orderly. Single-unsurprisingly-fear of dogs, was up on harassment charges, which were dropped. Shame, really. Prison would have been safer.

There was the sound of somebody protesting at being shoved around, followed by a gunshot. Batman was getting slow, wasn't he?

"Doctor Crane!"

"Hello, child."

"Whatcha need, Doc?"

He pointed one needle-clad finger towards a man in the back.

"That one."

"Sure thing, Doc. Ya know, maybe this'll be the time that Bats doesn't show up."
"Could be, child. Could be."

Two of the lesser inmates take hold of Todd Wallace's arms and escort him out of the room.

"Where d'ya want him, Doc?"

"Follow me."

"See ya, Doctor Crane!"

"Good bye, child."

There. That was as nice as he had to be for the day.

"Right in here."

"Want us to strap him in?"

"Of course."

Oh, Arkham. It was a shame it hadn't been abandoned—he'd love it for a lair. All set up for experiments…one day, perhaps.

"How are you, Mr. Wallace?" He shoos the inmates out and flicks on the overhead light. "Happy? Healthy?" He lays his gloved hand on the man's shoulder and leans forward. "Scared?"

"Crane, you sick bastard…"

"I really do wish you people would be a little more creative in your insults." He taps Wallace's face with a needle and relishes the look on his face. Defiant, angry…terrified. "Do you know why you're here?"

Wallace scowls at him and says nothing. Mannerless little…well. He isn't all that surprised.

"You have a habit, Mr. Wallace, of looking at things that don't belong to you." Scarecrow slides into place now. "And sometimes touching those things."

"Bull shit."

Scarecrow chuckles and ruffles Wallace's hair. He likes this guy! He's not a crier. Criers suck.

"I don't think so." he rasps. "I have some very reliable witnesses."

"To what?"

Curiosity killed the cat, doesn't he know that? Although…he did ask so very nicely…

"Think back to two months ago, Mr. Wallace." He tilts the chair back a bit and bolts the man's head in sideways. Can't have him choking on puke, after all. That would ruin the fun. "Think hard. There's an inmate you've taken a shine to."

He starts to shake. He knows why he's here now. That's good. That just adds to the fear. After all, there is a bloodstain in their cell, and it didn't get there from a cut finger.

"Look, Crane…"
"Jonny-boy isn't here right now." He strokes Wallace's cheek and Wallace whimpers. "Shh, shh. Scarecrow will take care of you."

"I didn't know, God…"

"You didn't KNOW?" He can't believe that. It's no big secret. "Don't lie to me."

Wallace isn't crying yet, but he's damn close. Typical. Faced with impending death, everyone's a wimp.

Jonathan shoves him out of the way-ugh, fine.

"Once upon a time, there was another guard here. He was very much like you. Fancied himself a regular ladies' man." He began to circle the chair, checking to make sure the straps were secure. "Do you know what happened to him?"

A single tear trickled down Wallace's face.

"He died. It was a tragedy, really. A terrible accident. He was bringing me my breakfast and bumped his head on a loose brick. Repeatedly." Everything's secure. "What an unhappy coincidence, wouldn't you say?"

More tears, followed by a low, steady whine.

"How horrible." he says softly. "Such a promising career, cut short by a sudden nervous breakdown."

One needle slides effortlessly into Wallace's beefy wrist.

"Scream for me, Todd. Tell me what you see."

The whine becomes a wail, and then the wail becomes one long, steady scream.

The doctor is in.

THE END
He doesn't have one any more-maybe it has something to do with self-disembowelment? -but he used to have a scythe. Once upon a time.

It's sharp. It makes a pretty noise when he swings it at people. And it looks horribly creepy.

He doesn't have it for a weapon-it's too clumsy for that. But he's happy to use it in traps and to frighten people.

Now, if he can only figure out how to swing it in a straight line…

*Fwoosh thunk!*

And maybe not get it stuck in the floorboards.

"Jonathan, what are you…what are you *doing*?"

"I found it in the cellar."

"Why are you playing with it? Didn't somebody ever tell you not to play with sharp objects?"

"No."

*Don't play with sharp objects.*

*Hypocrite.*

*No one's making you listen to me.*

*Good point.*

"Don't stab your eye out." she grumbles. "Supper's at six."

Oh, good, she's gone. Now he won't accidentally cut her with it. Or if he hurts himself, he can hide it before she says 'I told you so'.

*What if you cut off a finger?*

*Don't say things like that.*

He yanks the scythe out of the floor, spraying a couple of woodchips towards the wall. Oops.

*Fwoosh rip!*

Well, at least it's not stuck in the floor.

Now how is he going to explain the huge slice in the couch?
THE END
Radioactive

Chapter Notes

Written shortly after seeing Gotham's first-ever trailer, way back when (can you believe we're getting a third season?). Title is from the Imagine Dragons song of the same name. Characters (in order) are: Penguin, Riddler, Joker, Scarecrow.

Oh, sure, they're laughing now. They think it's funny that they threw him into the icy river and watched him flap his way to shore.

But he'll show them. He's worked here long enough, being Fish's little toy. She calls him 'penguin' because of his fondness for suits and because she's an utter bitch. But penguins eat fish.

He wrings himself out and goes to collect his trusty umbrella from the stand. They'll be sorry. They'll be sorry.

One day, they won't be laughing at him.

________________________________________

Idiots! Idiots everywhere. This was a gang killing, not a suicide!

They're not just idiots. They're corrupt idiots, no smarter and no better than the criminals they hunt.

Eight down is…bat.

He hates them all.

Well, he likes the new recruit. He's got promise, and manners, and he's not a complete moron.

That won't last.

He needs to find a better job.

________________________________________

Why won't they laugh? This was his best routine!

A rotting tomato hits him in the face and he leaves, angrily wiping red flesh and seeds out of his eyes. Assholes. They just don't know comedy, that's all.

There's an apple in his lunch box and he carves a smile on its face with a plastic fork. There. He's made someone smile today.

One day he'll make them all smile.

Smile like the apple.

Smile like the Grim Reaper.

________________________________________

He hates his colleagues, wishes they'd burn in Hell with Granny. They laugh at him behind his back,
call him Scarecrow as an 'affectionate' nickname.

He'll show them. He'll show them all. He startled one of the worst offenders quite by mistake, but he'll make more of an effort next time. He'll make her sorry.

He'll make her scream.

He'll make them all scream, and then he'll laugh.

Just like he did before.

THE END
Considering he had pneumonia, Jonathan couldn't be more comfortable. He was in his favourite squishy armchair, with a warm blanket around his shoulders and another across his lap. There was a nice, thick book within arms' reach, a box of Kleenex on top of that, and a veritable pharmacy on the table by his book.

"Comfy?"

There was also a very worried girlfriend perched on the arm of his chair, fussing with the blanket around his shoulders.

"Yes."

"D'you want anything? Orange juice, tea, anything?"

She wouldn't leave off unless he accepted something.

"Do we have any chamomile?"

"Yes."

He settled back into his chair and closed his eyes. Imbecile Batman…dragging him around in the rain…lovely.

"Here you go." So soon? Maybe he'd dozed…

"Thank you, Kitty."

"Sure." She settled onto the arm again. "You don't need anything else, do you? Soup, Nyquil, anything?"

"I'm all right. It's just a touch of pneumonia, that's all. Nothing new."

"You're sure?"

"Yes. Don't worry about me."

"If you say so…"

"Yes. Don't fuss."

He took a sip of his tea and burned his tongue. Great. It did feel nice on his throat, though.

"You really ought to go to bed, love."

"M'fine."

"You are sick, you need to be lying down…" He set the tea down and pulled her off the arm and onto his lap. "Hey!"

"M'fine."

"Really?"
"Yes."

She shook her head but settled back against his shoulder with his book in her hands.

"You're really warm."

"Mm."

Tea, tea…ah. Tea. He took another sip-oww, tongue still burned-and closed his eyes. Maybe he would go to bed…but he was comfortable. He'd finish his tea and then consider it.

At some point after his tea was (mostly) gone, he felt his glasses slide down his nose. A minute later, they were off his face altogether.

"Go to sleep, Jonathan."

Sleep? In the armchair? He was very comfortable, and warm, and drowsy from his tea…perhaps she had a good point.

"Kitty?"

"Yes?" He felt her move a little further down, so her arms were wrapped loosely round his neck. "What is it?"

He couldn't remember. Damn.

"Forgot."

"Maybe it'll come back later." She kissed him and moved a bit more before going still. "Night, love."

It didn't take him very long to fall asleep.

THE END
She's always liked the medical building. Sure, it has a nasty history of botched lobotomies and other unpleasanties, but it's quiet. It's also one of the oldest parts of the asylum-beautiful architecture. It rather reminds of her of a church back home, the one she snuck into with Davie Wonder.

*I will never be able to look at a confessional without blushing again.*

Unfortunately, being an old building, the power is shit and it's always the first to go during a takeover. Cheapskates. Admittedly, they could have fixed it when they were working here, but that's neither here nor there.

She flops back on a gurney and looks towards one of the gargoyles. Gargoyles, in medical…oh, well. Could be worse. Could be…

"…ME, in a thong?"

Yeah. Could be that.

Why does the clown have to play with the speaker systems? And why do said speaker systems have to echo so badly? She'll never get that mental image out of her head, never.

She yawns and fingers the strap on the gurney. She could take a catnap in here, really, if it wasn't for the Goddamn Batman running around. Why does he have to ruin everything?

There's a nasty crash and she's up and moving, a stolen knife in one hand and a canister of toxin in the other. Turns out she's right to panic-it's one of the Blackgate prisoners, is standing a little ways away. He probably doesn't know who she is.

"I'm armed." she warns. "And my boyfriend will kill you if something happens to me."

That last bit is true, unfortunately. She's seen it happen. It was messy and they had to throw the couch out because the bloodstains were too bad. Impaled on a candlestick-those always bled an awful lot.

The man stares at her with blank eyes. Drugged. She'll have to deal with him, then, before he comes at her.

"Back off, or I will kill you."

He rushes her.

She sprays him in the face and he drops like a stone, shrieking about Hello Kitty. What does toxin do when combined with certain medications, she wonders?

Something taps her on the shoulder and she whirls, canister upheld, and finds her wrist caught.

"Jonathan, Jesus…don't do that."

"Did I scare you?"

"Of course not." she lies. Wait a minute…"You're bleeding."

"It's nothing." He points to the still-shrieking inmate behind her. "What did he do?"
"He was going to attack me."

"Ah." He shoves his mask at her and starts undoing his glove. "Put that on. I need you to keep the Batman busy."

"Why?"

"Because I have something to set up and he'll be looking for me. I wouldn't ask you if I didn't think you'd be fine."

Isn't that the truth? She knows he hates asking her even when he *knows* she'll be fine.

"Fine." She pauses and looks at the red blotch on his shirt. "You're sure it's not serious?"

"Yes."

She leans up to kiss his nose before pulling the mask on and taking the glove from him.

"From a distance it's convincing."

"Be safe." There are heavy footsteps a little ways away. "Any time limit?"

"As long as you can. That'll have drawn him." he continues, pointing at the inmate again. "I have to run. Be careful."

And then he's gone and she's left to wait for the Batman.

THE END
Session

I loathe my doctors, each and every one of them. And I've been through quite a few. One of them I talked into suicide. I tried that on another one, but all I could manage was a nervous breakdown and eventual admittance to Arkham. Alas.

Arkham doesn't get the doctors that you civilians go to, oh no. We get the ones with questionable backgrounds, ones that should have retired last century, and ones fresh out of school with 'new ideas'. I was like that once, young and stupid.

God, I hate those ones most of all.

They spend far too much time trying to work out our 'motivations'. Most of them blame my traumatic childhood. That's just ridiculous. Plenty of people have had a terrible childhood and turned out… well…maybe not normal, but harmless. Or at least your garden-variety offender-child abusers, violent drunks…every so often you'll get a madman with a gun, but those don't happen as often as you'd like to believe.

Others accuse me of having an uncontrollable compulsion to scare. I was rather insulted by that, actually. What do I look like, the Riddler? He is uncontrollably compelled to leave riddles. I, at least, can go to the grocery store without (intentionally) inflicting blind panic on the masses. (For the last time, Kitty, they recognized me first! I had no choice but to gas the supermarket!)

Still others have no idea and just jot me down as being 'born utterly evil and crazy'. (I can read upside-down. They should start writing in French if they'd like to keep their conclusions from me.)

Oh, look at you! Thinking you'll succeed where trained minds (and I use that term loosely) have failed. I don't believe you'll be successful, but I'm in a good mood. Go ahead. Play psychiatrist. I'll behave, you have my word.

What? Too scared? I can't hurt you. See this straitjacket? They made it especially tight this time so I'll keep it on. (Not that that's ever worked before…) Oh, nothing. Just talking to myself. I am completely insane, after all. Or have you forgotten about that? All those screaming victims of mine…one of them impaled himself with a candlestick. Bled all over the carpet. Some of it even got on the walls…I had to get a stepladder to scrub it off.

You're looking a little pale. Are you afraid? There's nothing to be afraid of. There's a nice button to call for help. (Not that anyone ever comes.) And it's not even raining, for once. We're just having a nice little chat in the sunlight.

Tell you about my mother? Quid pro quo, child. Suppose I play along. I did promise, after all…but in return, I want you to tell me about your greatest fear. That's a harmless request, is it not? After all, what could I possibly do with the knowledge? I don't have my toxins, after all. You are quite safe. (Or so you think…)

I see you reaching for the panic button. Scared off so soon? What a pity, I was rather enjoying our conversation…that's better. After all, we have fifteen more minutes to chat.

Try breathing deeply. I would hate for you to faint due to lack of oxygen. There's no telling what could happen while you lay there, on the floor, dead to everything around you… (Like the fact that I'm halfway out of this wretched jacket!)

Why do I frighten people? I've never heard that question before. (Idiot!) What? Oh, nothing. The
jacket's a bit too tight, I'm losing circulation in my left arm. It's nothing. (If you only knew the truth!)
Well, now that you mention it, these aren't difficult to loosen. Just a touch. Yes, yes, our little secret. You can tighten it again before we leave and no one will be the wiser. (Until they see the body on the floor!)

You're too kind. Perhaps they can hire you… (If you weren't about to be a blubering wreck…that vial's in here somewhere!)

No one's ever been so nice to me, actually…very well. I'll tell you everything. (Just a little more to the left!) Do you have a pen ready? Does the pen work? Perfect. All right. It's true. It was Granny. She made me into this. (FREE!)

Thank you for loosening that jacket, child. It makes it easier to take off. And I had the worst itch on my nose…oh, I wouldn't bother with that button. No one ever comes. They're all too busy harassing the henchgirls in C-block. They never learn their lesson. Neither, for that matter, do you idiot interns. You know you're the third one who's let me out of that infernal jacket?

Shh, shh. There's no reason to scream. (Ah! I knew there was a vial in here! You'd think they'd learn that they can't pick apart my formula in Arkham's laboratory.) Everything's going to be fine.

Whatever is the matter? You look as though you've seen a ghost.

I'll just show myself out. I know where to collect my luggage, thank you. You just lie on that couch and rest…clear your head a little. Be good. And don't take it too badly. I've pulled this on smarter people than you.

(Must've been a beautiful baby…must've been a beautiful child…)

THE END
CAW. CAW. CAW.

He stands in the middle of the cornfield, surrounded by dead stalks and dust. He doesn't know where he is.

CAW. CAW. CAW.

It is twilight. Long shadows stretch out over the field. His own shadow looks like a demon lying in the earth.

CAW. CAW. CAW.

A crow flutters over his head and he ducks instinctively. He's forgotten how big those birds are, how savage.

The stalks in front of him move and a tall, thin man in a tattered suit and a burlap mask stands before him. He looks familiar, something about him…

CAW. CAW. CAW.

Cold blue eyes stare at him from behind the mask. He's seen those eyes before. Where has he seen those eyes before?

"Good evening."

The voice is cold, clipped, a dead monotone. He's heard that somewhere before, he knows it. Who is this? And where the hell is he…

He knows the answer to that, at least. Arlen. He's back in Arlen, Georgia, in some rotting field in the middle of nowhere. But who is this?

"How are you these days? Happy? Healthy? Wife and two-point-five kids?" The masked man chuckles mirthlessly and plucks a blade of dried grass from the dust at his feet.

"Who are you?"

The mask tilts to the side and those cold blue eyes seem to bore into his skull.

"You don't remember me, Mark?"

He does, he just can't place him. Who is this?

"I…"

"There's no reason you should, I suppose. You made it out alive. I, on the other hand…” The mouth seems to twist into a grimace. "Not so much."

Images flash in front of his eyes. Kids laughing, a skinny little boy curled up in a ball at their feet. Then everyone gets older and the skinny boy is thrown into a locker.
"Crane?" he whispers. "Jonathan Crane?"

"Very good."

**CAW. CAW. CAW.**

"Hi."

"How are you."

"Um…" What to say? "Fine. I guess. You know. Married now."

"Two point five kids?"

He forces a laugh. The sun sinks lower in the sky and he takes a deep breath. He'd like to go now, find his way out of here and never think of Crane again as long as he lives.

Another image flash in front of his eyes-Crane, squeezing a book bigger than him and trying not to be noticed. Guilt twists his stomach and he shakes his head. They were kids, kids are naturally mean little shits!

 Aren't they?

The image dissipates and the Scarecrow-god, is that really Crane under that mask? He can't be sure-is standing in front of him. When did he get there?

**CAW. CAW. CAW.**

"I need to get going…my wife will worry…"

He goes to step around him and finds his path blocked.

"If she'll worry, why aren't you wearing your ring?"

Um…"

"She's left you, hasn't she? For a younger man, I suppose, after you cheated on her one too many times." The voice is smug. "No one knows where you are. Nobody cares. Just like they never cared about me."

He turns to run and finds the Scarecrow in front of him once again. What is this, some kind of nightmare?

"There's no way out, Mark." he taunts. "Nowhere to go and nowhere to hide."

**CAW. CAW. CAW.**

He swallows hard and tries to keep his panic from spreading.

"What do you want, Crane?"

The mask moves back and forth.

"Jonny's not here. You killed him. Or don't you remember?"

Another image flashes in front of his eyes. The skinny little boy, pleading for mercy.
They threw him in the river and watched him go under.

"It was just a joke, we didn't know…"

"Some joke, kiddo." The Scarecrow advances on him, its tall shadow stretching out like a reaching hand. "Between you and the bitch that raised him, it's a miracle anything survived."

"What?"

He sees the little boy huddled in a dark place. A flock of crows comes down and everything vanishes in a flurry of feathers.

"We didn't know…"

"Now you do. Do you want a taste of fear, Mark?"

No.

He runs. The Scarecrow lets him, but he can hear him whistling, always behind him.

"Run, run, run, as fast as you can, I'll always catch you, little gingerbread man!"

That's not how it goes…?

A blade sings out and there's the sound of stalks falling to the ground. He risks looking back and sees the monster, the Scarecrow, cutting his way through the field with a scythe. He has to get out of here, has to get away, has to run…

He makes a turn and stumbles, falling to the dust with a nasty crack. Ankle. God, no…

**CAW! CAW! CAW!**

"Oh, there you are!" The Scarecrow leans on his scythe and seems to grin down at him. "Wake up."

Huh?

"Wake up, Mark. Wake up. Wakey, wakey, eggs n' bakey!"

The cornfield is gone. Everything is gone, including the pain in his ankle. All that remains of the nightmare is his heavy breathing.

Then a low, raspy chuckle comes from the darkness.

"Wake up! Time to die!"

The scythe comes down.

THE END

Chapter End Notes

Two of Scarecrow's lines come from outside sources. 'Wakey wakey' comes from a film called Kill Bill, and 'wake up, time to die' comes from Disturbed's 'Droppin' Plates'. 
Because WE ARE DISTURBED!
He is not looking forward to her visit.

They didn't invite her, she invited herself. Just sent them a letter stating that she would be visiting the week of April second and that he had better make himself available.

Not for the first time, he curses having used his vacation time so early this year.

He straightens his shirt for the umpteenth time and makes sure his glasses are spotless. He could, he supposes, just not open the door, but she'd find a way in. He knows she will. It's not worth the panic.

**Knock knock.**

Firm and brief, that's her way. He takes a deep breath and calls, "Coming, Granny."

He should have killed her when he had the chance, but he really, really hadn't wanted blood on his hands. He wasn't a murderer, for heaven's sake! Some nights, though, he lies awake, wishing he'd had the spine to get rid of her.

He opens the door. Here she stands, back straight, eyes annoyingly cataract-free, with the hated wooden cane in her hand.

"Jonathan." she croaks. "Step aside, boy."

He should just slam the door. But he lets her in, wondering why she had to come. She doesn't like him, he doesn't like her, so why is she here? He closes the door and clasps his hands behind his back, watching as she shuffles around the room, running one boney finger along every surface she can find.

"Go and get me a lemonade, Jonathan."

"Yes, Granny."

He hates lemonade.

When he returns to the room, she is studying a picture of Kitty and himself, taken shortly after their college graduation.

"Still living in sin, I see." She takes the glass from him and takes a sip. "Too much sugar."
"Sorry, Granny." At least she's not staying here. He offered-more out of fear than anything else-and she refused.

"You should be."

Shame the walls are so thin. He could strangle her otherwise. Well, maybe, if he didn't think he'd get caught. Or, more accurately, that she would hit him over the head with her cane. Or worse.

"How is your arthritis, Granny?"

"Worse by the day." she grumbles. "Well? Aren't you going to offer me a seat?"

He gestures to the couch and she sits down, her eyes flitting around the room. He can feel his hands shaking.

They sit in an awkward silence. Then…

"You always were a disappointment, boy." Oh, boy. Here it comes. "You leave your poor old Granny to fend for herself, just so you can run off and be some sort of quack doctor!"

"I…"

"After all I did for you, you left!"

He has nothing to say. What's he supposed to say? 'Seeing as you used to attack me with that cane…'

"What do you have to say for yourself?"

"Nothing." he says softly. "I'm sorry, I don't…"

She scowls and begins to cough. He hopes briefly that she'll choke to death, but she doesn't.

"Worthless." she grumbles. "Absolutely worthless."

Then why is she here? He didn't ask her to come. He'd been hoping she would have a heart attack, to be honest.

"Look at me when I'm speaking to you, boy. And sit up straight."

He just wants to disappear into the couch.

"S-sorry, Granny."

"Don't stutter."

He folds his hands in his lap and digs his nails into his palms. Why won't she leave? What are they supposed to do, anyway, sit here for half an hour, staring at the carpet?

He sighs and wonders when she's going to leave. Surely she won't stay here all afternoon.

He wishes the phone would ring. Then he could say he has to go to work. But it doesn't ring.

She's watching him. He wishes she'd blink already.

Why won't she blink?

She stands up. Is she leaving? He's off the hook? God, please let her be leaving…
"Well, I can't say I expected too much from you." she rasps. "Good bye, Jonathan."

He stands up to walk her out. She's leaving. She's leaving! She probably won't be back—surely she won't live for too much longer.

He opens the door and steps aside.

"Good bye, Granny."

He has no time to react when she strikes him hard across the face.

"Mind your tone, boy."

That's going to leave a mark. Cantankerous old hag…

"Sorry, Granny."

She sniffs and marches out. He hopes to hear the sounds of someone falling down the stairs, but he isn't so lucky.

He closes the door and goes back into the main room to put the glass in the dishwasher and get the place back in order.

Hopefully she won't come again.

THE END
Chapter Notes

Nothing to do with anything, but Jonathan and Kitty (Krane? Jitty? Fuck it, ship names are not my forte) probably do read the advice columns and offer their own advice. Which, of course, consists of, 'you're an idiot, break up' or, on occasion, 'have you tried cyanide?'

It's best that they don't have an advice column. It would end so badly.

What woke her? It's two-thirty in the morning!

Must be one of those freak things. She yawns and snuggles back against Jonathan. Back to sleep.


Well, at least it's not Batman. Batman doesn't knock. He just kicks the door down.

She rolls over and shakes him awake just as they knock again. A minute later, they're on either side of the door, armed with spray cans.

She jerks the door open and lets the can drop. Harley Quinn is standing there. She's soaking wet and her makeup is smudged and she's clutching a ratty backpack in her hands.

Upon realizing that the door has been opened, she throws the backpack inside and flings her arms around Kitty's neck, sobbing.

"I'll just go...put the kettle on." Jonathan mumbles.

"Fine." She kicks the door shut and half-guides, half-drags Harley to the bathroom to get dry clothes on. "Come on, sweetie...this way..."

Harley's clown makeup comes off with hot water—it was half off already, with the rain and the tears—and a bruise is already blossoming around her eye. Again? Idiot. The child is a moron. She's a college graduate, for heaven's sake! How can she be this stupid?

The kettle shrieks and she drops some dry pyjamas on the toilet seat.

"I'll be right back, sweetie."

"Th-thanks."

"Sure." Imbecile. She wouldn't stand for it. The first time he raised a hand to her would be the last. If she was lucky, she'd chop that hand off.

But Harley was never violent before. Annoyingly bubbly, yes, but not dangerous.

Jonathan's digging through the cupboard for something. Chamomile, probably.

"Top left."
"Thanks."

"Slip something in hers to knock her out."

A bitter grin graces his features and he pulls out a small pill bottle.

"And you yell at me if I drug the Riddler."

"You drug him for your own amusement. She'll be up all night otherwise."

"What was it this time?"

"No idea, but she's got a gorgeous bruise on her eye."

"Bet there's more."

Yeah, probably. But they don't need to know about those. They never need to know. They just need to let her cry out and maybe drug her tea so she doesn't stay up all night.

This sort of thing happens far too often.

By the time the tea is ready, Harley's moved to the sofa and is huddled there, hugging her jester's hat. The way she's sitting says there's more bruises on her back, and an old one is visible on her wrist.

Kitty says nothing. She's long given up on trying to talk sense into Harley. The only one who can do that is Harley herself, and she doesn't try.

Fucking idiot, that's what she is.

"Th-thanks, Doc."

"Sure, Harleen."

"What happened, Harley?"

"The car ran outta gas." she sniffs. "I didn't fill it up."

"Harley…"

"It was my fault." She takes a sip of tea. Good. "I should've killed the attendant and filled it."

To be fair, that would have been the logical choice.

"But I didn't, and M-Mister J…" She breaks into sobs again, hideously overdramatic ones that belong on stage. Jonathan looks pleadingly at the ceiling and Kitty tucks a slightly ratty throw blanket around her shoulders.

"It's okay, Harley. It's okay."

There's nothing else to say. They've tried interventions, they've tried cutting off ties…nothing works. Nothing ever will work.

He'll kill her one of these days. It'll be an accident, probably, but it'll happen. He may not even mention it-she may just disappear from the scene.

Stupid. Stupid kid. Says volumes about her parents.
Harley sets the now-empty mug down and lies down, still hugging the hat. In the street below, some drunk shouts at someone who cut him off. Life goes on.

"Think I'll ever do somethin' right?"

Harsh truth or comforting lie?

"There's no way of knowing, child." Jonathan says quietly. "Go to sleep, it's three in the morning."

Everyone is silent for ten minutes. Eventually, Harley's tears stop as she falls asleep. Good. Very good.

They leave her on the couch and go back to bed. She won't be here in the morning-she never is. She'll be back with the Joker by six AM.

How many times will it take?

"I don't understand her." Jonathan says. "How can she be so delusional? I was never this delusional."

"She's not you."

"Obviously." He turns off the light and mutters his token complaints when she curls up on top of him. "She's an idiot."

"I know."

And that ends the conversation. He falls asleep soon enough, but she remains awake, watching the rain fall on the street lamps outside. Sometimes a car will pass, other times a shadow that might be the Batman. The little bar across the street has a neon sign that blinks insistently. The 'B' is out. A few blocks over, police sirens wail. There's been another mugging gone wrong, probably.

Life goes on.

THE END
You all owe me BIG for this. It took all my narrator powers to get us in here. Ahem…

Welcome to Arkham Asylum! This is the high security ward, where all the fun…erm, psychotic costumed lunatics go. Not everyone's in right now-God, this place has awful security-but we've got a few familiar faces to see!

What? Back off, I'm the narrator. I'm allowed in here. What do you mean, I work for Crane? I do not! He hates me!

"I do not. She works for me, Doctor."

Shut up, are you trying to get us kicked…you sneaky little monster.

Hang on. I have a clearance card…what? They're with me, they're fine.

"Why did you bring them? It's bad enough that I'm in Arkham, but I can't even get a respite from you?"

We thought we'd drop in.

Anyway. High security ward. Smells, doesn't it? They need to get some Lysol down here.

"That would be the bout of stomach flu that's been going around."

Isn't there a medical building?

"Overflowing."

You know, I think he's trying to get us to leave.

"Where ever did you get that idea?"

To your right we've got Joker's cell, all nice and ready for when he gets back from…erm…blowing things up, I guess. I try to leave the Joker alone.

"Oh, you're nice to the clown but not to me."

I only hurt you out of love.

"Humph."

And here's Jervis Tetch, the Mad Hatter. Say hi to Jervis, everyone.

"I wouldn't get too close. He's got the flu."

Maybe say hi from a distance, everyone. Like, from down the hall?

And this is Doctor Crane.

"The least you could do is break us out instead of standing there acting like a tour guide."

Hmm.
What do you think? On one hand, leaving them in here is the right thing to do. After all, these people are mass murderers and generally a danger to society.

On the other hand, I don't relish getting my name on their shit list.

Which is worse? Leaving him in here to plot his revenge against us, or letting him out and getting killed on the spot?

THE END
Hang on, stop shoving. No molesting the inmates!

"Now look what you've done. You've started a riot."

Shut up, I'm counting hands.

Um…okay. Release the inmates. You're sure about this? Really sure? These people are homicidal maniacs!

"You counted the hands. The passkey is two-eight-zero, on that keypad. So go push it."

If I die, I'll come back to haunt you all.

"Hurry up and press the buttons."

Mother…

Um…two…eight…zero…enter.

Oh, god, what have we done?

"All right. Everyone back away very slowly and I won't snap her neck."

Help.

"I will deal with you later. Into the cells, please. Thank you."

Do you really have to squeeze my neck?

"I'll break it if you don't shut up!"

This was a bad idea.

"Yes. And rest assured, I will be framing the lot of you as accomplices to Gotham's Rogues Gallery. Good afternoon."

Somebody call Batman…

"I don't think so. Shouldn't have visited in the daytime."

Crap.

"Since you like audience participation so much, let's play a little game called Save-the-Narrator. Promise not to follow, and I'll send her back in one piece. You have my word. Call the Batman or the police, and I make no such guarantee."

THE END
Good Ending

Chapter Notes

Or suppose we left them in.

Um...how do I say this nicely...

You're stuck in there. Sorry. Majority rules and all.

"You little...let me out of here right now."

Blame them. I had nothing to do with it.

"You brought them here."

They didn't have to click on this story...hey, why are the cells opening?

Oh, god, who let the crazies out of the box?

"Back away. Now."

Who is responsible for this? We said to leave them in!

"That's the problem with relying on honesty. Come along."

I'm gonna die, aren't I.

"That's likely. Anyone calls the Batman or the police, and the Narrator dies. Is that quite clear?"

Somebody call the police-ow! Do you really have to squeeze my neck?

"I'll break it if you don't shut up. It's up to you. Keep your mouths shut and I'll consider releasing her. Touch that panic button and you all die."

Help.

"Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Be good. Watch out for the lunatics on the upper floors-they don't have my restraint."

THE END
"Today we're going to discuss our first murders."

Oh? That was a suicidal idea. Why in the world did she think this was a good idea?

Oh, never mind. She'd be sorry soon enough. In the meantime, he could sit back and watch the fun.

"I wanna go first, I wanna go first!"

Harley. Of course. She was enthusiastic about everything. He suspected it was a classic case of insecurity and maybe a touch of ADHD, but he couldn't sure about that last one.

"All right, Harley."

She squealed-ow-and practically bounced out of her seat. He was slightly gratified to see that he wasn't the only one rolling his eyes at this.

"It was this gas station attendant, and he wouldn't fill up the tank like I told him to, so I stabbed him in the eye with my shoe because the cops were right behind us." She paused. "Ruined a perfectly good pair of shoes."

Their attending doctor looked a little squeamish at that. Ha.

"How did that make you feel?"

"I didn't even care, 'cept for the shoes."

Oh, she was expecting anyone in this room to feel remorse? Ah, the newbies…she'd learn soon enough. If she didn't end up an inmate here herself. Or dead. That tended to happen a lot.

"Okay. Does anyone else want to share? Jonathan?"

Oh, why not? He didn't have to tell them why-although he had a good excuse.

"I killed my great-grandmother." And promptly went home and took a shower because Scarecrow had slopped blood all over him on the way there. Clumsy alter.

"You WHAT?"

"Harley…"

"Ya killed your grandma? That's awful! Jonny, don't ya have any sense of family?"

"No."

"Ohana means family! Family means nobody gets left behind or forgotten! Or killed!"

"Not in my house."

"Did you have any reason, Jonathan?"

"Not exactly, Doctor." And that would be the end of this discussion. "Have you ever killed anyone, Doctor Combs?"
Oh, the widened eyes, the shaking lips, the sudden realization that this was a terrible idea! He always loved it when that happened.

"I think that's the end of the session."

Harley, unsurprisingly, refused to let it go. Apparently she still had some semblance of a moral compass. Or, more likely, had been watching too many Disney movies.

"Did ya really kill your grandma?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Never you mind."

"But Jonny…"

"Harleen, if you enjoy what's left of your sanity, you will drop the subject right now and never bring it up again."

"But…"

"Remember what happened to my nosy psychiatrist? The one that broke a picture and slit his wrists with the glass?"

"Yes?"

"Do you want that to be you?"

"No?"

"Then drop it."

THE END
Ahh.

There was nothing—well, almost nothing—like a hot shower after a busy day. His subject had finally died—they all did, unless they were rescued and sent to the psych ward first. Really, death was preferable. As far as he was concerned, anyway.

But now the water had gone cold and it was time to get out and maybe look over his notes before bed.

Funny, it felt like there should have been more steam in here...oh, well.

Where were his pajamas? He'd set them right there...had they fallen off? He knew he'd brought them in here. *Knew* it.

Not again.

"Kitty!"

"Yes?"

"Don't try the innocent trick! What did you do with my clothes?"

"Aren't they in there?"

Every. Damn. Time. One of these days he was going to start locking the bathroom door for protection.

Who was he kidding? She'd pick the lock. He'd just have to start hiding them under the sink or something.

"Give them back!"

"I don't have them!"

Fine. He'd play along. But he was staying right here until the situation was resolved.

"Where are they, then?"

"Don't look at me."

He wasn't coming out until the clothes were returned, and that was final.

THE END
Clothing

He doesn't mind that she wears his clothes sometimes, he just minds that she never gives them back.

He had a flannel in college-nothing special, just a light blue plaid flannel shirt. It was warm. He liked it. So did she, apparently. She borrowed it one night to make a run to the store and it found its way into her side of the closet.

Scarecrow thought it looked better on her, anyway.

Later, when he had a job at Arkham, she had a habit of stealing his button-ups to wear around the house. Invariably, he never got them back. Ever.

Scarecrow thought those looked better on her as well. For once, Jonathan agreed with him.

Then, somehow or another, she'd stolen his straitjacket-seriously?-and turned it into a coat. It looked warm, actually. And convenient for hiding canisters in. He didn't mind that one so much. He didn't like straitjackets.

Scarecrow, unsurprisingly, loved it. He would.

And now this.

She'd gotten for him, on purpose, and he'd actually worn it. So why is she wearing it now? That's the goodbye-kiss for his clothing, seeing them on her.

"Kitty!"

"What?"

"You have shirts."

"They're all bloodstained. I'll give it back, I promise."

No, she won't. He'll be stealing it back, though, because it's soft and he wears it all the time.

Maybe this time he'll hide it.

THE END
Every year here we have a tourist who dies of heat. Arizona is HOT, y'all. HOT. Drink lots of water. (It's already 109 most days right now, and it's only going to get hotter.)

Gotham usually avoids the major heat waves. It's nothing like Georgia, which is a blessing. Unfortunately, the more years he spends here, the more sensitive he gets to heat. So when the worst heat wave in thirty years hits in July, he is not prepared. And he. Is. Miserable.

It's midnight when he awakes to find himself lying on his stomach, his shirt sticking to his body and the sheet somewhere around his knees. He's slick with sweat and for a drowsy minute he wonders if he's back in Arlen, or if he's sick.

Then he realizes that the cheap floor fan they stole has finally broken.

Fuck.

He throws the slightly sticky shirt into the corner and pulls the sheet up to his lower back. After a minute, he flips the pillow over as well.

Ugh.

Why couldn't the fan have broken when the heat wave was over?

He drags himself out of bed and over to the window. The glass is still warm and there's nobody out tonight. They're all sitting inside with their working fans, he's sure. How dare they have working fans?

This just isn't fair.

Wait. Maybe he can fix the fan. How hard can it be? If he can make fear toxin, and break out of Arkham on a regular basis (not to mention stay out), he can fix the fan.

Never mind that he's not mechanically inclined. If he gets electrocuted, hopefully he ends up in the cold circle of Hell.

Okay. He'll try unplugging it and plugging it back in. Aand…no. Okay. There's nothing clogging the blades? (Can that even happen?) Maybe hitting it will help.

SMACK!

Ow…no.

"Jonathan?" Oops. "Love, what are you…what are you doing?"

"The fan broke." And it refuses to fix itself. Because it's evil. "Go back to sleep."

"Leave it alone, it was making a nasty noise yesterday."
He sighs and returns to bed, only bothering with the covers because it feels weird without them.

It's too hot. He flips the pillow yet again, shoves the blankets back down and tries to remember what the fan felt like.

THE END
I have this little theory that Arlen is some kind of ruined town with an ugly history. Maybe I'll look into that sometime. Takes place between All Those Things You Fear and College Days, probably while they're packing up to move.

"Who's that?"

"Janice Ambry. If you ever get dragged into going to a church potluck, don't eat the turkey. She never cooks it enough."

Ew.

"Thanks for the tip."

"You're welcome." She scans the crowd and points to an old man. "I haven't met him, either."

"That's...oh, my god."

"Who is it?"

"That's Doctor Gottreich."

"Huh?"

"He must be visiting...he left about seven years ago, after the accident."

"Accident?"

"You know Lulu May Johnson?"

"That's the...um...challenged woman, right?"

"Yeah. She's always been a little off, but not like that. She used to be able to brush her teeth, at least. She was just obnoxious. Like a toddler." The old man steps aside for somebody to pass him. "Her mother asked Gottreich to fix her, and he gave her a lobotomy."

"Are you serious?"

"Mm-hm. He'd done it before, but this time it went really wrong and now she's...well. You've seen her. He left, of course. I don't know why he's back."

She looks at the spindly old man and shudders. Lunatic.

"Granny used to tell me she'd take me to get one if I didn't behave. Every time I had to see him for something I was convinced she'd scheduled it and didn't tell me."

"Your grandmum was a nutter."
"Yes…why's he coming over here?"

Why should she know? She hasn't even met the man in person! She doesn't really want to, but it doesn't look like she's got a choice.

"Jonathan Crane?"

"Sir."

"It's been a long time."

"Yes."

"Where is your grandmother?" Why did he have to have clawed hands? Was that an old person trait or just a creepy person trait?

Hopefully the doctor didn't hear the little laugh in Jonathan's voice when he said, "She couldn't come out today."

Or any day ever again, but that will remain their little secret. She'd offered to help him bury her, but he'd shaken his head and said there wasn't enough left. Fair enough.

"What a shame." Somehow, his bent back and tiny spectacles do nothing to make him less creepy. If anything, he's now at the perfect height to drive an ice pick into her eye. "Who's this?"

"This is Kitty Richardson."

"Friend of yours?"

What is it with this town that when they say 'friend', it comes out meaning 'personal hooker'? Like their ex-classmates are little saints. These righteous old people should pop into the girl's locker room at lunchtime. They'll certainly get an eyeful.

"She moved here at the beginning of the school year."

And will be moving out in another month, so there.

"How are you enjoying Arlen, Miss Richardson?"

Ugh, even his voice gives her the creepy-crawlies. And his eyes are most certainly not on her face. Where's Scarecrow when you need him?

"It's…nice." It'll be nicer when it's in her rearview mirror.

"Yes." This is horrible, but maybe he'll get heatstroke?

"It was a pleasure meeting you. Good afternoon, Jonathan."

Once he's far enough away, she makes a gagging noise.

"I don't like him."

"Can't blame you. Let's go in, it's hot."

Really? She hadn't noticed.
If she never meets that creep again, it will be too soon.

THE END
Incarceration

Chapter Summary

So a few days ago I woke up at three AM to something scrabbling in my trash bin. I thought it was a roach-we've had construction, they've been in the sewers, and I've seen some outside that have clearly come up from the depths. So I psych myself up (I HATE THEM SO MUCH) to go slap a binder over the bin so it can't fly out, and a MOUSE hops out instead. A. MOUSE. Just moved in-there were no signs when I deep-cleaned earlier that day.

IT SUCKED SO BAD.

Arkham's breakfast was questionable at best and 'do not eat if you don't want food poisoning' at worst.

Actually, all of their meals were like that. To be fair, the canteen wasn't much better. If anything, it was safer to eat the inmates' food. The odds of there being actual poison in it was much lower.

This morning it was oatmeal. They claimed it was oatmeal, anyway. It didn't look like oatmeal. It (probably) didn't taste like oatmeal. It didn't smell like anything, oatmeal or otherwise.

Nope. He had the stomach flu.

He forced a few bites in-better that than the possibility of the feeding tube-before shoving it aside. There. Breakfast. Ugh. Thank god he wasn't much of a breakfast-eater.

"Morning, love."

"Hi, Kitty…when did you get here?"

"One in the morning. Surprised you didn't hear it."

"I was in solitary for manipulating my therapist into jumping out the window."

"Did he die?"

"No. He landed on an orderly and they're both in the hospital."

"Damn."

"How'd you get back?"

"Batman. Harley and I were having a girls' night out, since you and Joker were in here, and he didn't like it."

"What were you doing?"

"Shopping. It's not my fault if we had to kill the clerk for being a perv." Oh. That explained a lot. "I got you something. They took it from me, though, so you'll have to wait until I can take it back."
"What is it?"

"You'll see." She leaned over and kissed his nose. "After being thrown into a mannequin and dragged back here at one AM, you'd think they could give me something besides…goop."

He would have appreciated something else, too, but it couldn't be helped. Although…it wasn't horribly difficult to break out when there were two of them.

"What'd you get me, anyway?"

"It's a secret."

"Kitty-!"

"Fine." She grinned at him and prodded the glass of pulpy orange juice. "You know that song that Scarecrow likes? 'When You're Evil'?"

"Yes…"

"I found a shirt with a line from it."

"What line?"

"While there's grannies left to trip down the stairs…"

Thank god this was Arkham. Nobody noticed if you burst out laughing in the middle of breakfast.

THE END
Oh, god, oh, god…help…

"Be quiet. You should have been more careful. Leading a group of obsessive fans into a place with terrible security and manipulative residents? You brought this on yourself."

I'm really sorry for dredging up your terrible childhood?

"A bit late now. Come along. If you behave, I might not experiment on you. We'll see."

Somebody call the Batman…

"Ah-ah-ah. They're locked in my old cell, and didn't you all have to check your phones at the desk?"

Shit. To anyone intending to write a 'Scarecrow kidnapped me!' story-THIS ISN'T FUN!

"Really? I'm rather enjoying it…stop trying to grab things, you'll only rip your fingernails out. Just…cooperate…and maybe you won't…die!"

HELP! POLICE! BATMAN!

"They're not coming. They don't care. Stop squirming, you'll only hurt yourself…ah. Here we are."

Um, Doctor Crane? I'm really, really sorry, I'll never do it again, and I promise not to tell. Honest. So…um…let go?

"No."

Somebody tell my mother I'm sorry I ate the chocolate cake!

"Shut up…there. Much better."

MMFF!

"Can't make so much noise with a gag in your mouth, can you? At last, some peace and quiet…I should do this to all the idiots that use me for grammar practice."

BWEFE!

"What? Can't breathe? That's hardly my problem…stop thrashing or I'll have to break your neck and nobody will have any fun at all. Although I suppose I could rig you up and wait for somebody to find you…their reaction might be interesting…"

…

"I thought so. Listen up, you little lurkers. Scary Scarecrows is no longer available. She's taking a little holiday for her…mental health. Choose your comments wisely-I have a new batch of toxin waiting for me at home and I've been dying to try it out. You wouldn't want anything to happen to her, would you?"

THE END
The Scarecrow wasn't the worst boss in the world. Sure, he didn't always pay them and yeah, sometimes he'd use them for a test subject, but it could have been worse. He could have been the Joker. For all the Scarecrow's faults, he didn't shoot someone because they got a pimple. Besides, he gave them holidays. Sometimes. As long as they worked on Halloween, of course.

No, he could have been much worse. But there was one small thing that nobody enjoyed. Miss Richardson.

She was nicer than he was, most of the time. She was certainly happy to make tea and scones for whoever was on guard duty. Unfortunately, she was also small and pretty. And Scarecrow's girlfriend.

It was one thing to look at the boss's girl. If they were careful, they could even discuss her. But if Scarecrow so much as suspected one of them of…ill behavior…that someone would be sorry.

Early on, no one had known what would happen. Sure, most guys would get jealous if someone was ogling their girl, but most guys weren't psychotic. Unfortunately, the first guy to point out that Miss Richardson was hot didn't know this.

"Yeah, if I could get with her just once, I…"

"Mr. Nickels!"

Crap. If the boss wanted something, it was probably bad.

"Yeah, boss?"

"Come here."

Nickels shrugged and sauntered over to the tall, thin figure. He was forgotten about until the screaming started.

"Oh, God! GetthemoffgetthemoffGETTHEMOFF!"

The four other men turned in time to see Nickels' fingers entering his mouth. Then there was a horrible ripping noise and a gurgling wail. Blood spattered onto the Scarecrow and he reached over and tapped the man on the shoulder.

"Boo."

Nickels did not stop screaming for another twenty minutes.

"Consider this my only warning."

Yes, Scarecrow was a fine boss as far as bosses went. As long as they kept their eyes to themselves
and their mouths shut.

THE END
Escape

Chapter Notes

Seriously, I doubt that Jonathan deleted every little detail about Arkham when he...erm...quit.

Jonathan Crane has a lot of disadvantages. He's breakable, prone to pneumonia, and an insomniac-sometimes to the point of danger. But he has one crucial advantage over the other inmates.

He worked here. He has seen every single blueprint and wandered through every single room, even the falling-apart ones. Breaking out of Arkham is no picnic, but he has an easier time of it than the others. It helps that the passwords haven't been changed in years, and he remembers them all.

So when the Joker breaks out one evening and causes an absolutely huge to-do, Jonathan takes the opportunity to slip away from the mess hall and into one of the janitor's closets. This one leads to a walled-off portion of the building. He used to use it for testing, but now he'll use it to get out of here.

The dusty old rooms creak and groan as he walks through, as though trying to give him away. Ha! If anyone knows about this part of the asylum-he doubts it-they'll have a hard time getting in. Besides, there's other places to go.

He keeps extra clothes down here for times like this. Hopefully the rats haven't found them...ah! There they are. Nice and hole-free. He slips out of the orange jumpsuit and puts them on. They're soft against his skin.

There! The trapdoor that leads out under the grounds. Hopefully no one's up there...no. There's no voices or footsteps. He's safe.

He pushes the trapdoor open and clambers out onto the grass. Time to go home.

He jumps the wall and slips down the darkened alley, listening to the barking dogs. They may catch the Joker, but by the time they notice he's missing, he'll be long gone.

They haven't had time to move and he lets himself into the abandoned apartment without a sound. It's hard to believe it's only been four days since he was here last. The screams and laughter always disorient him.

"Kitty?" he calls. "I'm home."

THE END
Accidents

Chapter Notes

Positively ANCIENT-so any weird characterizations should be ignored.

It was all Batman's fault. Obviously the overgrown rodent hadn't remembered what his toxins actually did.

He tried very hard not to breathe, but when his head was being jerked back and the canister pressed against his face, it was unavoidable.

Granny! Dear god, he hadn't heard her voice for years! He'd hoped never to hear it again. And then…oh, god help him.

She was there! But she wasn't…right. She and the Batman had merged into one being.

A hand was around his neck and he was shaken. What did it want? Why was it here?

*It's not real, it's just an idiot in a costume.*

Scarecrow was wrong. This was definitely real.

*No, it's not! Listen to me, Jonny, it's all in your head!*

No, it was real! What did it want from him? Was Hell real after all?

"Who are you working for?"

That was all? Maybe he would make it out of here okay.

"Ra's." he whispered. "Ra's al Ghul."

"Ra's al Ghul is dead! Who are you working for?"

He tried to turn his head away and the grip on his neck tightened. What more did it want? He'd told it who he was working for!

Scarecrow took over his vocal cords and he heard himself say, "Doctor Crane isn't here right now, but if you'd like to make an appointment…"

Then he was slammed against the wall and everything vanished.

This time was mostly his own fault. He could blame Scarecrow, technically, but they'd both thought it was a good idea at the time.

Kitty was always so jumpy these days. Somehow or another, Scarecrow had gotten the idea to sneak up on her and put his hands over her eyes.

That was a huge mistake.
They got an elbow to the stomach and fear gas to the face before she realized who it was, and she wasn't particularly sorry.

"What'd you do that for?"

By that point, of course, he was too far gone to answer her question.

When he came out of it two hours later, he and Scarecrow agreed never to do that again.

This time was an accident, but at least by now he knew what to expect.

One of their subject had gotten loose and flung the vial onto the floor before bolting. He had just enough time to sit down before it overwhelmed him and he was thrown back into the chapel with the birds.

They weren't attacking him this time, but they knew he was there. He could feel them watching him. Where was Scarecrow? Scarecrow always took care of him.

"Scarecrow?"

The straw man didn't answer and Jonathan hugged his knees. He was alone again.

"Scarecrow, please."

He'd always hated the sound of his voice as a child, high and desperate. Right now he didn't even care.

"Scarecrow!"

Shouting upset the birds and they took flight, cawing and rustling their feathers. A moment later, they were on him, tearing his skin and clothes to shreds.

THE END
Buyer Beware

Chapter Notes

I have no sympathy for any moron that buys drugs from the Scarecrow. Um, HELLO! Do you not watch the news or anything? Even if you're completely oblivious, he's wearing a glorified potato sack. I don't know about you, but I don't want to buy anything from that guy.

Sometimes Jonathan Crane wishes he was still employed at Arkham. He doesn't wish for it very often, but right now he's tired and more than a little grouchy.

"Look what your drugs did to my customers!"

_You're buying from a man with a sack over his head and a nasty criminal history, cretin._

"Buyer beware. I told you my compound would take you places. I never said they'd be places you wanted to go."

The men he brought with him crack their knuckles and scowl. Is it so hard to get semi-educated help in this town? Really?

"Repeat customers!"

He shrugs and glances at his watch. The man's dogs growl at him and he narrows his eyes. He likes dogs, but not these ones. They tore his sofa apart _and_ knocked over his tea. Ill-behaved little monsters.

"If you don't like what I have to offer, you can buy from someone else. Assuming the Batman left anyone to buy from." Idiot. The first chance he gets, he's gassing both him and his dogs.

_His little dogs, too? Jonny, Jonny…_

_If you quote that movie one more time, just one…_

"My dogs are hon-gray!"

Oh, he's incapable of pronouncing 'hungry'? Dear god…he'll never work with mob members again.

He catches sight of something that may or may not be the Batman. Fantastic. He's beginning to develop a sinus headache.

Gunfire rings out and he ducks behind the hired help. That's not Batman. Batman doesn't shoot at people. Time to leave.

Not-Batman makes the mistake of grabbing him and he sprays them in the face, allowing himself a small smirk when they go down shrieking.

_Vroom!_
Oh, yes. That's the real Batman, make no mistake. How he got up here is, of course, another matter.

Real Batman or not, he's not sticking around for this.

He hits something but shakes it off just as quickly. Just a few more turns…

*Fwam!*

What the…drat.

Batman has landed on his van. The van was ugly, but still. No vehicle should have to suffer a flying rodent landing on its hood.

His mask is yanked off and he is dropped with the imposters in the garage. He'll only be here for a few minutes, but Batman doesn't need to know that.

"I don't need help!"

"Not my diagnosis."

All right, maybe that wasn't the smartest idea, but he couldn't resist.

He sits there for ten minutes or so, listening to the complaining Not-Batmen, before the sound of a car reaches his ears. Ah. His ride is here.

"Aw, shit, it's the cops."

Oh, they'll only wish it was the cops.

The black car parks in front of them and opens up.

"Hot cop." one of them breathes. He makes a mental note to give this one an extra dose of toxin.

"O-officer…"

"Shut up, you." Kitty Richardson gives him a peck on the cheek and takes a bobby pin to his handcuffs. "Batman?"

"Of course."

"Typical…there."

He stretches and puts his glasses on. *Much* better.

"Aw, shit." a Not-Batman whimpers. It's the cheeky one that has to ogle. He won't make that mistake again.

He gasses them and walks away, listening to the horrified wails.

"Sorry I'm late, traffic was a mess."

He takes the keys and slides into the driver's seat, more than ready to go home and take a nice, hot shower.

THE END
Harry Moon lay back and breathed a sigh of relief. Three long years and he was finally free! Free from Scarecrow and that crazy girlfriend of his.

It wasn't that Moon wasn't afraid of the Scarecrow. Oh, he was. The man had eyes that could put an iceberg to shame. Norman Bates would bow down before him. But Kitty Richardson…dear god, she was worse. Scarecrow could just…drive you mad. But Kitty waited. She waited until you weren't expecting it and *then* got you. Made a guy nervous, just being near her. Not to mention Scarecrow had a jealous streak. Understandably, of course. If Moon had been that lucky, he'd be jealous, too.

He looked at the alley wall and took a deep breath. He'd gotten on their shit list, make no mistake. Leading the Batman to them(for the last time, it was an accident!)had not been good. He was lucky they'd both survived, or things might get ugly.

He was about to stand up when there was the unmistakable, horrible, sound of a spray can.

"Really, Jonathan, you made a mess of that one."

"Wasn't my fault he gouged his eyes out."

"Ick."

Kitty Richardson shook her head and wrapped her coat tightly around her.

"Well, come on. That git gave me a headache and I'm tired."

"You always have a headache."

"You have bad timing."

Jonathan Crane rolled his eyes but stuffed his canister back in his pocket.

THE END
Kitty Richardson looked in the mirror, frowned, and reached for her makeup. She needed to make a trip to a nearby Ulta soon.

She was midway through her mascara when Jonathan Crane stuck his head in.

"Have you seen my shirt?"

"Which shirt?"

"The bloodstain free one."

"Um…should be in the metal locker." Wait a minute. Were those…yes! They were! "Jonathan, are those eye bags?"

"Maybe."

Hah! Finally!

She wasn't a vain person, for the most part, but it had always irritated her that he could go out in-quite literally-sackcloth and look fine (a bit too fine, the bastard) and she had to fuss. She felt extremely gratified that finally all those late nights had caught up with him.

"Why?"

"Oh, nothing."

"No, really. Why do you ask?"

Because now your perfect face isn't so perfect, and now I don't have to spend quite as long in front of the mirror.

"Just surprised." she said. "You seem to avoid those."

"Lucky."

Shut up! I can enjoy it for once, seeing as they'll be gone tomorrow.

"Don't rub it in." she grumbled. "You could walk into a door and avoid a bruise."

"I've had black eyes before."

"And I have uneven patches constantly. So shut up and let me enjoy the moment."

He shrugged and went back out. A minute later, he came back and glanced in the mirror.
"They're not *that* visible, are they?"

THE END
The differences are subtle-a change in tone, in vocabulary. A hardening of the eyes. A relaxation of his posture. The untrained eye will miss all of these. But she can always tell.

Sometimes the signs aren't so obvious-a tightening of the grip, for instance, or a sudden decision to sing the *Scooby-Doo* theme in the shower. She can tell then, too, but sometimes it takes it a minute to register.

The most subtle sign of all is his handwriting. If Jonathan leaves her a note-*Gone out shopping*-it's always in a messy doctor's scrawl. Sometimes she has to strain to read it because he's barely pressed the pen to the paper.

Scarecrow doesn't leave notes when he can help it. When he does, they're borderline illegible-*Gotcha something, meet me in the bedroom at six*.

Oh, yes, the differences are subtle. But they're there, and she can always spot them.

THE END
"Eaten!"

"I know."

"By that…that…thing!"

"I recall the details, thank you."

"What do these people take me for? I liked the glove. I might use the body-bag trick. But eaten, Kitty! Like a chip! I don't even like chips!"

Kitty sighed and rubbed her temples. He was upset. She couldn't blame him, but he was being a little ridiculous.

She honestly didn't know where he'd gotten the thing or why. She didn't care, either. All that mattered was that he had found some Batman game, huffed at it, and then found out they'd included him as a villain. The game had been fun. Then Killer Croc had eaten the Scarecrow.

"It's a game, love. Just a game. They did good otherwise."

"Eaten." he seethed. "If I find out whose idea that was, so help me…"

"Yes, yes, I know. They'll be banished into a never-ending nightmare."

"Worse! I'll feed them to Croc, see how they like it!"

Fine, fine. Now would he please shut up so she could read in peace?

Jonathan flopped down in his armchair, caressing his mask in his hands and scowling at the game case.

"Eaten." he muttered. "Humph."

He was quiet after that. Finally! Now she could sit back and enjoy her paperback.

"I might get one of those gloves, though."

"No."

THE END
Kitty Richardson had never really had worries about her boyfriend. Well, normal ones. She was pretty sure worrying about getting caught by the Batman didn't count.

As of late, though, there'd been some crazy people stalking them. Really! What kind of nutters got a crush on a guy in a mask who turned people into raving lunatics? She brought it up to Jonathan once, but he thought it was funny.

"I should gas them and see what happens." he joked.

"They'll probably chase you down for another helping."

She seriously considered dealing with it herself, but then decided that they were probably just stupid teenagers. She'd her fair share of stalkers, after all. Again…why? She would never know.

She was taking notes on a new subject when the door flew open. It slammed shut a second later.

"Jonathan?"

"Next time, you're going."

"Why?"

"They're waiting outside."

"Really?"

"They followed me all over the place! Batman could learn from them."

"Okay."

"Go deal with them."

"No!"

"Yes! They tried to hug me."

Oh, for…really? Really? These people must be insane.

"Why didn't you gas them?"

"I was in broad daylight and for once, nobody recognized me. Except them."

"Jonathan," she said slowly, "I told you so. Remember?"
"Punch me in the face. Maybe the bruises will turn them off."

"No. Then you'll just look pathetic and they'll love you even more."

He sighed.

"I'm never going out again."

Well. At least they'd scared him straight. Better safe than sorry. No one could accuse her of having a jealous streak, but…it was still nice to know.

When he'd gone to bed, she slipped outside with a handful of twenties.

"Thanks, girls."

THE END
Well, no one ever said that Gotham was clean. Their new flat-slightly nicer than most, since there's two incomes-is, well...ew.

Jonathan Crane can practically smell the roaches that he's sure inhabit this place. Sure enough, one skitters out from the bathroom. Kitty shrieks and all but clambers up his shoulders. Scarecrow wishes she was in front instead of in back. Jonathan wishes she'd get down. He's not exactly a professional wrestler.

It's cold in here. Gotham doesn't have nice weather, either. His lungs never did recuperate from that last bout of pneumonia, and he resigns himself to a very unpleasant cold and flu season.

The roach comes towards them and he drops his books on it. There's a crunch. Kitty finally gets down but sticks close, tensed to climb again. He sighs. Yeah. It's going to take a while to get used to this place.

A job promotion has allowed them to move. Kitty provides the new owners with a sticky note about the roach problem.

The new flat is roach free and in a slightly better part of town. Although, really, any part of town is better than the Narrows. Arkham is in the narrows and as such, that area is dangerous. The security is good, but not always good enough.

This new place smells better-more bleach than roach-and there's more room. They decide on a new TV set-the old one is absolutely horrible.

The only problem with this place is the bat population. Bats adore the city, and the air is a bit better here, so they love it. Jonathan hates bats. They remind him too much of crows.

There's insects outside the window their first night and they bring the bats. Kitty shuts the drapes and comes up with a distraction for him. Scarecrow approves of the distraction.

Their final flat is the nicest of the nice. Being employed at Arkham isn't exactly a desirable job, so the pay is good. They have to have some incentive, Jonathan supposes.

The bats are still bad here, but the pollution is not and besides, the police take good care of this neighborhood. Several prominent mob members live in it.

This is nicer than his room in Georgia. The furniture is white-a stark contrast to the stained, chipped pieces he had there-and the mirrors reflect what sunlight they get. Kitty's put up some pictures to perk it up, mostly pictures of European landmarks, and the walls are a light blue. Nothing here reminds him of home, and for that he is grateful.
The rest of the flat is a wide, open space decorated primarily with bookshelves. An old record player sits against the far wall. They found it in a thrift shop and three weekends later, had gotten it to work.

Yes. This one is good. Hopefully they can stay here for a long time.

THE END
Nightlife

There's something about being awake when everyone else is asleep that's just so…enjoyable.

He doesn't sleep much—he never has. First it was the ever-present fear that Granny would burst into his room, furious over some real or imagined wrongdoing. Then, later, it was usually physical pain. Neither the crows nor his classmates took pains to be gentle.

By college, the nightmares had gotten a firm foothold. And the sleep paralysis. And it was then that he realised how…different…Gotham is at night.

Sometimes he just lies in bed, listening to Kitty's breathing and the rain on the window pane. She's always warm and it's always reassuring to have her arms wound loosely around his neck.

Other times, when he just can't stay in bed another moment, he'll slip out from under the covers and go to the window to look at the city. The traffic is almost non-existent and Gotham always looks so wet and cold at three in the morning.

Right now he's leaning against the cold glass, watching the wind blow the trees so the tops are nearly entangled in each other. The streetlights cast little halos on the street and the occasional drunk pedestrian stumbles by, trying to hail a cab.

The glass is cold against his skin and he straightens up to go back to bed. He might not be able to sleep, but at least he'll be warm under the blankets.

Kitty moves closer to him and he rubs her shoulders. He's still not sleeping. Sometimes a car will drive by, its lights playing on the ceiling.

Ah, the life of an insomniac.

THE END
He likes screams. It's not that at all. But this one…this one not so much.

He turns around, hoping that it's…something else…and doesn't see her.

Oh dear god, she's fallen off the roof.

"Kitty?"

*Please don't have a broken neck, please don't have a broken neck…*

She doesn't answer him.

He makes his way to the edge, hoping that she's just too winded or something and knowing that's not the case.

"Kitty, please…"

"Jonathan!"

He's going to kill her for scaring him like that, he really will.

"Don't move! What's broken?"

"Nothing!" What? "Look what I landed on!"

Maybe he'll throw her off the roof himself for scaring him like that. It would serve her right.

He swallows hard, looks, and has to sit down.

She's landed on the Batman.

Seriously. She's on a balcony-she'd have been fine anyway, then, thank God-but she somehow managed to land on the Batman.

This is the only time in his life that he is grateful for Batman's insistence in being at every show.

"Stay there, I'm coming down to get you."

"There's a ladder."

Good. When she gets up it, he'll throw her back off. Jesus Christ…

He pulls her up the last few rungs and hugs her, silently swearing that the next time she does this, he really will throw her off the roof.

"What's this for?"

"Don't scare me like that again."

"I didn't do it on purpose."

"How did you fall off the roof?"
"I slipped."

"You…slipped."

"Yes."

One of these days…

"You just need to stay at home in a padded room."

"Hey!"

"You trip over the coffee table, even though it hasn't moved for six months!"

"I don't trip, it leaps out in front of me!"

He sighs and wonders if he has white hair now.

"Just…just don't do that again."

THE END
She'd managed to avoid him for about fifteen minutes, mostly by doubling back and hiding in the shadows. Not bad, really. Considering.

She was more than a little skittish about the glove, really. That thing was an accident waiting to happen, especially since it didn't fit her very well.

She was minding her own business, wondering where he'd gotten to, when she was-literally-swept off her feet and slammed into a gargoyle.

Ow.

That was going to leave a mark.

"What's the plan, Crane?"

That was for her to know and him to wonder about, wasn't it? Besides, she was rather insulted that he hadn't recognized her. 'Greatest detective', indeed! That had always been, and always would be, Sherlock Holmes.

Preferably as played by Benedict Cumberbatch.

She shrugged and watched him come closer. A little more…little more…why was he stopping? Was the great Batman scared of needles?

"Crane!"

She'd love to talk, truly she would, but that would ruin this little game. And that wouldn't be any fun at all.

She was going to have to move, though, because she was starting to get stiff. Thrown into a gargoyle…hadn't he heard of asking nicely?

She got to her feet-yeah, that was a bruise already-and wondered how the glove worked. Did you just stab with it? Was there a hidden switch? Did it do anything but sit there and look creepy? (Scratch that last-that was his latest batch in there, she could tell.)

Well, learn something new every day!

She let him rush her this time-there was no need to stab herself, she'd never hear the end of it-before trying to stab him. She got one finger in-it would do-and a trickle of toxin left the needle before he shook her off, grabbed her round the neck, and threw her.

Maybe it was an accident, but he tossed her down a flight of stairs.
Ouch
Ouch
Ouch
OUCH
Ow.
Pain.
Bruises.

Mother…fucking…asshole.

Okay…two broken ribs, countless bruises…possible concussion, but she couldn't tell about that last one. Hopefully not.

He was standing over before she could get up, arms crossed. He had no business being grouchy. She'd been thrown into a gargoyle and tossed down a flight of stairs and what had happened to him? NOTHING!

It was almost a shame she hadn't died. He'd never get over the guilt. Not that he'd have too much time to feel guilty, really.

"Tell me the plan, Crane."

She shook one needle-clad finger back and forth and grinned-ouch. Grinning hurt.

"Scarecrow, then." Hey! There was no need to sound so sarcastic. Scarecrow was his own…person.

She shook the finger again and reached up to pull the mask off. It was a shame he was wearing that cowl-the look on his face was probably priceless.

"That hurt."

Wait.

Was that…eye shadow?

She knew it was probably to blend in with the cowl, but…but…

Harley would find this hilarious.

"Is that eye shadow?"

He didn't seem to find that funny, because he grabbed her ankle and started dragging her down the hall, making no move to avoid any fallen objects. It might have just been her, but he didn't seem to be very steady on his feet. Maybe she'd given him enough of a dose to have some effect, after all.

"Just stay here."

Here? Where was…aw, come on!

"Fine. But you're too late." He stopped just outside the cell but didn't turn around. She struggled up and slung one arm-the one with the glove-through the bars. "You're too late, Bats. You'd be better
off just waiting here, making sure I don't die of internal bleeding. Could you handle the guilt if that happened?"

He left, his cape billowing out and taking up most of the hallway. Fine.

"Fine!" she shouted. "Leave me here to choke to death on my own blood! See if I care!"

She made her way to the cot and flopped back. Ow. Ow. Ow.

Her only real consolation was that the Batman, the Dark Knight, the terror of Gotham's criminals… wore black eye shadow.

THE END
Written before season one of Gotham aired, when what little we knew of Oswald included some poor sucker saying, 'you know, when you walk, you look just like a penguin!' Poor, dumb bastard.

"Who's that?"

"Who's who?"

"The waddling man outside."

"What waddling man?"

"Get up and look."

Jonathan Crane dragged himself out of his chair and shuffled over to the window. Sure enough, a man dressed in black was, for lack of a better word, waddling across the grounds.

"He looks like a penguin."

"Be nice."

"It's true."

"I know. He's not one of the patients, is he?"

"I don't think so."

The man made his way to the door of the asylum and Jonathan dismissed him. Probably here to see one of the patients.

Five minutes later, his secretary reported that an Oswald Cobblepot would like to see him.

THE END
Kitty has a cold.

Yes, it really is just a cold. Sure, she's probably caught it from Batman. No, she does not need to go to the hospital.

"Are you sure you don't need anything?"

"Yes, love." She sneezes and settles back against her pillows, clutching a glass of orange juice. "Honest."

"You're positive?"

Oh, dear god. YES. She's FINE. It's just a cold, it will go away in a few days.

"Yes."

"You'll tell me if you do need anything?"

"Yes."

"Promise?"

"Yes, love. Run along, I'm going back to sleep."

He lingers in the doorway for another few seconds before leaving. At last. She can just stay here, with her juice and her teddy bear, and feel sorry for herself.

She should encourage it to become pneumonia, go out, and sneeze on the Batman. But then she'd have to go back to Arkham, and Jonathan would…no. It's not worth the effort. But the mental image is nice all the same.

She drains the last of her juice and settles down with her teddy bear to go back to sleep. This poor bear…she had to stitch it back together when the head fell off. Jonathan makes fun of it, but's hardly the bear's fault that its head fell off. He should be nicer to it.

Ohh, her throat is killing her…maybe she should get a water bottle. Yes.

She's just reaching for it when there's a disapproving sound from behind her. Aw, crap.

"Kitty." You know, it's times like this that she sees what scares people so badly. "What are you doing?"

"Getting a water bottle?"

"Go back to bed."

"But…"

"Bed."

She frowns and takes her water bottle out of the fridge. The only problem with being sick—apart from, well, being sick—is that Jonathan tends to fuss over her like she's due to drop off the twig any second.
"I…"

He picks her up, carries her back to the bedroom, and drops her on the bed. Humph. She's fine, it's just a cold.

"Jonathan…"

"Stay in bed!"

She sighs and gets back under the covers with her water and her teddy bear.

"Happy?"

"Yes." He turns to leave again. "Stay there this time."

"Of course, love."

She stays in bed for most of the day, but by eight PM she's bored. And hungry.

Mostly bored. She probably isn't even legitimately hungry.

She borrows Jonathan's robe before going downstairs. Jonathan is just coming up from his lab.

"Just what do you think you're doing?"

"I'm bored and peckish."

"Kitty…"

"Come on, love. I can't stay in bed forever."

"What'd you have in mind?"

"No idea."

"Go watch TV or something, I'll see what there is."

"I'm…"

"Go."

She shrugs and goes to see what's on, if anything. She's just found *Scooby-Doo* when Jonathan comes in with soup.

"How's this?"

"You're a saint."

"Mm." He hands her the bowl and settles down next to her. "How are you feeling?"

"Better. Anything interesting happen?"

"It died." he grumbles. "I didn't even do anything. I just came down and, well…"

"Heart attack?"
"Stop talking, you sound awful. But yes."

She doesn't sound *that* bad, does she? After all, it's only a clogged nose and a sore throat...maybe she does sound that bad.

The soup's fine—could use some more pepper, but that might be her stuffy nose talking. It's certainly better than the cold muffin she'd been considering.

"Thanks, love."

"What did I say about talking?" Whatever. "You need to go back to bed."

No. She's been in bed all day and she wants to watch cartoons. It's just a cold.

She burrows further into the robe and shakes her head. If he wants her to go up there, he's going to have to carry her.

After a few minutes, she hears an exasperated sigh and feels herself being dragged along the sofa.

"You'll get sick."

"I'm fine. Now stop talking or I'll put you up there myself."

She shrugs and pulls her arms inside the sleeves.

"Is that my robe?"

THE END
Bra

*What the hell is that?*

*What's what...what the hell is that?*

*That's what I just said.*

"Kitty?"

"Have you seen my black button-up? I could have sworn I got the bloodstain out..."

"No idea. Um..."

"Dammit! Where *is* it..."

"It's not that I mind you wandering around in a bra, but..."

"It's somewhere, I know it is!"

"Kitty!"

"Yes, love?"

"Why do you have a bat symbol on your bra?"

"What? Oh!" She fluttered past him, towards the closet. "I knew it was around here somewhere. Harley and I saw these and had to have them."

"Why?"

"You know that thing *he* does, where he hangs you upside down and yells at you, and your shirt flies up and you flash everyone?"

"Yes?"

"One glimpse of this, and he'll never do it again."

*That doesn't make sense.*

*No.*

**WOMEN CONFUSE ME.**

*Join the club.*

*Isn't there some kind of psychologist mumbo-jumbo for this?*

*No.*

"Why?"

"We had a good explanation when we stole them. I don't remember now."

God. Why?
Vacation

It took quite a bit of driving before they found a hotel that wouldn't question the bloodstained wallet. They hadn't *meant* for it to be bloodstained. There was no way to predict how people reacted to the toxin, and this one had been…messy.

But no matter. That was all taken care of now (the man was stuffed in a dumpster somewhere) and they were perfectly nice, normal, law-abiding citizens on a weekend trip.

Really.

No, of course their car wasn't stolen. What a silly idea! It may have seen better days (that human-shaped dent in the hood? No idea.), but it was most certainly *not* stolen.

Unfortunately, the hotel was grimy, with lousy reception and nothing but an IHOP anywhere in the vicinity. Damn.

Jonathan settled back on the bed-after having meticulously checked it for bedbugs, questionable stains, and spare change-wishing he hadn't suffered that Batarang across the ribcage. It wasn't life-threatening, but it hurt all the same and it had bled enough to warrant a strip of gauze.

Oww. Had it really been necessary to fling him against the wall like that?

Well, since Kitty was taking a shower and he'd read this book twice already, he may as well watch the news.

"…known as the Scarecrow…"

Dammit! How dare the reception be so terrible!

He smacked the top of the television a few times, got no result whatsoever, and settled back down in a rather grouchy mood.

What appeared on the screen next did not help in the least.

Was that…oh dear god, that was his old yearbook photo. Really? Really? They couldn't have gotten, oh, one of the dozens of photos he'd had to have taken when he worked at Arkham? They had to scrounge up his *yearbook* photo?

Who were these people?

Sarah Jones and Mike…oh, for heaven's sake, First Alert Bar, move!...Mike Walsh.

He jotted those names down and made a mental note to get rid of them.

Then he turned the television off and made himself as comfortable as possible on the bed.

He must have fallen asleep because the next thing he knew, Kitty was shaking him.

"Your turn."

Shower? Hot water? Yes, please.
He had to take off the gauze wrap before risking it and wondered if they had any more.

The water pressure was dismal and the shower itself was grimy, but he still found himself leaning against the wall, enjoying the warm water tapping against his back.

All too soon the water went cold and he made his way back out to see about another bandage and maybe dinner. He didn't really want IHOP, but beggars couldn't be choosers.

"How was your shower?"

"Hot. Yours?"

"Hot. Come here and I'll wrap that up again."

He could protest, say that he could do it himself, but it would be easier if she did it.

"What should we do for dinner?"

"I didn't see anything but an IHOP, did you?"

"No."

She didn't say anything, too busy making sure the bandage was snug.

"There. You won't die."

"That's always important."

He settled back down again, half-convinced that he'd missed a bedbug and that it was moving around in the mattress, sensing blood.

If he had missed it, and he brought it back to Gotham with him, he was coming back here and making everyone in the building regret it before they died.

"How long d'you think we'll have to stay here?"

"A few days. Someone else will do something terrible by then and they'll forget about us."

"Mm." He yawned and his thoughts drifted to the IHOP again. He wasn't hungry, really, but a cup of coffee might be nice. Maybe a couple of scrambled eggs… "Hungry?"

"A little, I suppose."

"Come on, then. I think this is a normal hour that people get food." She stayed where she was, watching him put on a clean shirt. "Don't get ideas."

"Me?" She batted her eyelashes at him. "When did I ever do a thing like that?"

"You don't want me to answer that, do you?"

She shrugged and swung her legs off the bed.

"Come on. I'm feeling bacon."

Maybe a little bacon with those scrambled eggs wouldn't hurt.

THE END
Chapter Notes

Takes place directly after leaving the hotel in 'Vacation'. Because no, they can't just go to IHOP like normal people.

One sip of the grainy coffee reminded him that he loathed IHOP. This was not coffee! This was a travesty! If he hadn't wanted to draw attention to himself, he would gas the place and make his own damn coffee.

"Ugh. What is this? Are they trying to poison me?"

"No, love. Don't be so paranoid."

"But…this…"

"Shh. Don't draw too much attention."

Fine. But this was still dismal.

The eggs, at least, were edible, but the bacon was thin and slightly limp. Should've gotten pancakes…

"How is it?"

"Terrible. Yours?"

"I've had better, but at least it's food."

That didn't make this taste any better.

The seat was uncomfortable and he wanted to go back to the hotel and lie down and try to forget the horror of eating at IHOP.

"You look pale, love."

"I'm not surprised."

She leaned forward.

"Don't look now, but we've made the evening papers."

Oh, no.

"Decent pictures?"

"Mug shots."

Dammit.
"Now what?"
She shrugged.

"I don't think the waitress has noticed yet. We'll just slip out of here without looking at that paper."

"Don't you want to see what they said about us?"

"Good point."

The cashier, unfortunately, was chatty. Oblivious, but chatty.

"Yeah, I guess a couple of crazies broke outta Arkham and went on a killing spree."

It wasn't technically a killing spree. It was more 'idiots got in the way and got gassed and run over'. But that didn't have the same ring to it.

"How awful."

"Yeah. Fuckin' nuts. Isn't that what we got the chair for?"

Name, name…Thomas T. All right, then. Thomas T would be getting a visit in the near future.

"We're against the death penalty."

"What? Are you nuts? Hey, wait a minute, aren't you…"

It couldn't be helped.

He gassed the man, picked up his paper, and slipped out the door before it could really take effect. By the time anybody connected the crying man with him, he would be long gone.

Silence really was golden, didn't people know that?

THE END
He sank back onto the bed with a low groan, wishing Kitty would stop panicking. For heaven's sake, everybody had thought the cashier was having an anxiety attack. (He'd been a mild reactor, thankfully-tears, mostly, and little else.)

"There's nothing to worry about."

"Jonathan…"

"Relax."

"Lying low should not be that hard!"

"Batman hasn't broken in yet. Stop worrying."

"But…"

"Calm down. Everything is fine. Go to sleep, it's getting late."

"If he hadn't opened his big mouth…"

"Nobody even noticed. Now at least stop pacing, I'd like to get some sleep."

She flopped down on the bed, the vibration making him wince. At least she'd stopped pacing. Now maybe he could go to sleep.

"What if Batman comes in?"

Oh, for…

"Then we deal with him. Now go to sleep."

"But…"

"Kitty."

That shut her up for a few minutes, leaving him to turn his thoughts to the potential bedbugs—was that something crawling on his skin?—and their next move. He'd intended to remain here for a few days, but maybe it would be better to leave tomorrow morning and slip back into town. They might not be expecting that.

Or maybe it would be better to go a little farther out of town for a day or two.

Hm.

"Are you sure-"
"Yes. I'm sure. We'll be fine. Now stop worrying. What's the worst thing that ever happens, anyway? We get thrown around a little and dragged back to Arkham."

She mumbled something that may have been 'scythe' and he scowled. That had been a freak accident, and it had only happened once.

Granted, it had only happened once because she got rid of the scythe while he was in the hospital, but no matter.

"I lived."

"Barely."

"I still lived. And I don't have it now. What could possibly happen?"

He hadn't expected her to answer, but she did-promptly and (typical!) with the worst-case scenarios.

"He could throw you out the window and you could get a broken neck. Or you could get a broken rib that pierces your lung. Or…"

He was sorry he'd asked.

"Kitty. Stop worrying. Do you need a sedative?"

"No, and don't even think about trying it."

"It's not healthy to lose sleep because you were stressing out."

"Broken necks aren't healthy, either."

His palm hit his face of its own accord.

"I don't have a broken neck, and I don't plan on getting one. Now go. To. Sleep."

"But…"

He really should have just left her to panic, but he got the feeling she wouldn't let him get any sleep if he did.

"I am not going to get a broken neck or anything else. He isn't coming. But I will wreck the car tomorrow if I don't get any sleep, so…"

"I'll drive."

"You'll wreck it if you don't get any sleep."

Finally. Silence.

"Promise?"

"Yes. Promise. Good night."

She didn't say anything else after that.

THE END
Ah, Christmas. His least favorite holiday, save for one thing-their own little tradition of giving each other gag gifts to open on Christmas Eve. Usually they're back in Georgia for this, but they couldn't quite make it out of Arkham in time to get there, so the Richardsons went home to visit other relations.

"Go on, open it."

"It's not a pack of rubber roaches again, is it?"

"No."

"You promise?"

"Would I lie to you?"

"Yes."

He rolls his eyes and motions for her to open it up. She pokes it a couple of times, reaches back for her Xact-o, and tugs on the ribbon. It doesn't give and she ends up slicing it.

"Are you going to take all day?"

"Now I'm scared! What's in here?"

He shrugs and leans back against the wall, peeling an orange.

"Forgot."

She finally unwraps it, stares for a minute, and bursts out laughing.

"You got me a plush Batman?"

He nods. Why they make such a thing is a mystery to him. (They also make a plush Joker. He's grateful he was spared the indignity.)

"Oh, my god…can I use it as a Voodoo doll?"

Visions of a suffering Batman dance through his head. Mm, such lovely shrieks…one day, perhaps.

"There's something else in the box."

"Oh, god…"

"It's not a rubber roach, I swear."

Although there is one in her actual present. What? It's tradition.

She pulls out a holiday-themed lighter.

"Ceremonial burning?"

"Mm-hm."
They leave the warm (ish) room and go outside. It's snowing. Ugh. He hates snow. He'll tolerate the cold, but snow? Snow is horrible. And it brings out scores of children.

They spend the next few minutes clearing a place and, as a joke, giving the now-ratty Batman doll a few sprays of fear toxin. Once they've made a pyre, he douses it with lighter fluid and gives the lighter to her.

**FWOOSH!**

Oh.

Oh, dear.

He was expecting a small fire. What he gets is a bonfire. What on...*fear toxin.*

"Um…"

"Yeah."

The bonfire doesn't spread, but the smoke does and a few houses down he hears a scream. Is it spreading the toxin? It sounds like it. He'll have to remember this...**BAM!**

Ow.

"What is this?"

Well. He got here fast.

"Merry Christmas, Bats."

"CRANE."

"We didn't do it on purpose."

He hears sirens in the distance. Next to him, Kitty sneezes and grumbles, "The snow is seeping into my shirt. Let me up."

He does, but only after cuffing them together. Then he goes to the fire and plucks out the now-charred Batman doll.

Five minutes later, they're in the back of the car, speeding towards Arkham once again.

They'll have to do this again next year.

THE END
The first of a...four? I think it's four...part storyline, featuring murder and no mayhem.

Even though it's a hospital, Arkham's medical wing is difficult to get into. Many a time he's been on his deathbed and received the diagnosis of 'common cold'.

But not this time. This time he's getting in there if he has to shatter an ankle on the way.

He's already got broken ribs and a dislocated shoulder (but they put that back), and that might be enough. But just in case…

"Come on, Crane."

They tug him semi-gently from the van and he slumps against them with a low groan.

"Get up."

"I-I can't see very well."

That's true. His glasses have been broken again and they took the remains lest he shove an earpiece into someone's eye. That's not his style, but still. What matters is that he could.

"Come on, you'll get a check-up when we're inside."

Yes, but just to make sure…

He groans again and forces his body to go completely limp, slipping out of the man's grasp and falling to the asphalt.

"Shit."

"I didn't do it."

"Don't look at me!"

Is he going to have to lay here all night? This is incredibly uncomfortable and besides, think of the germs! He isn't the first to bleed here, after all.

"Jonathan?"

Bless her for that. He'll drop her a hint when he's sure they're not looking-the first (and last) time he didn't…it hadn't gone over well.

"What'd you do?"

"He just…"

"We don't have to explain anything to her."
Hell hath no fury…but they don't need to know that, do they?

"Go and get help, you idiot."

Hopefully she won't get herself into trouble. The last thing he needs is for her to worry in solitary for a week, find out he's fine, and slip something poisonous into his morning mush.

"Um…"

"Move!"

"Kitty…" He musters up a weak cough, which really does hurt, and follows it with a whimper of agony. Well, he hopes it's agony. Close enough.

Footsteps start running towards the asylum and there's the clink-thud of a handcuffed individual kneeling on the asphalt next to him.

"Jonathan?"

He blinks a few times. There's a large blur a few feet away—the remaining guard. He shouldn't hear anything as long as he keeps his voice soft.

"Shh. I'm fine, I just can't deal with group therapy right now."

He can feel the relief melting off her. She really does worry too much. It's not healthy. All the same, he's oddly touched.

"Don't scare me like that." she hisses.

"It's just a couple of broken ribs."

"It could be an impaled lung."

"It's not. Don't worry."

The blur moves a bit and when she speaks again, her voice has that scared edge again.

"It'll be all right, love, just don't go to sleep."

He coughs again—ouch—and closes his eyes. Where is that damned guard? It's starting to rain again! If these two had worked for him, they'd have been fired on the spot.

There's the rattling of cheap, poorly-attached wheels. About time.

"Come on, Richardson. Up."

"P-please…please get him to a doctor…"

"Come on."

He's picked up—do they really have to be so rough? What if they injure him further?—and placed on the rickety gurney. Better. Moderately. Now, about that trip to medical…

He's blinded by cheap lighting when they enter and when the cart finally stops, there's the smell of cleaning supplies, medicine, and fabric softener. At last.

"Mr. Crane? Jonathan?"
DOCTOR. DOCTOR Crane, you imbecile!

He groans and blinks a few times.

"K-Kitty?"

"No. Nurse Wilkes."

She's not so terrible. She lets him read if he asks nicely.

"S-sorry…"

"I'll take it from here. You two go on about your business." He hears them leave. "What hurts?"

"Ribs…shoulder…really dizzy."

"I'll keep you overnight and we'll see how you feel in the morning. Sound fair?"

Good! Plenty of time to come up with vague, potentially life-threatening pains that will keep him out of group therapy for a good long while.

"I think I may be in danger of a rib impaling my left lung." he murmurs.

"Is that so?" She doesn't sound worried. Damn. "We'll see. Think you can get into pajamas, or do I need to help you?"

No, thanks, he can manage just fine.

If he were at home he'd accept the help, though.

Once he's in bed-one hand cuffed to the side as a precaution-she turns out the lights.

Sleep. At last.

THE END
At any given time, one of them will be in medical. And without fail, everyone else will be struck with the need to make get-well cards and pay a visit.

The doctors don't discourage this. Empathy is important. As long as no one's in a coma or has boils or anything, visitations are allowed.

Jonathan Crane hates visitations. Medical is the one place he can be left alone for once, without having to listen to giggling and coin-flipping and everything else. He wouldn't mind if it was just Kitty, or maybe Harley, but the whole block? Most of whom he doesn't even like?

The doctors are sadists.

"Heya, Jonny."

His only consolation is that Joker's in solitary again, for making some kind of poison out of cleaning materials. Thank heaven for small favors.

"Hello, Harley."

"What happened, Jon? You look…dead."

"Batman happened, Edward. What do you think?"

"Jabberwock."

"Mm."

"Puddin' sent ya a card." Harley reports. Great. The last card he got from the clown had stains on it from a fight with the art therapist.

"That's…nice."

"He's so thoughtful."

Can they all leave now? He wants to go back to sleep. The painkillers are wearing off and everything hurts.

Harley is the one in charge of the cards, apparently, because she dumps a handful on the nightstand. Joker's is stained again—he won't be touching that one without gloves—Jervis's has the Batman being devoured by a monster, Edward's has a riddle on it (he'll decipher that later) and Harley's is… incredibly busy.

Joy.

"All right, you three. Out."

They leave, grumbling and calling out offers to break Batman's neck (as if!) and he settles back into his pillows.

"They wouldn't let me give you a card."

"Oh?"
"They thought I'd give you breakout plans in it. Somehow."

"And did you try?"

"Of course not." He snorts-ouch. "They gave me five minutes with you in exchange. They're not bright."

"How much crying did that take you?"

"About twenty minutes, complete with a couple of 'if he dies, and you didn't let me see him one last time…'"

"I'm not that bad off."

"I know." She leans over. "Look pathetic, they're watching." That isn't hard. Broken ribs and a dislocated shoulder are not pleasant. "How bad off are you, really?"

"Not that bad. I could be up in a few days, but I think I'll drag it out. I hate group therapy."

She nods.

"Good."

"Why?"

"You're not going to die, are you?"

What…oh.

"I'm fine, Kitty. Really."

"Promise?" She blinks a bit.

"Yes."

She hugs his head and whispers, "Don't take your sleeping pills on Thursday."

What has she been up to in his absence? Should he worry?

"Fine."

She gives him a quick kiss before the guard comes in.

"Feel better, love."

He watches her leave. The nurse comes in, arranges the cards (carefully not touching the Joker's) and fluffs his pillows.

"Do you need anything?"

He shakes his head. She fixes the blankets and goes into her little office. He sighs and closes his eyes. Whatever Thursday will involve, he'll need his sleep for it.

Maybe visitations aren't so awful, after all.

THE END
Come Thursday evening, he cheek the sleeping pill (after having chatted up the nurse enough to get her to drop her guard) and feigns sleep.

A little after midnight, one of the orderlies comes in with Kitty, who's whimpering about severe abdominal pain.

"All right, hon, it's all right…is it food poisoning or…?"

"I dunno." She gasps and tries to curl into a little ball. She *is* acting, isn't she? "I dunno, it just started about half…god…half an hour ago."

"Okay. Just lie still, I'll be right back."

She bites her lip and whimpers something he doesn't catch. Maybe she really is ill…no. No, she's not. He just saw her slip the spare pen from the nurse's pocket.

It's all he can do not to rub his hands together and cackle.

"It'll be okay."

Her only answer is a whine and a high-pitched, "God, this hurts…"

They leave. The minute the door is shut, Kitty uncurls, clicks the pen a couple of times, and yanks out the spring and straightens it out.

"Hold still."

"Not bad."

"I know. That idiot orderly almost screwed me over. I told him it might be that time of the month and that got him going."

He cracks a small smile. A minute later, the cuff is off and he's free to get out of bed. At last.

They raid the nurses' station for anything that could be a weapon and come up with a couple of syringes (enough to bluff their way through, anyway) and a stethoscope (great for strangling!).

The hallways are empty—they always are, at this time of night—and they make it out of the medical building unscathed. Now, there should be one of those forgotten doors around here somewhere…

"Hey!"

They never have gotten out of here without a murder. One day, perhaps…
"Hey! Stop!"

The man's backing up, reaching for the alarm switch. They spring at him, straightening out the stethoscope to wrap around his neck.

He goes down with minimal struggle-funny what a syringe pressed against the lower eye will do for silence.

Once there's vomit dribbling from the lips, he takes the stethoscope back and lets the body fall. Ow. That didn't do his ribs any favors.

Now, where were they…ah. Door. Should be right about…here.

Once the door (hidden at the back of a janitor's closet) is shut behind them, he drapes the stethoscope around his neck and she puts the syringes in a rolled-up cuff before leaning up on tiptoe to kiss him.

"I missed you."

"We've only been here for three weeks."

"Feels longer." There's a noise in the hall and she draws back. "Hold that thought."

There's no scream, no frantic, 'escapee!', but still. They should get out of here before someone finds the body in the hall. They'll pick this up at home.

THE END
Home Again

Chapter Notes

Nothing to do with anything, but I have to laugh-in universe, poor Jonathan is pretty much SOL in terms of a date. In fandom-land…oh, my. Man's got a harem. How the hell does that sort of thing HAPPEN? Anyway, concludes the 'Admittance' storyline.

They burst into the abandoned apartment, dripping wet and freezing cold. They had to take the long way here-somebody found the dead guard and raised the alarm. There had been a few close calls, but they'd made it all the same.

"How're your ribs?"

"They're all right."

"You'll forgive me if I'd like to check."

He sighs but lets her shoo him upstairs and get him out of his shirt.

"Well, nurse?"

"Bruised, but nothing serious. I'm impressed-they actually did their job."

"Mm-hm." He riffles through the peeling dresser, comes up with a pair of sweats for himself and an oversized t-shirt (is that his? It looks familiar…) for her. "Told you I was fine."

"I'm paranoid."

That's true.

He towels his hair dry and sinks onto the bed with a contented sigh. Ahh. Bed. He's always liked this hideout best. Decent acoustics, protection from the elements, furniture…

"You'd think they'd let me keep my own damn bra." Kitty grumbles. She's fighting to get out of some grey thing that's soaked through and unwilling to come off.

"You could have something sewn into the liner, I suppose."

"There's hardly any fabric on those things! Paranoid gits…finally."

She throws the now-wadded up bra onto the pile of wet clothing and goes to get a towel. He takes his glasses off and sets them on the nightstand before getting under the covers. Sleepy.

He rouses himself a little when she comes back in and turns off the light.

"Remember when I asked you to hold that thought?"

"Mm-hm."

"Still holding?"
"Mm-hm."

"Good." She kisses him-a proper one, not one of those hasty 'we've been arrested, see you in therapy' ones. "Let's try not to break anything else, hmm?"

She expects him to answer? That's not fair!

All the same, it really is good to be home.

THE END
There's a knock on the door.

"Would you get that, love? My hands are wet."

"Sure."

He sets his book down and goes to answer the door. It's probably the mailman—he's expecting something.

It's not the mailman. It's somebody he wasn't expecting to see again, and certainly not here.

"Batman." He remains in the doorway, one hand feeling for the umbrella. It isn't much, but it'll do. He's counting on Bats' paranoia of Cobblepot's trick umbrellas to help him out. "What brings you here?"

"Jonathan? Who's at the door?"

"An old friend." Ah, there's the umbrella. Better safe than sorry. "Well? What do you want? I'm in the middle of grading papers." A lie, but it is technically what he should be doing.

"Papers."

"Took up teaching."

Kitty appears behind him and he feels her freeze.

"What's going on?"

"It's nothing."

Batman crosses his arms.

"Why here."

"I grew up nearby." he says shortly. "What is this, twenty questions? I haven't been involved in anything illegal since we left Gotham."

There had been a flu epidemic, sudden and difficult to treat, and they'd nearly died from complications. They couldn't very well check into a hospital as wanted criminals.

That had been their last winter there—by next Christmas they'd settled in Georgia and he'd taken up teaching while she took up a job as a librarian. Dull, but safe. Sometimes a little dullness was a good thing.

"So what are you doing here?" He draws the umbrella from the stand and keeps it behind his back.
He doesn't have anything else-too easy to fall into temptation, even with the medication-but it'll do. "Hoping to pin some anxiety attack-related death on me?"

"Jonathan…"

He puts his free arm around her shoulders, prepared to shove her back if necessary. They've got a baseball bat around here somewhere, she can run and get it…maybe a kitchen knife…

Old habits really do die hard.

"Just checking up."

"Do you do this often?" He doesn't remember all the signs he should be wary of, but so far Bats is just standing there. A gust of cold wind tries to open the door a little wider and he lets it. It's freezing outside-it'll snow tonight.

"Sometimes." He shifts, his cape whipping in the wind. "Teaching?"

"Psychology 101." he says. With a heavy emphasis on phobias, but he'll keep that little tidbit to himself. "College students-can't stand the high schoolers."

Kitty shivers and he's painfully reminded of how close he came to losing her that last year.

"If you need to go back inside…"

"No." Her voice is soft but steady. "So there's no real reason for you to be here, then?"

That's directed at Batman, who turns his head a little bit to look at her.

"No."

"All right, then." She straightens up a little. "Glad that's settled."

He shuts the door and locks it. Batman does not knock again and a minute later there's the VROOM of a tank tearing up the neighbor's lawn and a querulous shout of, "You rotten kids!"

"It's cold out there." she says. She did bring the kitchen knife, he sees. He lets out a breath he didn't realise he was holding.

"What tipped you off?"

"Hm?" He nods towards the knife and puts the umbrella back in the stand. "Oh. Nothing, I guess. Paranoia."

She returns to the kitchen and he follows her, his book forgotten.

"I wasn't expecting that this evening. Will you cut the meat? You know I hate touching raw meat. It's just so…icky."

That's not new. He always found it funny that she could beat a man to death and yet still hate touching raw meat.

"Sure."

She resumes chopping carrots and he reaches up to fix his glasses before digging out another knife.
"Do you ever miss it?" she asks suddenly.

"Yes. I miss the adrenaline rush." He pauses. "Sometimes I miss Scarecrow. But if I stopped, he'd... well." He'd kill them all, probably. He was always an impulsive bastard. "Do you?"

"Sometimes." Chop, chop, chop. "Sometimes when somebody cuts me off in traffic I'm tempted to get out and strangle them with my purse strap."

He represses a smile at that.

"I'm not surprised." She leaves off cutting the carrots and wraps her arms around his stomach. "I've got meat on me."

"Mm."

Fine. She can stay there, but he needs to finish this and actually get on those papers. They've been a good class for once—not too many idiots. They can all spell, at least.

He wonders what they would say if he told them who he was. Probably nothing—maybe a few laughs, a few, 'yeah, right, Prof.'

The toxin isn't hard to make. He could show them, watch them...no. No, he can't. He doesn't want to see Batman again. He used to wish he could, but now that it's happened...no.

It's beginning to snow outside. Kitty lets him go and returns to the carrots. He finishes the meat and debates on whether to start the papers now or do it later...he'll do it later. He's comfortable in here. It's warm.

"Coffee?"

"Do we have any Bailey's?"

"Yeah."

"Yes, please."

He measures it out, pours them both a generous helping of Bailey's, and leans against the counter. He's tired tonight. Seeing the Bat gave him a bit of a fright, to be honest. He has no intention of going back to Arkham. Never again. In all honesty, he'd rather hoped Bats would think them dead and not come looking. A fool's hope.

Perhaps they should move.

"There. Let that go for twenty minutes and then I'll finish up."

She's still thin and pale. Haunted.

_As I pondered, weak and weary..._

"I thought he was going to drag us back."

"You and me both."

The coffee machine stops and he reaches back to pull the pot out.

"Ta." The pot on the stove bubbles and she leans over to poke it. "It will not burn this time, I swear."
They've gotten better. It took time, and more studying the cooking channel than he'd like to admit, but they can at least not set things on fire.

There's a knock on the door again and this time they both grab knives before going to open it.

It's only the kids from across the street. Ugh. Nosey little monsters.

"Yes."

"Who was that guy in the tank?"

Well. They certainly are blunt. He doesn't remember being like that as a child. Though to be fair, he wasn't exactly the average child.

"An old friend." he says, hoping they won't ask about the knives next.

"Oh."

They run back across the street, not stopping to look both ways. Idiots.

He shuts the door for the second time that evening and returns to the kitchen for his coffee. He really should start on those papers.

THE END
"What the-! KITTY!"

It wouldn't be the first time, and it probably wouldn't be the last, but it was no less irritating.

He had walked into one of his own traps. Again. Lucky it wasn't a particularly fatal one…

In his defense, they hadn't been in this particular lair for several months. He'd forgotten it was there.

But regardless of the reason, he was now hanging upside down, his glasses on the floor and the blood rushing to his head.

Damn snare traps…

"KITTY!"

He didn't remember this trap being so…high. It was going to hurt when she did manage to get him down.

He tried to reach up and untie the knot and couldn't quite make it. He wasn't a gymnast, for heaven's sake.

"What is…oh. Oh, my." She covered her mouth. "What did you do?"

"Get me down."

"I dunno, love…"

"Kitty, the blood is rushing to my head. It is not a pleasant experience. Get me down from here."

She burst into a fit of giggles and picked up his glasses and his notes.

"You've been awfully busy lately, you know."

"Yes, I know, now get me down."

"I hardly ever see you."

He was beginning to suspect that this was not his fault at all. Had this been here when they first inhabited the place? He didn't remember installing it…

"So," she continued, walking over to him, "I've had no choice but to take drastic measures."

"Um, Kitty…"

"It's not healthy to be working all the time, you know." she said. "Especially with all those chemicals."

He tried to get at the knot again, failed, and dropped back, swinging a little. Maybe there was something to carrying a pocket knife.

"Yes, I know it's not, it can't be helped. I promise when this is all over we'll…um…you pick it. Get
me down now, please."

"I rather like you here." She poked his stomach and sent him swinging in the other direction. "For the first time in a while, I have you exactly where I want you."

Oh, boy.

"Kitty…"

"Oh, very well. If you promise to stay up here for the rest of the day."

"Yes, fine, anything. *Now get me down.*"

"Brace yourself."

What?

**SLICE!**

He dropped, landing hard on the tile, and relished in the feeling of the blood leaving his head. Ow.

"Come along."

"What?"

She grabbed his wrists and started pulling. He let himself be dragged along the tiles for another minute before giving them an experimental tug.

"Kitty, what are you doing?"

"I don't trust you."

"I said I'd stay up here, didn't I?"

"That doesn't mean I believe you."

"When have I lied to you?"

She paused, gave him a look, and continued down the hall.

"You don't really want me to answer that, do you?"

"When have I lied to you about something important?" There, that was safer.

"That time I thought you were shot and you didn't tell me otherwise."

She was never going to let him forget that, was she? How was he supposed to know she was good at faking tears? It had never come up before!

He gave his wrists another tug and felt her pull harder. This was ridiculous.

"I can walk, you know."

"I know."

"Then unhand me."
“What's the fun in that?”

She opened a door and he tilted his head back to see where they were. Everything was blurry. How helpful.

“You can either stay here, or I can dig out the handcuffs. Which will it be?”

“When did you get handcuffs?”

“I stole them.”

“From?”

“The police.” she said, as if that was the most obvious thing in the world. “Couldn't get the keys, though, but I can do all right with a hairpin.”

“I'll stay here.”

“Good boy.” She let go of him and gave him back his glasses. “Remember…no more work today.”

He'd remember. He'd also remember to watch where he was going from now on.

THE END
News travels fast in Gotham. Maybe it travels fast in all big cities. Jonathan Crane will never know.

What he does know, and what he doesn't completely believe, is that Harleen Quinzel-Harley Quinn is dead.

He heard it from the Riddler, who got it from Ivy, who got it from one of Joker's henchman. It was inevitable—that silly little fool was firmly in denial about her precious puddin'. And look what undying loyalty had gotten her-beaten to death with a crowbar.

Idiot.

He takes a sip of his tea and realizes that Edward is waiting for him to say something.

"Shame."

"Yes." The man looks a little unsettled. Secretly, Jonathan can't blame him. Harley may have been a fool, and she may have been annoying,

_No more, 'HEYA DOC'!

but this…expected or not, this is very strange. It'll be strange to do business with Joker without having to hiss, "Don't touch that, you idiot! Do you want to blow us all up?"

_Remember remember how upset we were when she really did blow something up never again no more._

"Did Batman catch him?"

"No."

That's a little surprising. Maybe Bats is getting old.

Maybe they all are.

"When was this?"

"Last night."

Where was he last night…you know, he can't remember. Does it matter?

_Remember, remember, the fifth of November…_

"Shame." he says again. "I'm not surprised."
Edward's smile is humorless.

"Is anybody?"

He doubts it. They all knew. They all tried, to some extent, to knock some sense into her.

\textit{He knocked it into her, didn't he?}

"No," he says. The steam from the tea fogs his glasses and he takes them off to clear them. "If they are, then they're an idiot."

Edward says nothing. Jonathan settles back into his armchair, feeling stiff and tired. He might go to bed early. That sounds nice. Have some leftover lo-mein and a nice bath and go to bed. He has to shave, actually…and there's that subject downstairs, maybe he should feed him…

"I should go," Edward says suddenly. "I have a trap to finish setting up. Reverse-motion-activated bombs."

"What?"

"It's brilliant, it really is. I strap the bombs on, and \textit{they can't stop walking} or they'll go off!"

What on…and they call him crazy. At least he does this for science. Edward just wants the attention.

"I'll watch the news."

"For what?"

"News of your capture." He fights to keep a straight face and fails horribly. "Good luck."

"I won't be captured. Not this time."

"That's what we all say."

Edward scowls and leaves the lair. Still smirking, Jonathan settles back with his tea and his book.

Life goes on.

THE END
The annual Wayne Charity Event usually takes place in October, but very seldom does it take place on Halloween. But this year, for whatever reason, it's a costume party on October thirty-first, held in—oh, how unfortunate—the old theatre, the one that shut down after he paid it a visit a few years ago.

Naturally, he can't resist going.

He gives them time to get nice and tipsy—and in some cases outright drunk—before decapitating the guard with his scythe and walking right in.

"Your name, Sir?"

"Jonathan Crane."

"You're not on the guest list…"

"Gate-crashing."

The butler's head rolls along, coming to a stop under the hall table. The body stays on its feet for another minute before collapsing to the ground, a spray of blood still coming from the neck.

"The only problem with this is that it's messy." he says, wiping the blade on the butler's back.

"That's one way of putting it. Hold on, you've got a spot on your forehead…there."

"Thank you. Shall we?"

She steps around the still slightly-jerking corpse and takes his arm.

"Ready when you are."

The party is in full swing, with the drinks flowing freely and the music loud enough to hurt. Nobody notices them, and why would they? They're just two more people dressed up for the evening.

There's three policemen here tonight—no Gordon, but Bullock and two others whose names he can't remember. Hm. Bullock complicates things a bit. He's trigger-happy. Oh, well. There's enough people in here that he might think twice.

Hopefully.

"Shall I get their attention?"

"Would you? I don't know that I can shout at them right now. Still a little raspy from that cold…"

"Sure, love."
The shot takes out the stereo and silences the partygoers. Much better.

"Happy Halloween." Bullock moves as if to draw his weapon and Kitty fires a warning shot in his general direction. It clips somebody's ear before embedding itself in a Jack-o-Lantern. Bullock is spattered with pumpkin.

"I'm sorry to drop in like this, but I couldn't resist. It's been a long time since we attended a celebration."

"What do you want, Crane?" Bullock calls from his corner.

"You shouldn't interrupt. Quite rude. But no matter…I don't really want anything. Thought I'd pay you all a visit and see how you party was coming along."

He leans on the scythe, enjoying the waves of terror. It's thick enough to taste, just about-seasoned with fury and confusion. Perfect.

"We're not afraid of you." He doesn't know this person, and he would like them to get out of his personal space bubble, thank you very much.

"You should be."

"Fuck off." The man's drunk—he's swaying badly. Does he think this is a bar fight? "Fuck off, freak." He flails and finds his hands knocked aside. "Hey!"

The angry expression is still on his face even when his head is bouncing on the floor. There's a gunshot from behind him and somebody nearby drops dead.

"Great shot," he says. "Truly. If you wish to kill any more innocent civilians, go right ahead. I don't mind."

Kitty muffles a small laugh at that.

"So. How are we all doing this evening? Well, apart from being drunk and scared."

"Shut up, Crane! Put your hands up!"

"After that stellar display of marksmanship?" He snorts. "I could do better than that. Now be quiet, this has nothing to do with you. God, any idiot can be a policeman these days…Detective Bullock, you've got a bit of pumpkin still in your hair, by the way."

He shoves the body out of the way with his scythe, cutting it up a bit more in the process. Whoops.

Now, where would be the best vantage point…? Ah. Right there, by the punch bowl. A few years of Arkham parties has taught him that the punch bowl is the best place for people-watching. And the safest—nobody ever tries to grind against somebody by the punch bowl—what if something spills? Then there will be no drinks, and they'll be stuck with tap water.

"I am here, ladies and gentlemen, to study the effects of my toxin on a group of intoxicated adults. Now, before I begin, does anybody have any heart conditions?" Nobody speaks. "You're quite sure? Is anybody taking any medications?" Still nothing. "All right, then. Thank you so much for your cooperation."
He reaches over for the nearest person-a woman dressed as a...he's not actually sure. There's neon fishnet and those tacky glasses with plastic bars where the lenses should be. Eighties hooker? Whatever. She'll do as a hostage. Just until things get going, then she'll do as a subject.

He tosses a few capsules into the crowd. There's a general stampede towards the door, but that won't help them. He made sure to lock them when he came in. No, here they are and here they'll stay until further notice. If he needs to make a break for it, there's always the window.

It doesn't take long for the gas to spread. Even Bullock is not immune, and within five minutes he's on the floor with the rest of them. There's something oddly satisfying about the sight.

He shoves the eighties hooker away from him when she starts to gasp-damn, sounds like she's got asthma-and leans against the table with a glass of the punch. It's not bad, actually.

"No mask?"

"It's nice to actually see what's going on sometimes."

She nods and leans against his side, the gun hanging from her fingers. It goes off a minute later and the eighties hooker drops to the floor.

"Wonder how that happened."

He shakes his head and pulls his notebook out of his pocket. He has some notes to take.

THE END
Misdiagnosis

"That bastard!"

"What?"

"He had the gall to suggest that I was brainwashed. Me! One of these days, so help me…"

"Want me to have a talk with him?"

"No. Fucking…grah!" She stabbed her spoon into the cereal. "Soggy."

"So. Brainwashed?"

"Humph." She shoved the bowl away and slumped over the table with a low growl. "Sexist prig."

"Huh?"

"Never mind."

"Hullo, Doctor Drew."

Oww. God, what a headache. What had happened? He'd been staying late in his office…

Something light but hard smacks his hand and he yelps.

"That's better. I wondered if maybe I'd used too much chloroform…want some light? I forget most people aren't used to the dark."

Click.

Oww.

He's in a dark room with a lone bulb swinging from the ceiling. It's cold and damp and it looks almost familiar…

Oh, shit.

He's in Arkham's basement.

"You're not sulking, are you? I didn't hit you that hard. Nothing's broken."

And he is not alone. His patient-well, one of them-has broken out.

Help.

Cold metal-an aluminum bat?-touches his chin and forces his head up.

"There you are! Don't worry, I'm not going to hit you. This is just in case you get out of that chair."

He realizes that he's tied to a crappy swivel chair, probably stolen from the security booth. No one's ever in there…

"I wasn't too pleased when you told me I was brainwashed." she says, letting the bat drop with a
hollow ping. "I don't mind so much if you say I'm barking mad, but..." She chews her lip. "Do I look like Harley Quinn to you, Dr. Drew?"

He shakes his head.

"N-no."

"That's right. Shame you had to open your big mouth, though. But I can't have people thinking I'm some pathetic...well. I'm going to paint your nails now, okay? So don't squirm."

She's got pliers. Why does she have pliers? And how tightly is he restrained...very tightly. Great. Shit.

"Go ahead and scream. No one ever hears what goes on down here."

The jaws of the pliers close around his left thumbnail and begin to pull. There's a strange feeling, like his nail is being stretched, and then a soft riiip.

PAIN.

MOTHER FUCKER.

His nail bed, raw and pink like uncooked hamburger, stares up at him. The air hurts and he tries instinctively to curl it under his palm for protection.

"Look at that. Came right out. This won't take too long, then."

The pliers close around another nail and begin to pull.

She lets him keep his right pinky nail, but she doesn't seem to be finished. She's circling him, muttering to herself, when the light swings back and catches someone else, leaning against the far wall.

"Help!"

The figure moves away from the wall and a cold whisper reaches his ears.

"Do you take me for a lunatic?" Crane chuckles. "I know better."

"Please!"

The bat hits his head and he lurches forward, gasping.

"Shut up!"

Ow...

Christ...

He tries to sit up, his fingers and head throbbing.

"I'm going to let you go now. They'll grow back, don't worry. But, sweetie..." She bends over, makes him lift his head with cool fingers. "Next time, it'll be your teeth. Be good."

This time the bat hits him in the face, repeatedly, until the dimly-lit basement disappears.

THE END
Arkham Asylum was creepy in the sunshine, unnerving on a rainy day, and the gateway to Hell at night.

Well, Hell's waiting room, anyway. Hell itself was in the basement, in a room that had been locked ever since Jonathan Crane had been committed to his own asylum. That room had been his laboratory, and nobody was stupid (or brave) enough to go in there and clean it out.

These days, the only time those heavy doors were pushed open was during a breakout. Or, occasionally, in the middle of the night.

Like tonight.

This room had once been the boiler room, back when Arkham had been a proper hospital and not this dying beast. These days, it was cold and dark, the only sounds being the dripping of the leaky pipes, the squeaking of the mice, and (if one listened very closely) the screams of prior victims.

Arkham was a very absorbent location.

Cobwebs clung to the tables, coating cracked vials and old syringes with dead insects. The notebooks that had once been here were long gone, tucked safely away in a bookshelf in an unknown lair. Dead mice lay in a dark corner, far from the door, well away from the swinging light bulbs.

This had never been a pleasant room.

Scarecrow left the dust alone—he wasn't here for science, and it added to the atmosphere. After pinpointing a soft scuttling as coming from the corner with the dead mice, he picked his way over and gathered a fat, hairy spider into his hands. Perfect for his little arachnophobe.

He secured the creature in an old bottle before melting back into shadows to wait for his prey.

Soon enough, there was the sound of running and a man's voice called, "Get back here!"

The doors creaked open enough to let a small figure slip inside. A minute later, a larger figure—his victim-burst in, wheezing and coughing at the dust. Allergies? Best to take that into account, then.

"Hello?"

He stole along the wall, keeping out of the light, and sidled up alongside the guard. Patience, patience…spiders never caught flies by rushing at them, tempting though it was.

"Hello? Is someone in here?"

He stepped into the room.

And the Scarecrow struck.

The guard had no hope—spindly though he may have been, Scarecrow had had practice subduing unwilling help. All it ever took was getting one arm around the neck and pressing his lovely glove (how had he ever survived without it?) against the wrist or the throat.

"Shh, shh. There's nothing to fear."
The guard stopped struggling at once. Scarecrow could feel his pulse against his fingers, feel the frantic wheezing. Asthma, maybe. Hm.

"We've been waiting for you." he hissed. "It's been ever so long since we got to play."

"Please…Crane…"

" Jonny-boy's not here right now."

"I-I…"

"Hush little baby, don't you cry." He trailed his needle down the man's cheek. "Scarecrow's gonna sing you a lullaby."

The man was crying now, pleading to be released and swearing that he wouldn't say anything.

" Promises, promises. Jonny makes 'em all the time. Never keeps 'em, either."

Since when have I broken a promise to you?

You promised not to get us caught, and here we are.

I'd hardly call one promise 'all the time'.

WELL IT FEELS LIKE IT.

Teenage girls…

HISSSS.

Did you just hiss at me?

Maybe.

Jonny would have facepalmed if he'd had the ability. Too bad.

He wrestled his new toy into a cobwebbed chair, patted around for an inhaler, and found it in the man's back pocket.

" There. Now you won't die. This won't hurt unless you thrash, and even then it'll only bruise."

"Please, Crane, don't do this…"

"There is no Crane." Scarecrow petted the man's face, relishing in his attempt to jerk away. "Shh, shh. There's no reason to act like a child."

It wasn't time for the injection yet. First he had to introduce his little pet.

"I brought you a friend." he said, picking up the bottle. "Look at it. Eight legs, all to hug you and caress you and poke around inside your mouth."

The guard was crying now, rocking and crying and starting to wheeze. Scarecrow frowned. Inhaler or spider? Decisions, decisions.

Spider, he decided. If the man's breathing problems made it difficult for him to scream, he'd deal with
it then. Or maybe not—might be interesting to see someone trying to scream and unable to manage it.

He opened the bottle and shook the spider onto the man's hair.

That alone resulted in a long, low wail and a frantic attempt to get the spider off. And now it was time for the injection.

He gripped the man's wrist and jabbed one needle into the tanned skin there. It would take a few minutes, so he may as well give him his inhaler. Just to be sure.

It didn't do very much for the wheezing. Jonny wondered if there would be a reaction to the toxin. Who cared?

Then came the screams.

They were slightly raspy and weak, but they were enjoyable all the same. Scarecrow laid his hand against the man's throat, feeling the vibrations there. Mm. Perfect.

*Nice tone. A little weak, but that's to be expected.*

**Shut up, I'm trying to listen.**

*You have no class.*

**Nope.**

The vibrations were weakening as his breathing worsened. Alas. All good things must come to an end.

There were few things more boring than watching somebody die of an asthma attack, and he had to be back in his cell anyway.

He picked up a rusty scalpel, ignoring Jonny's wines about *where had that thing been*, and made a quick, deep slice across the man's throat.

The screams turned to gurgles, and then the gurgles turned to blood dripping onto the floor.

Jonathan Crane removed the mask, put on his glasses, and reached up to turn off the light above his workspace. That would teach this idiot that mocking him was never a good idea.

"Thank you for luring him down here."

"Sure, love."

They could feasibly risk an escape, but it was cold outside and there was no reason to bother.

"I think I'll just leave him down here for the time being. They'll find him soon enough."

"Mm."

He turned off the last light and they left the room, leaving the door open just a crack.

Just enough to draw someone inside.

The spider, finding that it was now on a stable surface, scuttled down and retreated to the corner with the dead mice to clean itself.
All was quiet.

THE END
The Fearsome Dr. Crane (Gotham season 1) makes me suspect he didn't start out as a psycho. He doesn't look too excited about the whole 'kill people through their greatest phobias' thing, really. Though it could be getting kicked out to feed the meter…that aside, it obviously didn't stick. Shame. This version might actually stand still for hugging and feeding. AU for me, technically sort of canon, don't ask.

He feels his fingers losing their grip on the gun and hastens to set it down. He's shaking, god, his whole body's shaking and he's going to be sick…

But not right now.

"Kitty?"

He's not sure if she's unconscious or dead or just…quiet. But she's never been this quiet.

"Kitty."

*Please don't be dead…*

He doesn't really want to go over there-—there's blood and broken glass and everything—but he needs to. He needs to see if she's okay, and if…

"Dad?"

He doesn't answer, either.

He makes his way across the room. If he can just stay upright he can manage, but the minute he trips, he won't be getting up for a long time.

He's not sure if she's dead or not. She's tied to the chair, not moving. He shakes her, desperate for some kind of noise. She shouldn't be this quiet, she can never shut up in class, for god's sake…

"Kitty, *please.*"

Why isn't she moving?

He tries shaking her again. *That* does it—she starts coughing and sputtering and trying to twist away from him. She's okay.


It really isn't okay.

"Jonathan." Her voice is raw from screaming. She'll probably lose it. That'll make the teachers happy. "What happened?"

Should he tell her? He doesn't know.
"Hold still."

The ropes are thick but they give way to a kitchen knife. Once she's free she tries standing up and promptly falls over. When he catches her he realizes that she's shaking like a leaf and probably in shock. He's grateful he left the light off—he doesn't think either of them can stomach the thing in the middle of the floor, in the blood…

"Is he dead?"

"I don't know."

That's apparently enough of an answer, because she shuts up and clings to him. He suspects she'll fall if she lets go.

For that matter, he suspects the same of himself.

He manages to drag her into the kitchen—so normal, so not-like-the-basement, how strange—before his strength gives out and he drags them both down into a chair.

They need to go to the hospital. She's been injected with something—a sedative, maybe, definitely a dose of that poison.

Maybe Mrs. Richardson will come and pick them up.

He's just reaching for the phone when it occurs to him that there is a corpse

Is he really dead?

in the basement and that she might not take that well.

No. They'll have to walk home.

In a minute. He'll be okay in a minute, he can probably carry her, she's little…

Maybe five minutes.

"Jonathan."

Now that they're in a bright room, she doesn't look that bad. Rattled, pale, but no cuts or bruises. At least not that he can see. He's not surprised. They were never physically broken. Well, at least not in the capture. It was always the fall that killed them…or the drowning…or the porcelain doll's hands thrust into their eye sockets.

He closes his eyes and tries hard not to be sick.

"Jonathan."

That's right, she probably wanted to ask him something.

"Yes."

"I don't think we can go to school tomorrow."

Something about that strikes them both as hysterically funny.

Laughing mad…like that maniac that was scared of clowns, the ones the police got to in time, the
one that confessed to six murders…

"No." Control. Calm. "No, I don't think so."

She shifts a bit, her arms loosening from around his neck. He's suddenly jittery. They need to get out of here. What if he isn't dead? What if he's dragging himself up the stairs right now?

"We need to go."

"Mm?"

Her eyes are glassy. She's probably going to pass out on him.

"You need to go to the hospital."

She lets him help her up and doesn't ask why they don't just call her parents to come get them.

He won't tell her, he decides. She doesn't need to know.

"What on…my god. Paul. Paul! Over here!"

Huh?

Someone tries to pull her out of his arms—she finally did pass out a little while ago—and he steps back.

"It's okay." the first voice says. "It's okay, kid, we're the police."

Police?

He blinks, realizing that he's…in a neighborhood. A new neighborhood. When did they get there?

"What's your name?"

"Jonathan." he says.

"Who's this?"

"Kitty."

They really are the police—he can see their car. But Gotham's police are corrupt, or maybe the car is stolen…

He takes another step back.

"It's okay. Paul, call an ambulance…Jonathan, was it?"

"Yes."

"Okay. We're just gonna stay here and wait for the ambulance with you. Okay?" He doesn't say anything. "Is there anyone we can call?"

He gives them the Richardson's number. God, he's tired…how long has he been walking? What time is it?

He finds himself on a bench, listening—but-not-listening to somebody's phone conversation. Kitty hasn't woken up, hasn't made any sort of sound. He tries to remember when he finally had to pick
her up and draws a blank.

"How are you feeling?"

It's the other officer. Tim, his name tag says. Short for Timothy? Or just Tim?

He doesn't really care.

"I don't know."

"Do you remember what happened?" He hesitates, shakes his head. "Okay. The ambulance is here." Good. "Can they take her now?"

He becomes aware that two new people are standing in front of him.

"Yes."

He watches them walk away and prepares to sit back down to wait. But the ground suddenly tilts. A voice says, "Jesus Christ-!"

But that's all.

THE END
Okay. So I don't exactly love Gotham's take on his backstory, BUT this wouldn't let me sleep. Long story short, Kitty's mum found out about everything, had a row with Gerald Crane (Jonathan's dad) that resulted in her threatening to report him to the police for abuse, neglect, and assault (he'd grabbed her wrist during their row and left bruises). Seeing as Gerald seems to be shaping up to be more serial-killer-y, Jonathan's paranoid that this is far from over.

It's midnight, it's raining, and he hasn't slept at all. Kitty's been in here for about an hour, squeezing him around the ribs, but that isn't the problem.

No, the problem is that he knows full well this isn't over.

He remembers another rainy night, not so very long ago, that he'd been woken from a fitful sleep by his father coming in from a late walk. That in itself had been odd enough, but the stains on his clothes-red, blotchy stains-had given him the idea that the Scarecrow Killer might be…well…

It hadn't helped that there probably weren't *that* many creepy scarecrow masks floating around Gotham in February.

He should have said something then, but better the devil you know than the devil you don't, and he'd heard horror stories about the System. It was only two months until his birthday, anyway. He could stick it out.

He shivers, remembering that horrid mask coming out of the darkness of the basement, the stitched grin seeming to grow wider in the flickering light.

No. No, no. There's no grin now, and there won't be.

But Gerald Crane had never liked to be told no.

It isn't that he thinks the man will come looking for him because he misses him, oh, no. He knows better than that. But he will come looking because he's been beaten in an argument-by a woman, no less!-and because Jonathan hasn't told half of what he's done. If he did tell Mrs. Richardson anything else, she'd take him straight to the police station then and that's just too much of a hassle. He'll deal with Gerald in his own way, soon enough.

If he gets the chance. The minute he's back in that basement, he'll never get out.

One more month. One more month and it counts as kidnapping.

Problem is, Gerald's killed before. He's seen the news, he's not an idiot. He may very well kill everyone here-whether this includes him or not, he doesn't know.

He tried to tell Mrs. Richardson that-sort of-but she dismissed it as fever and nerves. So now here he is, unable to sleep and listening desperately for any sound of somebody inside.
Could be nothing, he tells himself. Just the house settling. Or one of Kitty's parents—probably Mrs. Richardson, her dad's a sound sleeper—up for a drink of water.

Yes.

That's all.

Or, his insidious inner voice whispers, or it could be a tall, gangly monster with a doctor's bag and a burlap face.

Creak.

Someone on the staircase? Mrs. Richardson. Hopefully she won't look in…although he suspects she knows more than she lets on. He'll just pretend to be asleep if she opens the door.

Creak.


Hasn't he broken in before? That last girl…slipped into her bedroom in the dead of the night and took her.

Creak.

He'd have heard the door open, wouldn't he? Unless he's been inside since earlier—they were all outside with the door wide open, he could have slipped in, hidden in a coat closet or something.

Stoppit!

Creak.

Kitty sighs and her arms slide a little further down his ribs. He wonders, briefly, what she would see. Roaches? Probably roaches, burrowing down her throat, suffocating…

Enough!

There's dead silence in the room and he shivers, knowing it really isn't that cold in here but unsure whether it's fever or fear.

Maybe both.

Did the door move? It's dark and he can't see for shit without his glasses.

He reaches over towards the nightstand, trying not to move too much, and closes his fingers around the earpiece. He still can't see very well—too dark—but the door does not appear to have moved.

He lets out a breath he didn't realise he was holding and lets his head fall back. It's nothing. It's just nonsense to believe that-

There's a scarecrow at the window.

He can't move, only lay there and look at it. The familiar grin—far too wide to be natural—looks back at
him.

He should wake her up, tell her to wake her mother and call the police, but he can't move. He can't even breathe.

The grinning face twists to the side and long, thick fingers reach up to rest on the glass.

Before he can do anything, the scarecrow disappears.

He won't be sleeping at all tonight.

THE END
Chapter Notes

Gerald Crane's big on eye contact. No eye contact could mean making up stories. Or missing things. Like the last two-AU for me, technically canon, yadda-yadda. Gotham's fault entirely.

He comes to on a hard table, his arms above his head. What on…has he taken up sleepwalking again?

He tries to get up and realizes that his arms are not only above his head, but that they're tied there.

He's on the table downstairs.

"Jonathan." His father's hand, deceptively gentle, tousles his hair. "I'm sorry about this. It's for your own safety. I don't know what this will do, and I don't want you hurting yourself."

What will what…oh.

"No." He pulls at the ropes around his wrists, confusion giving way to rising panic. "No, please, can't we find somebody else…?"

"Shh. You're the only one that will give me a detailed description."

"But…"

"There. You're nice and secure. This won't hurt you, I promise." The soft hand moves from his hair to his face. He closes his eyes and like lightning, the long fingers grip his chin until he opens them. "Tell me everything you experience, all right? Everything you see, hear, smell…everything."

"Please…"

But there's a needle in his arm now. It's too late for anything.

He swallows hard. Nothing's changed. The room is still pitch black and cold, and the only sounds being the familiar scratching of Dad's pencil and the rattling of the water heater in the far right corner. Maybe it doesn't work. Maybe it was a failure and he won't have to do this…

What was that?

A new sound has joined the other two-an unfamiliar scratching sound. Sounds like it's on the stairs, coming down.

*Just a hallucination…just a hallucination…*

He strains to see something, anything—even the glint of Dad's glasses would be fine. Anything but…nothingness.

His wish is granted and he immediately wishes that it wasn't.
A face comes out of the darkness, eyes glowing red and a hideous grin showing fangs.

"Jon-a-than…"

He closes his eyes again and a rough hand shoots out and folds gently around his throat.

"Look at me!"

He chokes and forces himself to look up. It smells like burlap in here, burlap and straw and stale water and sawdust.

"Please…"

The hand tightens and he yanks desperately at the ropes, willing to pull his hands clean off if it'll get him away from this thing, this monster from Hell, god please anybody…

"Please!"

The thing laughs and he struggles to get its hand off his throat, anything, please…

"Please! Dad!"

But Dad doesn't come and the thing continues to laugh.

He comes to on a soft surface. Bed. He's in his own bed upstairs, his throat raw and his wrists throbbing.

"Jonathan."

"Dad."

"Shh." A water bottle presses against his lips and he swallows half of it. "Good boy…how are you feeling?"

He opens his eyes. Yes, he's in his own room—his poster of Poe stares sympathetically down at him. It's beginning to get dark outside—or is it beginning to get light—and long shadows reach over him like fingers.

Burlap fingers…

He shudders.

"I don't know." he rasps.

More water. He finishes the bottle this time. He could do with another one, but it isn't offered.

"I hate to press you so soon, but I'm worried you might block it out." Huh? "I need you to tell me everything."

He blinks, confused. Now?

"Dad?"

"Just in case you forget. I know you won't, but one has to be careful." He settles himself in a chair he's brought up, pencil at the ready. "Don't worry about being coherent, this isn't an essay."
"But…"

"Don't argue with me, Jonathan, please."

He takes a deep breath.

"There…there was a noise, at first. Kind of a rustling noise. Like a mouse." Talking hurts. He'll be mute on Monday. "Then this…this thing…it came out of nowhere, Dad, its eyes were glowing and…"

He breaks off, coughing. A soft hand rests on his and he's offered another drink of water.

"Take your time." He closes his eyes and the hand grips his wrist, sending waves of pain up and down his arm. He opens them again and the hand relinquishes its hold. Oww… "Take your time, son."

He doesn't miss the tremble-of excitement, not worry-in his father's voice.

"It had glowing eyes and…and this grin…the teeth, they were so long and sharp…it looked like a scarecrow, sort of, but not a real one…"

"Did it touch you?"

He nods.

"It grabbed my throat." he says. "And it wouldn't stop laughing…it said my name and it wouldn't stop laughing…"

"Okay. It's okay, just take deep breaths." He tries, but they make him cough. More water is offered and Dad stands up, tucking his notebook into his pocket. "I'm going to ask you something, and I want you to answer honestly. Is that clear?"

"Yes."

"Good." He's holding something behind his back. "Is that what you saw?"

And he draws out a burlap face.

He can't even scream now, or move. All he can do is hide under the blankets and hope it forgets he's there…

"Okay. Good boy. It's okay…you're okay."

He hears him leave, but it's only after he hears him go downstairs that he feels safe to sit up.

He has to get out of here.

He pushes the blankets aside—it's freezing in here—and glances at the door. He should hear Dad come back in time.

Hopefully.

He pulls on a pair of jeans and a sweater before digging up his sneakers. He's just finishing tying them when Dad calls, "Jonathan?"

Shit.
"Yeah?" Ow. Definitely mute by Monday.

"I'm making some soup, do you want me to bring you some?"

"Yes, please."

"Okay."

There. Ready. He's tempted to grab the book he's reading and decides against it. He doesn't need anything extra to carry.

He's nearly to the window when he decides that one little paperback won't hurt. It's thin. He can fit it in his sweater pocket.

Dad will be up here any minute with the soup. He pushes the window open, tests his weight on the tree outside-habit-and makes his way down. He's just about over the back wall when there's the shattering of glass and a voice screams his name.

"JONATHAN!"

He freezes, about to go back in, and topples backwards. The sudden jolt snaps him out of it and he takes off, expecting any minute to hear the van

Jesus Jesus Christ I'll be the next one they find

behind him.

"Jonathan Crane, get back here!"

He ducks down an alley, not knowing where he's going and not caring. There's footsteps not far away and he dives behind a dumpster, wheezing and trying not to make any noise. The footsteps enter the alley.

"Jonathan?"

Don't breathe don't move don't fucking MOVE

"Jonathan?"

The footsteps come a little closer to the dumpster and he squeezes his eyes shut.

"Dammit."

The footsteps turn away and he hears them go back into the street. He still doesn't move until he hears Dad calling for him again from farther away.

The alley is getting dark, and maybe it's the leftovers from whatever that was, but it feels very tight and it looks endless.

Maybe he's still hallucinating.

He reaches the end of the alley eventually-five minutes? Five hours?-and realizes that he's across the street from the Richardson's house. He didn't know they lived this close. He always takes the long way.

He shouldn't bother them, but...he can't go home.
He knocks on the door.

It swings open a minute later and a confused voice says, "Jonathan?"

"Mrs. Richardson." Maybe mute by Sunday. "I'm sorry, I just…there was no one else and I…"

"Good God, what happened to you?" She ushers him in and shuts the door. "Such a state…all scraped up and shaking and—what happened to your wrists?"

Oh. It's the first time he's really looked at them, but he can see that they're red and raw from the rope.

"I…"

"Come on, sit down…there we go. Let me see."

He lets her look at his wrists and take his temperature—he has one, is it a side effect of the poison?—without saying anything. It's warm in here, and bright, but he can't shake the feeling that something's watching him.

She wraps his wrists and tucks a fleece blanket around his shoulders—for shock, she says—before getting them both tea.

"Kitty said you weren't at school yesterday, but I had no idea…"

How long was he unconscious?

"What happened?"

"I don't…." He takes a sip of the tea. It's scalding, but better scalding tea than that god-awful face. "It's complicated."

"Do I need to call the police?"

"No!" No, the police are too slow, there's nothing they can do. "No, I'm all right."

"Look at these!"

He's about to—what? Protest? Let her?—when there's a knock on the door. He jumps and nearly drops the mug.

"I see." She sets her mug down with a firm thump and stands up. "Come along."

He doesn't know what he thought she could do.

"Mrs. Richardson, I'm sorry to bother…Jonathan." Other people might take that tone for relief, but he takes it for what it is—barely suppressed fury. "Where have you been, I've been worried sick! Come here, we're going home."

"No."

What's she doing?

"Doctor Crane, could we speak outside for a few minutes?"

Is she insane?

"I really should be…"
"Go sit down."

"But…"

"Right now."

He does, but the minute the door shuts he's up again, straining to hear what's going on.

"Ever since his mother died…these little runaway attempts…"

"Where did he get those rope burns, Doctor Crane?"

"Excuse me?"

"I'm not a stupid woman, Doctor." Maybe she'll be okay after all. "I'll ask you again: where did those rope burns come from?"

"I had no idea he even had them!" Dad sounds mildly offended. "School, perhaps…"

"I don't know how that could have happened."

"Mrs. Richardson, I don't know what you're implying, but I assure you…"

"I'm not implying anything. I'm accusing you of child abuse."

There's dead silence for several minutes.

"I beg your pardon?"

"You heard me."

"That's ridiculous. I'm not going to stand here and listen to such…such…wild accusations!" Forget mildly offended—he's furious. Maybe he should call the police now. "We're going home. If you'll let me collect my son, we'll be…"

"You are going home. He is staying here."

"I could have you charged with kidnapping."

"And I could have you charged with abuse and assault, if you don't take your hand off me right now."

More silence. Then-

"Very well. He can stay the night. I'll come by to pick him up in the morning."

"We'll see."

He has just enough time to scurry back to the table before she comes back in, muttering darkly under her breath.

"You'll stay here tonight." she says. "And that's final. Come on, let's get you to bed."

It hits him, for the first time since he came in, that Kitty isn't here.

"Mrs. Richardson?"
"Mary, dear."

"Where's Kitty?"

"She and her dad went to a movie."

That's right…if it really is Saturday, this would be that fantasy movie that she wouldn't shut up about. He winds up in a pair of sweats and a t-shirt that are far too big for him, but they'll do. He certainly isn't about to complain.

"There we go…nice and comfortable." She tucks him in. "Don't worry any more tonight. We'll talk in the morning."

"Thank you."

"Shh. Just get some sleep."

She turns off the light and shuts the door and he curls up under the blankets, shivering. The warmth from the tea has long since faded and now he's really worried about what Dad will do. He won't call the police—for all his bluster, the police are already wondering about all these 'phobia murders'. One of them escaped, she might remember him.

But that doesn't mean that he'll be very happy.

He rolls over to look at the door. For some reason, he's never felt safe with his back to the door.

God, he's tired.

He closes his eyes and makes himself comfortable. Well, as comfortable as possible in a strange place.

Maybe he is still hallucinating. Maybe this is just a break. Like the quiet moment in horror movies before the serial killer leaps out of the closet.

There's nothing in the closet, is there?

It's closed. Probably not.

He coughs-ow—and pulls the blankets up to his neck. Better. Warm.

He can sleep for now.

THE END
Chapter Notes

Nothing to do with the Goosebumps book of the same name. Everything to do with screams and murder. I've stuck him in his Arkham Asylum costume for this, because I really, really don't want that coming after me at night. Or at all.

Gotham's annual haunted corn maze has never been particularly impressive. A couple of people usually dress up like vampires and spring at the walkers, but the only real terror is getting lost.

Like now.

Kathy Watson has gotten separated from her friends, the maze is officially closed, and she can't find her way out. Her allergies are acting up and there's no phone service out here.

This is just great. Fan-fucking-tastic.

Okay. She'll just go straight. Right? She's gotta get out of here soon. If she just goes straight, she'll be out of the field and then she can walk around the maze to her car.

So. Onwards, fair maiden!

Her footsteps are the only sounds and she eventually starts whistling. That's even creepier and she stops soon enough.

Why do her footsteps have to echo like that? It's bad enough that she's alone in here!

She rounds a corner and swallows a yelp upon seeing the creepy scarecrow in front of her. Just a prop…just a prop. Whoo.

"Hello?"

This time she does scream.

"Who's there!"

"Sorry! I got lost." The woman grimaces. "My boyfriend thought he'd be clever and ditch me in here, and my hay fever's been-ah-choo!-really bad." She sniffles and rummages in her pocket for a tissue. "Do you work here?"

"I'm lost, too."

"Oh." She slumps a little before perking up. "Come on, let's get going. I can't be in here by myself for another minute. Twice I thought that thing was going to jump me." She jerks her thumb towards the scarecrow.

Kathy breathes a small, sniffly sigh of relief. She is no longer alone in the maze. Thank God. Next year, she decides, she'll work overtime. Stay home and hand out candy. Anything but be dragged into this stupid maze. But her friends made her. 'It's your first year in Gotham!' they said. 'It's
"What's your name?"
"Kitty. Yours?"
"That's weird…Kathy."
"That is weird. Pleasure."

They walk in silence, fumbling through the darkened rows. And then-she doesn't know how it happens, honest she doesn't-her companion disappears.

Just vanishes.

And not two minutes later, there's a blood-curdling scream from behind her.

Kathy breaks into a run, the uneven ground threatening to trip her. And trip her it does-straight into the ground at the base of the creepy scarecrow prop.

She struggles to her feet, feeling her lip bleeding. There's dirt in the wound—nasty and gritty and slightly salty. Ugh…

She lifts her head and blinks a few times.

The scarecrow isn't there. This is the place—the cross is there—but it…isn't.

What in…
"Hullo again."

She feels a wave of relief that the other woman is unharmed, followed by a wave of anger that she scared her like that.

"What happened? Why'd you scream?"

"It's alive." She's grinning. "See? It's gone." She points at the empty cross. "It's walking around the maze, looking for victims."

And she's cracked. Whatever happened to her broke her, apparently.

"Boo."

She screams again and whirls around, hands upraised to shield her face. They're gripped by warm hands belonging to…

Dear God.

The scarecrow. It's alive. It's alive and it's grabbed her and oh sweet Jesus…

She rips free, leaving a piece of her shirt in its grasp. It swipes for her again, and misses. She takes off running, pulling shallow breaths through her mouth. Her nose is dripping and her eyes are so watery that she can barely see, but she can hear it coming after her.

"Run, run, little Kathy!" it calls. "Run like the wind!"

She trips over a rock and gets a mouthful of dirt. Spitting and scraping at her lips, she rolls over and
sees…nothing.

She's lost it.

Okay…deep breaths…deep breaths…she'll just find her way out and tell the police there's an escaped lunatic in the corn maze dressed like…

Oh.

Oh, dear god.

The first thing her friends told her about Gotham was that it was teeming with costumed lunatics. There was a clown, a man dressed in a green that liked riddles and death traps, and a scarecrow.

No way. Surely he'd be causing mass mayhem, not chasing after her. This was just a nut suffering a bad case of hero-worship or something.

SLICE!

A chunk of corn topples to the ground and she catches sight of a scythe.

"I found you!"

She scrambles to her feet and steps backwards, trying not to trip again.

"Please…"

"Hush, hush, child."

"Please, God…"

He lifts the scythe again and she turns to flee.

There! The exit, the exit at last!

There's a searing pain in her ankle and she faceplants in the dirt. When she manages to roll over and lift her head, she sees a foot lying a little ways away.

Not just a foot. It's got a pink Converse sneaker on it. *Her* pink Converse sneaker.

She passes out at the sight.

THE END
Troubles

Chapter Notes

Seeing as Batman can get antidotes, Jonathan has to make new strains to get around that. And that probably isn't easy-if it were easy, I'd make some and market it as the new pepper spray. 'Hands up-AUGH!' Ha. Mug me now, asshole.

BOOM!

"Jonathan!" Oh, dear god, if he'd set the lair on fire again… "Jonathan, what did you do?"

"I got it!" There was a bout of coughing. "I finally solved the problem! The heat was too much for it!"

Well, nothing was on fire. That was good.

Something had shorted out-she could smell burned wires-but other than that, everything seemed to be fine. Granted, the current subject was shrieking its head off through the gag, but that was to be expected.

"That's good, love."

"It kept wearing off in thirty seconds." he explained, already rummaging for a syringe. "But this should last longer."

He filled the syringe, forced the subject's head back, and injected it before ripping the gag off.

The subject screamed nonstop for thirty seconds…and dropped dead of a heart attack.

Crap.

Three…two…one…

"Dammit!" He flung the syringe against the far wall. "What is it? What is the matter with it? It's not the heat, it's not the plant…why isn't it working?"

He shook the dead subject back and forth before overturning the chair it was taped to.

Oh, boy. This was going to be a long day.

THE END
She'd thought he'd suffer from a misguided sense of chivalry. Surely he wouldn't throw her against the wall. She was fragile!

And now she was cut and bruised and pretty sure she had a broken wrist and a concussion.

That monster.

"What the hell is wrong with you?"

He looked at her and kicked her bat out of reach.

Yeah. Maybe flying at him with a baseball bat upheld was a bad idea.

"Sorry."

She was going to puke.

He hauled her to her feet and she spotted her wrist. It was swollen up like a watermelon.

She threw up on his shoes. That was an accident, honest, but she couldn't claim to be sorry about it.

Next time, she'd wear hockey pads.

THE END
Gotham also has 'Batman Insurance' and 'Rogue Insurance' in case something should happen. Bats crash through your glass ceiling? Money! I gas your kid? Money and free therapy! - Scarecrow

This was ridiculous. Really? 'Villain Drill'? First of all, that was overly dramatic. Second of all, no one committed crimes in the daytime. Third of all, no one bothered with the schools. There was no money there.

But this was just too good to miss. 'Villain Drill'…only in Gotham.

So here they were, in a broom closet, having killed a janitor and a lunch lady to get in.

"You know, some people have other things to do in a broom closet."

"I don't relish a broom jammed into my back, thanks."

"I never said anything about that."

He scowled at a bottle of bleach and finished straightening his clothing. Ugh. That janitor had been too short and too fat, and the clothes had been itchy.

"Ready?"

"Ready."

There was a class of sixth-graders just down from the hall from them, learning long division. Poor things.

He knocked on the door and went in, ignoring the, "Who are you?"

"We're here to test the students on this 'Villain Drill' of yours." he said.

"I don't know who you think you are, but this isn't…"

"This isn't a drill." he continued. "Kitty, would you lock the door?"

The teacher had gone pale when he pulled out his mask. Now she pulled herself together and advanced upon him with a yardstick.

"Get out of here right now!"

He shook his head and put the mask on. Well? What was this much-praised…oh, really?

Really?

Get under the desks and cover their heads?
He gassed the room in disgust and left the building, grumbling about the fate of today's youth.

THE END
"P-please. I need to see her, it's important." He coughs and catches hold of her hand with his free one. "Please."

She pities him, lying there in the grip of what the doctors seem to suspect may be a fatal fever. But they told her not to give in. They told her…

"I can't, Mr. Crane. I'm sorry."

He blinks at her, his eyes shiny and confused, and she feels her heart break for him. No matter what he's done, now he's just a very sick man.

He lets his hand fall.

"Tell her…tell her something for me." He forces another breath into his lungs and closes his eyes. When he doesn't continue, she panics and fumbles to feel for a pulse. No, not dead. Not yet.

"Mr. Crane?"

He groans and murmurs, "Kitty, please…”

That does it. A quick visit won't do any harm, and if it'll comfort a dying man…her conscience is worth something, isn't it?

"Okay. I'll bring her. But you can't say anything, please…”

"Thank you."

He falls silent and she slips out of the room. When she comes back with Richardson in tow, she knows she did the right thing.

"Jonathan?"

"Hello, Kitty." He looks a little better than he has all day, really.

"You look awful, love." She sits down beside him. "God, Jonathan…”

She breaks down sobbing and slumps over his bed. After a few minutes, she sits up, shakes her hair out of her face, and kisses his forehead.

"Just try to sleep. You'll be all right."

He nods.

"Kitty?"

"Yes?"

"I love you."

She gives him a watery smile.

"Love you too. Go to sleep."
Yes. She did the right thing.

She escorts the woman back to her cell before returning to her patient. He's dozed off again, his ragged breathing a little more even. She settles herself into the chair and picks up her magazine. All is quiet for a while, and then she hears a, "Miss?"

"Yes, Mr. Crane?"

"Would you get me a glass of water? Please?"

"Of course."

She gets up and goes to the sink. She's just finished filling the glass when a chain wraps around her neck and a voice hisses, "Come along, my dear."

"God…"

"Not exactly." She's escorted out into the hall and towards the main cell block. God in Heaven… somebody, please… "Thank you for permitting that little visit. It was very kind of you, letting her bring me that lockpick."

"Mr. Crane, please…"

"Doctor." he snaps. "Call me 'mister' once more and I shall have to hurt you. Now, your keys, please."

"N-no."

The chain tightens.

"No? You're sure? Final answer?"

"In my right pocket."

"Good girl." he breathes. "Thank you. You'll forgive me for leaving so soon, but I can't take you along. You'll make too much noise."

He tightens the chain again and after several minutes of gasping for air, the world goes black.

THE END
Late

Sometimes Jonathan wondered if it would be worth it to complain about police brutality.

Of course, he only ever wondered that while in a haze of pain (with no ibuprofen anywhere in sight). He always came to his senses later.

Right now he wasn't thinking about the police. He was thinking about Batman, and blaming him for not being able to sleep. He was the one who had thrown the Batrang, which had sliced them both (what were the odds?), and had made it impossible to sleep normally, which resulted in not sleeping at all.

Never mind that they had been busy borrowing some chemicals at the time. It was easier to blame the Batman. It was always easier to blame the Batman. Insomnia? Batman. Couldn't find decent help? Batman. Lousy Arkham therapist? Batman.

Kitty wasn't having trouble sleeping. Must be nice. Although she had gotten a bad scare-nearly fell off the roof. The comedown from that probably would have put her out if she had a broken leg.

God, he was tired. Why did those things have to be so sharp? He hated sleeping with a gauze wrap.

Kitty mumbled something about spoilers and inched back against him. He could feel the wrap around her chest brush against his fingertips. They were both lucky, really. They could be in Arkham. Or worse.

Gauze aside, she had a handful of scars within feeling range. There was one that he knew nothing about (probably sneaking out or something), one that was from a bad fall, and one…where had she gotten…oh.

He remembered this one. There had been a mishap involving a knife, and he hadn't given stitches before. She hadn't been in any shape to talk him through it, either. (She'd had a cold to begin with.)

"Jon'th'n?" She moved a bit. "You all righ'?"

"Go back to sleep."

"Mm-hm."

She rolled over and didn't say anything else.

What time was it? Had to be after three in the morning. Damn Batman. Couldn't even make a dishonest living in this town…

His chest hurt. And he was hungry. Of all the times to be hungry! Hopefully they had something in the fridge. Like an apple.

He withdrew his arm and slid off the bed, waited a second to make sure she wasn't waking up, and slunk into the kitchen.

Ow. Ow. Ow.

He wasn't going to sleep tonight, he could just tell. They did have an apple-a nice, tart, green one. He scrubbed it off before biting into it.
Well, since he was up, he may as well-yawn-see about those notes…maybe start that next batch…

Or maybe finish the apple and go back to bed. It was cold down here.

Did they really not have any ibuprofen…no. No, there had been a mishap with one of the subjects. Dammit. Shame the man was dead, or he could have taken his frustration out on him.

He made his way back upstairs and got under the covers again. It must have been colder downstairs than he thought-surely the bed hadn't been this warm when he left it.

Oh, never mind. Comfortable.

Well, as comfortable as possible, given the circumstances.

He closed his eyes and wondered again if he should complain about police brutality.

Probably…

If anything would ever get done…

Sleep.

THE END
I knew someone that tripped on the dog and shattered their ankle. Bone was sticking out and everything. Not pretty. So yes, that can happen. Watch your step. For those of you who somehow don't know this, Cujo is a rabid St. Bernard that appears in the Stephen King book of that name.

John Greene likes the graveyard shift at Walgreens. Most of the time nobody comes in, so he can just sit there and play on his Gameboy or watch TV or text.

He can't text tonight, because the phone lines are down at home and he left his phone for his mother in case of emergency. The lines are down here, too, but he's not recovering from surgery. (She tripped over the dog in the night and shattered her ankle.)

Oh, well. He'll live.

The door opens and two people who look a little the worse for wear come in.

"Hello, welcome to Walgreens."

"Hi."

"Looking for anything?"

"We'll manage." the man says shortly. "Go back to your game."

Fine. Asshole.

They disappear into the back, towards the first aid kits. He shrugs and turns to the TV to look at the news. The closed captioning says something about a Scarecrow attack on a football field. Huh. Crazy bastard. Probably just bitter about not being on the team in high…

Wait.

He knows those people on the screen.

They just walked in here.

And the phones are down.

Shit.

He eyes the door. He might be able to run for it, but there isn't a police station for several blocks and he's not in the best of shape anyway. Maybe it would be best to just stay here, act natural, and hope he doesn't tip off the guy in the back.

They reappear in the seasonal section, laughing about something. Probably those people they killed. Help. Somebody. Isn't the Batman supposed to show up now? Maybe the Walgreens is too brightly lit. Maybe he should turn off the lights.
Yeah, right. And be alone with the Scarecrow in the dark? NOPE.

Richardson holds up something lacy and Crane backs up, hands held above his head. She laughs at him, says something that Greene doesn't catch, and tosses it back into the bin.

Maybe that's not the Scarecrow at all. Maybe it just looks like him.

Before he's really convinced of that, they appear in front of the counter with a box of ibuprofen, a first-aid kit, a sewing kit, and a bag of chocolate.

"F-find everything okay?"

If this isn't the Scarecrow, he looks an awful lot like him.

"Yes. I think so." She cocks her head. "Jonathan, are you sure you don't like that black lace… whatever the hell it was?"

Jonathan. Isn't Crane's first name Jonathan?

Crap.

"Quite sure. I don't trust you."

"Why not?"

"You know why not."

As much as he hates to interrupt them, he'd much rather them pay and be gone.

"Seventeen thirty-two."

Act natural.

"You're a little jumpy, ah…John. Something scare you?"

NO NO NOTHING AT ALL EVERYTHING'S FINE.

"N-no, sir."

"Are you sure? You don't look at all well."

"I-I'm fine, Mr. Scare…"

Shit.

They exchange looks, nod, and turn back to him.

"As sorry as I am to do this, I can't risk you going for help." Crane sounds legitimately sorry. "Don't worry, this batch wears off about sixty percent of the time."

WAIT WHAT NO-!

And then Cujo rises up behind the counter, jaws open wide.

THE END
Most people, whether or not they liked to admit it, stayed well away from graveyards after midnight. They weren't most people.

In their first real effort to celebrate PDA Day in...god, four years?...they'd packed food (well...cookies) and taken a bottle of wine to the cemetery. And now here they were, in the back, with the old Graves, huddled under a terrible excuse for an umbrella because Gotham just had to have bad weather all year.

All the same, the cookies survived (by being eaten, naturally) and the wine was mostly gone (and they were more than a little drunk).

"You're warm."

"So are you."

The Graves surrounding them were crooked and crumbling and they couldn't read most of them.

"Can you believe they made a movie out of that...that travesty?"

"You didn't want to see it, did you?"

"God no. Did you?"

"You know me better than that."

She laughed and scrunched against him.

"We should catch the two AM showing and gas the place."

That would be funny...but he was oddly comfortable right here. And more interested in getting the last of the wine out of the bottle.

The rain was starting to let up. About time.

He leaned back against the gnarled old tree (it was the law to have at least one creepy tree per graveyard) and looked out, towards the newer Graves. He wondered how many were here because of him.

Probably...oh...ten percent?

"Kitty?"

"Yes?"

"How many people do you think we put here?"

"All of them," she said, spreading her hands. "Every last one...except this guy." She patted a patch of dirt beside her. "'Cause it says he died in eighteen-twelve."

He'd accept that. Who knew how many people died after the fact, anyway? Suicides...lingering effects...
He really would have to monitor one of his escapees one day.

**Crunch.**

"What was that?"

"I don't know."

**Crunch. Crunch.**

Could be footsteps. Maybe it was Cupid. He was a fat little bastard, wasn't he?

He grabbed his scythe and pulled himself up before giving her a hand. She had a gun. She may have been a lousy shot, but it was better than nothing.

Now, where was…ah. There, in the shadows. Batman, it had to be.

They hadn't even done anything this time! Life was so unfair…

"Do you see him?"

"Uh-huh."

"Can you hit him?"

"Probably not. Can you?"

On a normal day, his chances were fifty-fifty. Tonight? Sixty-forty.

"No."

They found that hilarious and spent another minute laughing. When they finally straightened up, Batman was gone.

This was going to hurt.

She fired in one direction and he swung the scythe in another. The blade glanced off a tombstone and the bullet embedded itself in a tree.

Well. This was awkward. Maybe drinks and weaponry didn't mix.

Batman did not swoop down on them and after a minute of standing there, braced for impact, they lowered their weapons and started laughing again, albeit a little nervously.

"I think we should go home now."

"Agreed."

**FWAM!**

Son of a bitch.

"We didn't even do anything this time." Kitty complained. "We were having a date. GOD."

Batman didn't answer. He just hauled them out of the car, paying no mind to the fact that he knocked them into a very big, very hard grave marker earlier and left horrendous bruises.
"Would it kill you to take a night off? Get a girlfriend. Or a boyfriend. It's all fine. Just get laid already."

"I don't think he's listening."

"Moment killer."

He couldn't have agreed more.

Although…

Since they were probably going to be separated for a few days…

What the hell.

He leaned over, ignoring the sudden tightening of a hand on his upper arm, and kissed her.

They got a few seconds in before Batman pulled them apart with a low groan of disdain.

"That's not fair."

He grinned at her.

"Consider it incentive to come up with an escape plan."

THE END
Records

Jonathan Crane is not a morning person. The only thing he does in the morning is sit down and drink his coffee. No reading, no television, no talking. His world revolves around the mug in his hand, and nothing else.

So when one of his henchmen comes bursting in, dragging the television behind him, he is not pleased. Looks like he's just found himself a new subject.

"Boss! Boss, you gotta see this."

What's his name again…ah. Matthews.

"Matthews…"

"You're on TV."

So? That has long ceased to be exciting.

He takes another sip of his coffee, debating on whether or not to use the needle or the aerosol.

"…records pertaining to Jonathan Crane, also known as the Scarecrow…"

He nearly spits the coffee out. What? Records? What records? What is this?

"…have been released to the press…"

Who is responsible for this? Oh, when he finds out, he'll kill them! Painfully!

"Are they legit, Boss? Did ya really get your ass handed to ya by an old lady?"

The men snicker. He sets his cup down and reaches for his scythe.

Not two minutes later, two heads are rolling on the floor and the wall is spattered with blood. He'll clean that later.

"Jonathan? What's going on? I heard screams…what did you do?"

"Some kind soul has released my records to the public." he says, wiping off the blade of his scythe with a napkin. "I don't appreciate that very much."

"Oh, no…"

"When I find out who is responsible for this, they'll have to die. Obviously."

"Jonathan, for heaven's sake…"

"It's either kill them all now or never hear the end of this." He reaches for his coffee cup again. "Killing them is easier."

"Oh, no…"

He ignores that and bats one of the heads aside. He'll finish his coffee, but after that he has to pay a visit to the news station.
"Reporting live from Gotham Today…"

"Reports that the Scarecrow has…"

"OH GOD WHY!"

There. That should keep them busy while he tracks down whoever is responsible.

"Really, love, aren't you overreacting?"

"No. First of all, this sort of thing is illegal. Second of all, I have a reputation."

"Yes, but…seriously?" She points to the now-flaming news building. "That's called overkill."

"It's called making a point." A shrieking, eyeless reporter flings his arms around his knees and gets stabbed with the scythe for his trouble. "I will not stand for this Kitty, and that's final."

She rolls her eyes.

"Come on. That's enough revenge for one day. We'll do some research tomorrow."

When he finds out who is responsible for this, they'll wish they'd never been born.

THE END
Motivation

It's a new doctor. Fresh out of school, determined to see what makes her tick.

She always hated the new recruits. 'What if we tried this?' 'What about this?' NO. Just no.

This one is no different. He has an annoyingly eager grin on his face. Idiot. If he thinks he'll understand anything, he's dumber than a box of rocks.

"How are you today?" Oh, he's polite! Well, good for him.

"Peachy."

After the typical questions-what did she do to get caught this time? She's unhurt, hopefully?-he leans forward, his game-show-host grin widening a little.

"Why do you do it?"

"Do what."

The grin shrinks a little. Only a little.

"Hurt people. Kill people."

"Oh, that." She makes herself as comfortable as possible in the hard wooden chair. The handcuffs are itchy-she always hated anything on her wrists, bracelets or otherwise. "You really want to know?"

The grin widens again.

"I really do want to help you, Miss Richardson."

"Well, you see, Doctor…" She leans forward and he shrinks back just a touch. Ha. Not so brave after all, hm? "When I was six years old, my mum and I were driving through the countryside. And I saw this beautiful black pony for sale. And I begged her to let me have it. Pitched a screaming fit, pledged my soul to Satan…and do you know what she said?"

"No."

"She. Said. No." She takes a deep breath to hold back the giggles. "And at that moment, something inside me just…snapped." She settles back in the chair, not bothering to hide her own smug grin. "And that's why I do what I do."

His grin withers and dies and he pushes the button to call the orderly. There. That'll teach this upstart to expect a straight answer.

THE END
For the first few days, there's nothing but that thing rising up from under the bed and lunging at him. Nobody comes no matter how much he screams for help-no Dad, no police, no one.

Nobody ever comes.

Eventually the thing grows bored, only coming at night, when the lights are off. Even then, it just prefers to stand at the foot of his bed-or right next to him. Wherever it knows he'll see it, that's where it stands. Just watching and waiting.

Sometimes it's there during the day, but there's other people there then-at least he thinks there are. He hears voices around him, anyway. Sometimes there's a man's voice that he doesn't recognize, and more often there's a woman's voice that he does.

But more often there isn't anyone at all.

He comes to with a soft, cool hand in his hair. For a moment he thinks the creature might be gone, but when he opens his eyes it's still standing at the foot of the bed. He squeezes his eyes shut and cringes back, wishing it would just go away, please…

"Jonathan?" He knows that voice, doesn't he? "Jonathan, are you awake?"

"Mom?"

The cool hand moves back and forth.

"You're okay. You're going to be okay."

Yeah. He'll be okay. Mom's here, she'll take care of him.

The next time he wakes up, the creature is gone—at least from his line of sight. He can still hear it breathing, but at least he doesn't have to look at it.

It's bright in here, too bright by far. He has a vague recollection of Mom being here, but that's not possible.

He must have imagined that one.

He's far more lucid this time around-the machines are irritating and the breathing has stopped. All the same, he's exhausted and he can't shake the feeling that something's watching him.

There's a presence beside his bed and he turns his head, dreading what he'll see. It's only Mrs.
Richardson, who's dozing in a chair next to him. Her knitting is perched precariously on her lap. He doesn't wake her up.

This time it's the opening of a door that wakes him, startling him out of uneasy dreams. "Jonathan?" It's Kitty, holding a book in her hands. "Are you up?"

He risks a nod. She crosses the room, sets the book down, and promptly squeezes him. "Kitty…"

"You scared us awfully bad, love."

"I did?"

"They weren't sure you'd come out of it." She lets him go. "You've been here for a month…"

"Huh?"

"Yeah." She sits down next to him. Her hands are shaking. "You died. For a couple of minutes when they got you in."

He doesn't remember that at all.

"What time is it?"

"A little after noon." He swallows hard and sits up, blinking at the harsh light. "How are you feeling?"

"Tired." he says. "Very tired. Kitty…my dad. What happened to him, do you know?"

"Jonathan…"

"Please."

She takes his hands.

"He's dead."

Oh.

That's…he doesn't really know what to feel, to be honest. Sorry. Relieved.

Mostly relieved.

"I see."

"I'm so sorry, love…"

"He was going to kill me."

"Jonathan…"

"He gave me too much, I said it was too much…"
She hugs him and he slumps against her, shaking. He's not sorry. He's sorry for *Dad*, but he's not sorry for himself.

"You're okay, you're okay…god, love, I'm so sorry…"

"No. Don't be sorry."

She rubs his head and lets him cling for another minute before tucking him back in bed.

"You hungry?"

Starving, actually. He suspects he hasn't eaten very much since he came in.

"Yes."

"Anything sound good?"

"Happy Meal?"

"I think I can sneak one in."

She leaves and he closes his eyes again. He'll just rest until she gets back.

The Happy Meal tastes good but makes him queasy and he falls back asleep not long after. He's woken up by the door opening again. It's Mrs. Richardson this time, carrying her knitting.

"Kitty had homework." she says. "How are you feeling, sweetheart?"

"M'okay." Mostly, anyway.

"Good." She fusses with his blankets, makes him take a drink, and settles in with her knitting. "You're sure?"

"Yes."

She tousles his hair and silences. For the next several minutes, the only sounds are the machine and the click-clack of her needles. He wonders how often she's been here, what all she knows.

He doesn't really want to know.

He drifts a bit before being woken by someone shaking him.

"Jonathan. Jonathan, wake up. Come on now, honey…"

He blinks, takes a shuddery breath and tries to sit up. He is not allowed.

"Please…"

"You're all right, Jonathan. Come on, wake up."

The feelings of terror melt away, leaving him breathless and mildly confused. Mrs. Richardson lets go of his shoulder and brushes his hair out of his face.

"Are you awake?"

"S-sorry…"
"Shh. Don't be sorry, you were having a bad dream."

He doesn't remember.

She tucks him back in and kisses his forehead.

"Go back to sleep, sweetheart. I have to go, but I'll see you tomorrow. Can I bring you anything when I come back?"

"M'okay."

"Okay. Sweet dreams."

For a moment he's tempted to beg her not to go, not to leave him here by himself, but before he can find the words she's gone.

From somewhere in the blackness, he hears something breathing.

THE END
Meeting

Chapter Notes

We used to have bars, but SOME people...why do I even bother protecting the identity of the guilty? The Joker abused the privilege. So now we have glass. Makes for a rude wake-up call, and harder to get out of, but things like this make it worthwhile.-Dr. Crane

He was expecting someone a little more...well...more. Given Crane's reputation, he was at least expecting someone scary. The Joker has his scars, and Croc is...Croc. But Crane isn't particularly threatening. He's too skinny, and right now he's got cuts and bruises from being dragged back in here.

But he doesn't care about that. He has a story to write, and it was a bitch to get permission.

"Jonathan-can I call you Jonathan?"

"You may not. Move back a bit, please, you're fogging the glass."

Crap. He's grouchy already.

He scoots back anyway. Crane does not rise from his bed. He doesn't do anything, actually, aside from stare at the ceiling through cracked glasses.

"What do you..."

"Doctor Crane. Or, even better, 'Good-bye'."

He's tempted to leave, but he'd never hear the end of it if he did. No, he'll remain here and get what he can out of the guy. The readers want a Halloween piece, and that's what they'll get.

He may have to make a few things up, though. What the hell, he's already moving to Florida next month. It's safer.

"I'm with the Gotham Gossip, Doctor Crane."

"They told me. A most disreputable paper. Tell me, were you planning on spreading rumors of a romance between myself and the Riddler? A suicidal idea, but it wouldn't be the first time."

He knows. The one-and only-time they ran a story like that, the people responsible died horribly. They won't be doing anything that stupid again. Let the internet spread those kinds of rumours.

"No, no." He forces a laugh. Crane sighs. "It's nearing Halloween, and we thought we'd interview you."

That gets him up, if only to slump against the brick wall.

"Freddy Dumas, isn't it?"

Where'd he get the last name? They were only supposed to give him the first name! Shit!
Maybe he'll change his name when he moves to Florida.

"Y-yes."

"Why are you here? Are you trying to build your career? Or end it?"

"Boss made me." He forces another laugh. Crane offers a wintery smile but says nothing. "So, can I ask you a few questions?"

"You may, within reason. You may not ask me about my childhood, however. If you do, that will be the end of the interview. Is that quite clear?"

Freddy remembers his high school math teacher and shudders.

"Yes."

"Good." Crane removes his glasses and gingerly begins to polish them. "One of these days…"

"Um…" He fumbles for his list of questions. "You used to be the director here, right?"

"Mm."

"What's it like to be here now?"

"Not particularly exciting, actually." His voice is dry. "Are they paying you extra to come down amongst the crazies?"

"No." Um… "Did you ever think you'd end up here?"

"Of course not. You should consider yourself lucky we have glass now, by the way. Otherwise the Joker would be throwing spitballs at you."

From somewhere in the asylum comes a mad cackle. Freddy shudders.

"What happened to get you brought back?"

"The Batman, Gotham's sainted protector." Crane snorts. "As per usual. I hear most of the bystanders died, though…would you know anything about that?"

Freddy shakes his head and glues his eyes to his notebook. He's still scribbling when there's a sudden WHAM! on the glass. He yelps and nearly falls out of the chair.

Crane retreats to his bed, smirking to himself.

"Run along now. You can make up the rest. But be careful…I have low tolerance for bad lies."

He vows never to visit Arkham again.

THE END
The young man is lying in an alley, one hand pressed to-or, rather, stuck to-his left side. He's apparently unconscious and he looks like he's taken a bit of abuse-he's got bruises and cuts on his face and hands, for one thing, and his breathing is painfully raspy.

"Mister?" He bends over him, fumbling for his phone. "Mister, you okay?"

The man's lips move but there's no sound. Phone! Light. Okay…yeah, he's bleeding. Probably a knife wound or something.

"I'm gonna get you to a hospital, okay? Just…um…Jesus Christ…"

"No…no 'ospital…"

"Are you fucking crazy?"

"Mm…"

Okay. 911 first, then he'll see what he can do.

He's just opening his phone when a spindly hand shoots up, the fingers closing tightly around his wrist.

"No hospital." He speaks clearly, but his voice is still thin.

He closes his phone and the fingers fall back, their owner gasping with the effort.

"Okay, man. Okay. Look, um, you're bleeding pretty bad…"

The fingers twitch and the man's eyes flutter open. Yeesh, they're creepy. Hopefully he'll pass out soon…

"Please…” He coughs wetly. "Please…”

For Christ's sake, he offered to call an ambulance!

The man's voice weakens further, forcing him to lean over him to hear him.

"Breathe deeply."

What?

The strong, spindly fingers shoot up again, this time outstretched...reaching...no. He catches a glimpse of something mechanical inside the sleeve a second before it goes off, releasing a white cloud. It hits him in the face, the bitter taste making him cough.
The man gets to his feet, shaking liquid off his hand. Some of it gets in his mouth and he gags before tasting…ketchup?

"A mild sedative." the man informs him. "Wouldn't want to draw too much attention, would we?"

He's already feeling drowsy, but he still reaches out to snap the scrawny bastard's neck. His hands are batted away with ease and he gets a firm SMACK! with a briefcase that had been lying a few feet away.

"Hands off. I don't need another bout of pneumonia."

Ow…broken nose…

His environment was starting to spin, spin, spin, spin, spin, spin, spin…

Nothing.

THE END
His first time in Arkham's rec room drives home what a horrible place he's landed himself in. The place is filthy and crowded-between the apathetic guards and the cackling inmates, there's barely room to breathe.

Who all is in here, anyway?

There's the Joker, hideously recognizable even without his makeup. His scars stand out in sharp relief and he keeps licking them and sometimes scratching at them. He doesn't want to know how he got those scars.

Next to him is a little blonde thing-must be the doctor he broke a few months ago. Quinn, isn't it, Harley Quinn? She's giggling and fussing with his clothes and staring at him with almost sickening adoration. Sadly, the Joker seems to be less-than-thrilled with the monster he's created.

He won't be sitting over there. Who else is here?

A man with fiery red hair and thick-rimmed glasses sits in a corner, playing with a Rubik's cube. That must be the Riddler-even without his green clothing, he's impossible to miss. He doesn't want to sit there, either-at least one person has wound up being convinced that being a henchman is a good job…and died horribly testing one of Riddler's death traps.

How about no.

There's the Scarecrow in a ratty armchair, one hand holding a thick book and the other draped around Kitty Richardson's waist. He knows better than to go over there. Scarecrow talks people into killing themselves, and if he should be construed as flirting with his girlfriend, well…

Who's the short blonde guy? He doesn't recognize him. He'll sit there, then.

"Hello."

"Good afternoon." Well, apparently the English accent of Disney movies is a thing. "Welcome to Arkham."

"Thanks."

"My name is Jervis Tetch, but you may call me Hatter."

He doesn't sound crazy. He doesn't look it, either…but neither does the Scarecrow.

"Bob."

"Robert?"
"Just Bob."

The little man gives him a wide grin. It hits Bob that the room has become very quiet—everybody’s looking their way. Joker’s stopped licking his scars and Harley’s whispering in his ear—probably asking about him. The Riddler has put the cube aside, Kitty has sat up straight, and the Scarecrow seems to be trying to read his mind.

He feels like a gazelle surrounded by lions.

Thankfully for him, he is called to therapy at that moment.

When he returns, the only people in the room are the Scarecrow and Kitty Richardson. Great. Why couldn’t the Hatter be in here instead? He was nice. A little freaky, maybe,

_Grandma, such big teeth you have!_

but…nice.

"Bob, is it?"

The number of guards has decreased. The hook-handed one—the leader—isn’t here. Crap.

"Yes."

"Sit down. We don’t bite."

Something about that makes Kitty grin, but Scarecrow—what’s his real name, anyway?—maintains his expression of polite disinterest.

Help.

"You’re new. What are you here for?"

He shrugs, tries to be embarrassed. He doesn’t have to try very hard.

"I dressed up as a nutcracker and killed a guy."

"What possessed you to do something as stupid as that?"

Good question.

"Money…"

"No."

It’s like being confronted by a snake-hypnotic, horrible. He shakes his head anyway. Just words, just words…

_Sticks and stones may break my bones but words can never hurt me._

"You’re desperate for attention." Scarecrow’s voice is soft, soothing. "Probably dating back to childhood. And the nutcracker…you’re frightened of them, aren’t you?"

"No," he lies. "No, I’m not…"

He is cut off by that horrid soothing tone.
"Don't lie to me. I can always tell. Fear of nutcrackers…tell me, are you the one that bit his victim to death?"

It was an accident, he hadn't meant to…

"Yes."

"Fascinating. How was it? Did the blood gush down your throat, or was it more of a trickle?"

It had started as a trickle, but then he'd hit the jugular and it had absolutely poured over his tongue, sweet and rusty.

"Did you enjoy it?"

He's too thin to bother with and besides, there's no blood in that pale face, only straw.

"Yes." he whispers. The Scarecrow smiles and reclines back in his armchair, his head on Kitty's shoulder.

"I thought as much."

"Crane! What's going on over there?"

"Just getting to know our new guest, Mr. Dolarhyde." he says, innocent as a schoolboy. "Aren't we, Kitty?"

She nods. Bob licks his lips. She's not worth it, either-too thin-but the guard…

"Act natural, Nutcracker." Crane says. "You don't want to be on the receiving end of a tranquilizer dart. They leave you with a hell of a headache."

He gets up, his eyes locked on the guard's plump neck.

The man has time to let out a choked scream before Bob's teeth are in his throat, clamping down, releasing the flow of blood.

Across the room, Jonathan Crane surveys the carnage through half-closed eyes.

"Such barbarians, Kitty." he says. "Honestly…biting. What is this city coming to?"

THE END
"Okay…you put your hands here…no, a little higher…no." He leaned over and adjusted her hands. "There. Right there."

"Like this?"

"Uh-huh…no! Don't just randomly swing it, you'll take your head off. Okay, you draw back like *this*-feel how it's top-heavy? That's why you don't just flail with it. A little more…controlled swing."

*Slice!*

"Eep!"

Well. There was a reason they were doing this outside.

"I tried to tell you. Let's try it again." He took her hands—that last swing had been a bit too close for comfort—and pulled her back against him. "Hands here, pull back…more…okay, now swing."

*Slice!*

"Better."

At least she hadn't nearly taken off a limb.

"Is this really necessary?"

"Yes. Hands here…"

"This is taller than me!"

"Everything is taller than you, Kitty."

"Fuck you."

He ignored that and let go of her hands.

"Try again."

This time she managed to embed it in the grass. Well, better the grass than his head.

"I don't think that worked."

"No." He took it from her. "Look. It isn't that complicated."

*Slice!*

"Show-off."

*You so are.*

*Shut up, Scarecrow.*

*But it's true.*
Your great dream is to strip-dance on top of Wayne Manor as Gotham is flooded with fear toxin.

I admit it, and it's art.

How.

I'll get back to you.

He gave Kitty back the scythe and adjusted her hands on it again.

There's other things you could be adjusting her hands on, if you know what I mean.

How old are you, nine?

How old are you, ninety?

"Let's try this again. Hands here, draw back…"

Slice!

"Well. At least you hit the pumpkin this time. Next time, let's try slicing it, not impaling it."

THE END
For a minute, Jim didn't really process what he was seeing. Then the smell of blood, sickly sweet, hit him hard and sent him reeling back, gagging.

The woman was tied to a pole, unconscious or dead. Her arms were stretched above her head, keeping her taut. The telephone pole and the sidewalk below were sticky with blood, but when someone shone a light on her he could see the large, coarse stitches on her abdomen. They were spread apart, more for fashion than for function. Jesus Christ…

She stirred, lifted her head and tried to move. A stitch popped and she screamed, a high keening that sounded more like an animal than a human woman.

She was still screaming when the ambulance arrived fifteen minutes later.

It was four hours before the surgeon came back, and he looked exhausted.

"You can't see her."

But she was alive.

"What happened?"

"Well, firstly I don't know that she'll ever be Norma again. She was out of her mind…hallucinating." The unspoken *Scarecrow toxin* hung in the air. "But I wouldn't pity her if that's the case."

This wasn't going anywhere nice.

"Why?"

The surgeon sighed and rubbed his face.

"Someone went in there with what looked like a steak knife and…well…they took out her uterus."

"They what?" That was not the Scarecrow's MO. Sure, they sometimes found mutilated victims, but they were usually dead. Or at least roaming, not tied up somewhere.

"Yeah, I don't know if she was awake. I hope not." The man paused. "What the hell is going on here, Jim?"

"I don't know, Steve. I don't know."

Norma Brown-thirty-six, a doctor, happily married, no children.

And had treated Kitty Richardson when she was still Arkham's head nurse.
His first thought was that she'd had a cold for too long. Crane usually deemed a simple paper cut grounds for annihilation-if she'd developed pneumonia or something…no, just the flu, and that had been taken care of in short order. There was nothing here that should have brought this on. Not that anything should have brought this on, but Crane was crazy.

Nothing…well, maybe.

At some point, Richardson had apparently brought up sterilization and been told no. He had to wonder on what grounds.

They'd been brought back two nights ago-well, they'd checked in. It was early November, about the time they went on vacation. He'd have to pay them a visit.*

"Hullo, Jim." She looked tired. Uninjured, apart from a nasty bruise on her face, but very tired. "To what do I owe this visit?"

"Norma Brown."

"Who…oh! How's she doing?"

"You know how she's doing." He eyed the cuffs attaching her to the table. "Why."

"Why what? Gas her? For science."

"No." he growled. "Why go in there with a knife and-"

"Oh." She grinned and leaned back, the cuffs clinking against the table. "I didn't want kids. Bitch told me I'd change my mind when I was older. Still don't want them. And now she can't have them."

Good god, she was insane.

"I…"

"Don't give me that look. You're a man, you have no idea what it's like. You don't want kids, that's normal. I don't want kids, I need a lobotomy." She cracked her neck. "I'll send her an apology, if it makes you feel any better."

He had nothing, nothing at all, to say to that.

THE END

*They don't ask us about every single crime, you know. That would take six months. Usually they just chalk it up to The Usual and hope we stay in Arkham for a while. -Kitty
Newlyweds

"Just married?"
She grins and wraps her arms around her companion.

"Mm-hm. This mornin'.'"

"Congratulations."

"Thank you." Her finger jabs him in the ribs. "Isn't that right, sweetie pie?"

"Yes, pumpkin."

"I'll set you up in room two-oh-three. It's got a king." The clerk winks. "Have fun, folks."

Once the door is shut and locked and a chair shoved up against it for good measure, she pulls the flowers out of her hair and shimmies out of the white sundress.

"Sweetie pie?"

"I had to make it convincing." she protests. "I think that's what people do."

"This is like being in a Disney film."

"No, there's no sex in Disney films…sweetie pie."

He scowls at her and drops back on the bed, one arm curled protectively over his ribs. They're lucky that woman they killed had a purse full of makeup-both of them have difficult-to-explain bruising on their faces and necks. Ah, Batman. Can't live with him, can't live without…well, he might not really care if Bats dies. It would be a shame, and he would feel robbed, but life would be fair less painful.

"Be gentle with me, I have a cracked rib."

"I have red lipstick."

*If you say no, I'll never forgive you.*

He doesn't say anything. A quick self-checkup says that nothing else is broken, but that he's going to be very sore later, especially if he lets himself get stiff.

"Anything broken?"

"I think I took a doorknob to the shoulder blade, but nothing's moving."

Oh, good.

*Now you won't feel guilty.*

*Shut up, Scarecrow.*

*Come on, you know you want to.*

*I want an ice pack.*
She returns from the bathroom wearing one of his shirts—good bye, shirt—and drops down next to him.

"Ow."

"At least we won't be disturbed."

"Mm."

"What now?"

"Now we hide in here for a few days, coming out as little as possible."

"They'll notice if we don't come out."

"We're newlyweds. It's our job to have as much sex as humanly possible."

Why? In this day and age…never mind, maybe it's one of those weird wedding traditions. He doesn't really want to know.

He yawns and stretches out, trying not to be creeped out by the comforter. When did this thing last go through the wash? Was it washed properly? Are there traces of blood on it?

He doesn't really want to know that either.

"Tired?"

"Mm-mm."

"You're a dreadful liar."

He ignores Scarecrow and closes his eyes. He's not really tired, but it was a long drive and the car they borrowed was a cheap one that made a nasty rattling noise.

"I dunno, though…" She reaches over and fiddles with his tie. "I mean, we do have a charade to keep up."

Damn right.

He ends up going downstairs later because they're out of coffee creamer. This place…who in their right mind thinks that two tiny little containers are enough?

The clerk from earlier is still there. Great.

Kill me now.

Swagger.

What?

Do it.
No.

*Just a little swagger?*

*What do I look like, a twelve year-old boy?*

*Well…*

*I do not look twelve!*

*You sure as hell don't look thirty-whatever, either.*

*As long as I don't look twelve.*

*Aaw, poor widdle baby. I could just pinch your cheeks!*

He takes a deep breath, shakes his head, and leans on the counter.

"I'm down for some more coffee creamer?"

"Sure thing." A handful of the things strike his palm. "Having fun?"

He forces a smile and rubs his neck with his free hand.

"Yeah."

*Now swagger back.*

*For the last time, Scarecrow, no.*

*You're lousy at this whole 'just married' thing.*

*If I let you do it, you'll gas the place and get us thrown in prison.*

*Yeah, probably.*

"You look comfortable."

"Oh my god."

"What?"

"I let you go out…come here."

Before he can defend himself, she's grabbed him and is frantically rubbing her sleeve across his lips.

"There."

"What was that?"

"You had lipstick smudged on you."

*You put lipstick on?*

*She had it on…must've gotten on me.*

*That's not as funny.*
He drops the creamers by the coffee maker and does a quick for anything else. That bruise by his collarbone is really starting to turn purple.

"Let me see your shoulder."

"Why."

"Doorknob."

"Oh." Yeah, that's purple, too. Great. "Well?"

"The Joker would be proud."

"Son of a bitch."

He yawns and stretches out on the bed. Batman won't track them this far for at least another day, thank god-he's worn out now, in need of a long nap. Maybe a hard-boiled egg or something later on.

But nap first.

They're woken by a door being kicked in and a woman screaming, "JESUS!"

Batman's early.

But at least he's gotten the wrong room.

They take their window of opportunity to break the window and climb down. Yeah, there's the tank, crushing somebody's convertible. Oh, well. Those are ugly anyway. And hazardous. But mostly ugly.

Within two minutes, they've hotwired a minivan. Hopefully this one can manage bumpy roads.

THE END
Continuation of 'The Scarecrow Walks at Midnight'. What, you didn't think he'd leave her there, did you? Warning for...well...unpleasantries. I wouldn't eat anything while reading, really...

She comes to feeling numb and foggy. There's a dull ache somewhere on the right side of her body and she's sitting in a chair.

"There we are!" She doesn't know that voice. "How are you feeling?"

She opens her eyes. Sitting across from her is a man she's never seen before. Something about him makes her skin crawl.

"Who are you."

He chuckles.

"You haven't lived here long, I see."

"Who are you!"

"Depends on who you ask." he says, his voice still calm despite her shriek. "To some, I am the once esteemed Doctor Jonathan Crane, former head of Arkham asylum. To others..." He leans forward. "I am the Scarecrow."

What the hell...?

"Why me?"

"You were there."

"What about that other girl?" The dull ache is becoming more of a burning throb, but she can't worry about that right now. "What did you do to her?"

That makes him laugh, and he's still chuckling-oh god, what happened?-when a door above her opens up. A ray of light catches something shiny, but before she can see what it is the door closes again.

"I didn't do a thing," he says, his grin wide. "It says something about you, that you trusted her so easily."

"What?"

"Hullo, Kathy."

That voice she knows.

"You!"
"You really should be less trusting, sweetie." She drops down onto the arm of the chair and folds her arms across his shoulders. "About half of the population here is either barking mad or extremely self-serving."

"You bitch!"

They both laugh at that and Crane leans down.

"You may want this back."

And he throws something into her lap.

She doesn't realize what it is at first, only that it's kind of heavy and oozing. Then she gets a good look and everything comes rushing back.

Running lost foot scarecrow chased me oh my GOD

She shrieks and thrashes. The foot-her foot-falls to the ground.

"You won't be needing it. I gave you a heavy dose of painkillers, by the way. I can't have your screams of pain usurping your screams of terror."

"Batman will stop you!"

If there's really such a thing as Batman.

There must be, because before she can blink he's out of his chair and his fingers are tight around her throat.

" Don't. Say. That name."

She tries to lift her hands to push his off, but they're tied tight. Can't breathe can't breathe can't BREATHE

He's suddenly back in his chair, adjusting his glasses and putting a stray lock of hair back in place. She can feel bruises forming on her neck.

"So." he says, his voice slightly raspy but otherwise the playful tone from before. "I'm going to need you to answer some health questions. Nothing complicated, just the usual-are you taking any medications, that sort of thing."

She's still trying to catch her breath!

"Very uncooperative."

"I've noticed. Want me to paint her nails?"*

"Not yet, she'll come to her senses soon enough."

There has to be a way to stall him. Or appeal to his good side.

"Please…"

"Just answer the questions, dear. Pleading will do you no good."

"M-my mom, she's old, I have to check on her tomorrow…"
"What's the address? I'll pop in." Kitty says brightly. They find this funny, too.

"Please!"

"I don't think she's going to cooperate."

"Shame." He sighs and leans back in the chair, watching her through half-closed eyes. "I suppose we'll have to find out the hard way, won't we?"

"I suppose so. At least she has a driver's license, we can label her properly."

Label her? Label her for what?

"It's something. I'll untie her, she won't be going anywhere."

Think again, asshole.

But before he cuts the duct tape, he goes to the table and draws something yellow into a syringe.

"Ah…a little above average dosage for this one, I think. Take those painkillers into account."

"One-fifty?"

"One-seventy." He taps the syringe, nods, and makes his way over to her. "Just relax, it'll be easier."

Easier? Easier for what?

"Let me go, you sick fuck!"

"They always start swearing at this stage, have you noticed that?"

"It's the angry stage. She'll start trying to give us a friend if it doesn't kick in."

They laugh and he cuts the duct tape, letting her fall to the floor. The impact sends dull waves—what the hell did he give her?—of pain through her ankle.

She may not be able to walk, but she can crawl, and crawl she does—towards a staircase that looks more like Everest every minute. Her head is throbbing and her arms were not prepared to carry the load.

The stairs are moving. They seem to be wobbling off to the right. Why are they moving? Get back here, bitches!

"Motor…coordination…affected. Doesn't seem to be hallucinating though, that's worrisome."

"I told you the flowers looked a little sad."

"It'll work, it's just taking longer."

Her arms give out and she collapses, banging her nose on the cement and prompting a flow of blood. She tries to get up and can't, and then she sees a beetle.

Ugh. She doesn't like beetles. They're creepy and if they land on your finger they never let go. Besides, they have those horrid scratchy legs.

She struggles to rise before the beetle reaches her, but she honestly can't do it. It scurries into the little puddle of blood below her nose and she blows at it. It is unfazed.
Before she knows what's happening, it's rushed up her nose.

There's a second of disbelief before she starts screaming and trying desperately to blow it out. She can feel it buzzing against her nasal passages, moving downwards towards her throat and obstructing her breathing.

"What do you see?"

She opens her mouth and shoves her fingers in and up her throat, one tip brushing against a scratchy leg. It scurries back up, towards her nose, and leaves her gagging.

BAM!

She's vaguely aware of shouting, and things breaking, and then some kind of monster is kneeling before, injecting something into her leg.

Everything goes black after that.

THE END

*Kitty's definition of 'paint their nails' is 'rip said nails out with pliers'. Needless to say, the only colour she has is red.
Poor, poor Kathy. I meant to kill her last time we met, you know, but...well...she fought me so. Tell you what, Kathy m'dear, you don't die one more time and I'll never drag you into one of these again. Promise. Really. Continuation of 'Scratchy'.

It had been three weeks since Kathy had been pulled out of a dark basement by the Batman. She preferred to call him a Fallen Angel. Or perhaps a Risen Demon. Either way, he frightened her nearly as much as Crane had done.

Crane...she still woke up screaming in the middle of the night, when the sedatives wore off. They gave her something strong to help her sleep, to stop the nightmares, but it didn't last forever. It didn't last nearly long enough.

She was improving—the Batman had gotten to her in time, had given her the antidote. There would be no lasting effects, of that she was assured. She would be fitted with a prosthetic foot soon, and then she could get on with her life.

Well, with a healthy dose of therapy, anyway.

She didn't remember the hallucinations, not really. She thought she dreamt about them, and that was what caused the screams, but she wasn't sure. It could just as easily have been a tall, thin monster with a snake's voice and a spider's hands.

Over and done with. Most of her friends hadn't come to see her, and one-Amy-had explained why.

"He doesn't quit. There was a man two years ago that he tracked down. Stalked him for months before breaking into his house. Hid him under the floorboards, the landlord didn't find him for a few weeks."

Well. That was not at all reassuring.

She couldn't begrudge them, then, for leaving her. She didn't like it, but she couldn't blame them. She might have done the same.

After that, though, she slept less and looked twice at everyone that came into the room. Just in case. He'd been arrested, she knew that, but that meant nothing in this town. The Joker had escaped four times since she'd moved here, after all.

When she got out of the hospital, she decided, she'd buy a gun.

She woke one night with a feeling of unease. A nightmare? Must have been a nightmare.

She rolled over, shivering—why was it so cold in here?—and caught sight of a shadow figure in the doorway.

"Hello?" One of the night nurses, it had to be... "Who's there?"
The figure did not speak. It did not move. It just stood there, the low light glinting off its glasses.

God.

"Answer me, please!"

And it answered.

"Hello, Kathy."

She knew that voice, that horrid gravelly voice that haunted her dreams.

"Did you miss me?"

She screamed.

By the time the nurse arrived, the shadow was gone and there was no sign that anyone had been there.

A week passed. Kathy spent it trying to convince herself that she had dreamt the whole thing. Surely she had dreamt it. Crane was in Arkham, he would not be out so soon. Besides, it would have been on the news.

Wouldn't it?

She had not mentioned it again, not after they brought in a shrink. She was not crazy. She was not. Obsessive, though…

Amy had brought her a laptop, and she had spent hours searching for Crane. His past had holes in it, and there was an ominous 'biography attempted, author found dead' article to be found. By the time she was through, though, she knew enough.

He would come for her, that was a given. It might take him a while-apparently he'd been brought back rather the worse for wear-but he would come. Moving wouldn't help her-someone had tried that already, to no avail. Besides, she refused to be frightened out of her own home.

And god, she was frightened. Knowledge was power, but knowledge was frightening and seeing everything he'd done made her realise that she'd been lucky. A few of his patients had survived their treatment, and they were in the mental ward of this very hospital, lost forever.

"How are you feeling?"

She liked Anne. She never lied about things. If something would hurt, she would say so, followed by a brisk, 'don't be a baby about it'.

And she was one of the only girls she knew that could rock a pixie cut. Maybe it was the red hair… lucky bitch.

"A bit tired, Anne."

Anne Foster gave her arm a pat and adjusted the IV.

"You should be off this pretty soon.” she said. "Just a precaution, people have a tendency to dry out in hospitals."
"It's cold in here."

"I know. I hate it." She laughed. "But germs hate cold."

Kathy shivered and reached over to plug in the computer.

"Anne?"

"Mm?"

"Can I ask you something?"

"Anything, sweetie."

"Do you think he'll get out soon?"

There was no need to clarify which he she meant. Anne knew everything, and she'd treated Scarecrow victims before.

"I don't know." she admitted. "I just don't know. You'll be fine, though-I'd like to see him get in here."

You know, Kathy would rather him not even try.

" Hello, little Kathy."

She woke screaming, his hands melting away from around her throat.

"Kathy. Kathy. Kathy! Wake up, Kathy, you're all right."

Anne. Anne was working tonight. She'd forgotten.

"A-Anne?"

"Nightmare?" She nodded and the other woman helped her wash her face before tucking her back in. "It's all right, you're all right. Come on, deep breaths."

"It was so real."

"I'm not surprised."

Her leg hurt. Hell, even her nonexistent foot hurt.

"My leg hurts."

"I can give you ibuprofen."

"Please."

She gave her two horse pills and a large glass of water. Kathy drained the glass and settled back down.

"Thanks."

"Do you need anything else before I go?"
"M'okay."

"Okay. Good night, Kathy."

She was just dropping off when the dry chuckle reached her ears. It sounded like it was coming from under the bed.

"Sweet dreams, little Kathy."

She did not sleep again.

"Good morning, Kathy."

She'd been reading her book, but the voice made her fling it into the corner.

He was standing in the doorway.

Oh, he didn't look the same-his glasses had thick black rims and he had stubble, but she knew those eyes.

"Get away from me!"

"I think you've got me confused with someone else." He remained at the door. "I'm Doctor Jim Ca-"

"Get away!" She fumbled for something, anything to throw at him and came up with a pen. "Get away from me, you sick, twisted bastard!"

She threw the pen and hit him in the arm. He looked at it, raised an eyebrow, and turned back to her, hands above his head.

"Kathy, I'm here about your prost-"

"Get away! Help! Somebody!"

The ruckus brought a gaggle of doctors from different directions.

"What's going on?"

"What's happened?"

"Is somebody hurt?"

"I have no idea what I did." said the monster at the door. "She saw me and absolutely panicked."

"It's all right, Dr. Capa." One of the doctors-she didn't remember his name-took him aside. "Scarecrow victim."

"Oh."

"That's the Scarecrow, you stupid fuck!" She tried to get up and was rushed by a pair of orderlies. "Right there! Dr. Capa, my ass, I'm onto you!"

"If it would help to see my credentials…"

"Maybe another time."
"Of course. Perhaps Friday."

"But he's the Scarecrow! Listen to me! Call the police, somebody, please…"

Somebody jabbed a needle in her arm.

The monster at the door winked at her before slipping out in the confusion.

"Kathy?" Why were her arms strapped down? Where was she? "Kathy, what happened?"

"He was here, he was here…"

"Shh, shh. It's all right. Who was here?"

"That monster, he was here…"

She tugged at the restraints. She was fine, she knew what she'd seen…

"I think she'll need emergency treatment." Anne said to someone to the left. She tried to look but couldn't move her head. "Shall I prep her?"

"You may as well."

She shrieked and tried again to pull away.

"No! No! No!"

"Be quiet."

She blinked, her screams suddenly silenced. Anne…had she been taken in, like the others?

"Anne…that's…he's…"

"You stupid, stupid little girl." Small, quick fingers tightened the restraints to nearly circulation-cutting levels. "I know who that is. I got him in here."

There was a near-silent chuckle from the left and he leaned over her. He had his regular glasses back again.

"How are you feeling, Kathy?"

"I'll scream."

"Go ahead. No one will come, not after what you did this afternoon."

"They'll come. They'll come and they'll see…"

"See what? A doctor giving you a nice dose of something to help you sleep." He pointed to the stethoscope around his neck. "Amazing what a few props and the right manner will get you."

"Get away."

"Kitty, do we have a gag?"

Kitty
Oh my god

OH MY GOD

"We do."

"Good. Keep it handy, would you?"

"Mm-hm."

"Get away from me!"

His hand shot out and pressed over her mouth. She tried to bite him and failed.

"If you don't close your mouth, I'll be forced to sew it shut."

She didn't really believe him, but she silenced anyway.

"Good girl." he murmured. "Good girl…a low dose, I think. She's had a bit already."

What?

She thrashed and his other hand moved to her neck.

"Oh, you didn't question the IV? Shame…thank you, Kitty."

"Mm-hm."

"Help me keep her still, we can't afford complications."

Before Kathy could do anything, her head was jerked to the side and held there while a needle went into her neck. She could feel the stuff coursing through her veins now, moving through like a snake in the grass.

"No…"

"Gag her."

"Hold her still."

His hands positioned themselves at the top her of head and under her chin, keeping her jaws shut. She closed her eyes.

Deep breaths. Deep breaths. It's not real, it's only in my head…

And then something sharp jabbed into her lower lip. She tried to scream but she couldn't even open her mouth.

The thing went up, into her upper lip, dragging something rough behind it. God, god, god somebody please this was real it was all real somebody help her PLEASE

After four or five more pokes, she blacked out.

"Oh, my god."

"How…?"
"That poor child." Dr. Capa said softly. At the sound of his voice, Kathy whimpered.

She'd been found at four in the morning, strapped to her bed with her lips sewn shut. The thread was gone, but the red, ragged holes in her lips were still very visible.

She'd been moved to the psychiatric ward when she started screaming at the sight of him, and drugged to keep her quiet.

"Poor thing." Anne whispered. "Just yesterday she was…god."

"Sad case."

"Very sad."

The little group left the room.

"I don't know that I like the red." Jonathan said once they were out of earshot. "Doesn't suit you."

"The stubble's got to go."

"It's a bit scratchy, actually."

"Come on. My shift's up. Walk me home, Doctor?"

THE END
Surprise Party

They meant well, supposedly. And some of them probably did—the doctors think he needs to work at being antisocial, and some of the inmates—not friends, friends don't throw each other under the bus like they do—honestly thought it would be fun.

But it really isn't the best idea to surprise him, even when he's unarmed. He doesn't like parties as it is. Walking into the rec room to find a mob of people he doesn't like gathered around a drooping cake?

No.

They tried this last year, but he broke out. That was a coincidence—the only reason he knows about it now is because Harley hunted him down and shrieked at him for ruining the fabulous surprise. He may or may not have intended to give her a faceful of fear gas, but it happened all the same. Call it force of habit, if you will—most people that grab his shirt and force him into walls are intending bodily harm.

This year, he was not so lucky. He checked in with the beginnings of a cold and wasn't really feeling up to launching a full-scale escape. And so they struck.

But he had the last laugh, he thinks smugly. They weren't expecting him to be so calm about it, to pick up the plastic spoon and join them in eating the cake.

And they certainly weren't expecting him to jam said plastic spoon into a guard's eye and get dragged off to solitary.

Maybe they'll think twice before doing this next year.

THE END
In…out. In…out.

Breathing had never been this much work.

"Kitty?"

"Ow."

"What happened to you?"

How had he picked the lock so quickly? Oh, never mind…

"I got thrown into a gargoyle and then down a flight of stairs."

"I'll kill him." he said, undoing the glove's straps. "Twice."

"I've had worse. Remember Bolton?"

"Don't remind me."

That may have been worse, but this really hurt. Safety be damned, she was wrapping these ribs.

"Okay…look at me."

Now?

Oh, very well. She supposed they had to get it over with.

"Okay…no concussion. What hurts?"

"Everything."

"I need specifics, Kitty."

"Ribcage."

It occurred to her that if anyone were walking by, they would almost certainly make a OH JESUS MOTHERFUCKING CHRIST…a snide comment about getting…getting a room.

Ow.

"Two cracked ribs."

"Great. That's…that's great."

He put his glove and mask back on and she closed her eyes again. She'd get up in a minute…go to
medical, get some painkillers and a wrap…but not right this second.

He picked her up—did those needles have to be so sharp? And right there?—and carried her out into the hall.

"You sure know how to sweep a girl off her feet."

"Don't scare me like that again."

"It wasn't intentional."

"Still."

Heartless monster, indeed. Idiot reporters.

He was warm and she wondered if she could doze off, just until they went downstairs.

Mm. Warm.

"Heya, Doc…Kitty! What happened?"

Oh, no. She was not in the mood for Harley.

"Batman happened."

"That jerk! I'll kill him! I'll…I'll…I'll beat him with my mallet!"

"Aim low."

She could hear her skipping down the hall for several minutes afterwards.

Warm…

"Kitty. Kitty, wake up."

Huh? So soon? She'd been kind of comfortable, actually.

Damn.

"Take something. I have an appointment to keep. You're sure you'll be all right? You don't need anything?"

"I'm okay."

"Try to stay out of trouble next time."

Humph. She hadn't gotten into trouble on purpose. Besides, it was rather his fault in the first place.

"Fine."

He set her down on a gurney and left without another word. Pills first, wrap second, then to the foyer.

She had some setting up of her own to do.

THE END
Richardson is out of her cell.

He was just stopping by-really, he just happened to be near there!-when he noticed that the door was wide open. Crane had probably fetched her.

Son of a bitch. Can't he be like the Joker and leave her to fend for herself? Is that so wrong?

Either she's with him-wherever the hell that is-or she's in medical. Selfishly, he hopes she's in medical, preferably with a broken leg.

He checks there first, knowing she isn't there but hoping otherwise all the same. Sure enough, she isn't there. This just isn't fair.

She may not be there, but she did leave him a little note, hastily scrawled on one of the empty clipboards.

*Sorry for borrowing some of the painkillers. And maybe kinda sorta killing a nurse. :/*

Sometimes, just sometimes, he wishes she was confined to a wheelchair. And mute. Definitely mute.

He goes back out into the hall. Sure enough, at the end, half-shoved into a vent, is yet another body. He pulls it out of the vent-broken neck, at least it was quick-and closes the eyes. It's all he can do for now.

"Hel-lo, Batsy!" The Joker's voice is piercing. "Having fun down there? Our little nurse is...now, now, Kitty-cat, there's no reason for *those* kind of gestures."

He ignores the clown and keeps walking, keeping an eye out for anything of interest.

Giggling erupts from the speaker and he resists the urge to roll his eyes. He'd be grateful if the speakers broke, to be honest. Now, where would she be...?

A wild shriek comes from somewhere ahead of him. Before he can really see what it is, *something* hurtles out of the darkness. It's only when its face connects with his fist that he realizes that it's a Blackgate prisoner, half-drugged.

Well, half-drugged and with two mostly-healed scars on the sides of his head, coincidentally where the Electrocutioner likes to jam his equipment.

Poor bastard.

"D'you like him?" The voice is a low whisper and for a moment he's not sure if it's Richardson or Crane. "There's more where that came from."
"Just give up now, Richardson."

There's a giggle, unexpectedly girlish in nature. He continues forward, trying to pick out where in the blackness she's hiding.

"Where, oh where has my little Bat gone?" she sing-songs from... somewhere to the left, he thinks. "Where, oh where can he be? With his ears lopped off and his throat ripped out... oh, where, oh, where can he be?"

Or maybe to the right.

"Kindly incapacitate him, but don't kill him. And mind the face, he's got such a nice chin."

What?

And then another inmate drops from above, wrapping his arms around him with an inhuman screech.

He flings that one off just in time to be piled upon by a group-three? Four? At least one of them's had Titan, he can recognize that by now.

Scraaaaapppeeee.

There she is. Crane's taken his glove back

*Probably out of the goodness of his heart, shame it doesn't apply to innocent lives*

but she's found a pipe to drag along behind her. He's pleased to see that she's bruised and limping. It's a small victory.

"Hullo, sweetie."* She pauses, grinning. "I've always wanted to say that."

"Shut up, Richardson."

**WHAM!**

That's just cheating.

He pitches the last of her goons into the wall just in time for her to smack him with the pipe again. He grabs it before she can swing again, yanks it out of her grasp, and slams her against a door.

She laughs at him, uncontrollable, shrieking laughter that probably stems from the painkillers more than amusement.

"You know, Bats, I could claim domestic violence."

"Where's Crane?"

"No idea."

He picks her up, cutting off that horrible laughter.

"Let's try again."

"I don't know!" She's still grinning, but it's a pained grimace. "He had something to set up."

She's telling the truth. He doesn't have to like it, but there it is. But that does not mean she can be out
"doing things."

"Come on."

He drags her back to her cell yet again and drops her on the bed before turning to leave.

"Aren't you going to ravish me?"

"Shut up, Richardson."

"No hard feelings!"

He ignores her, slams the cell door, and stalks down the hall.

THE END

*Courtesy of Doctor Who. And really...you'd think she'd learn to leave Batman alone. Though I suppose the same could be said of everyone else.
Boiling Point

Chapter Notes

Takes place early in their career. Title comes from The The's song 'Boiling Point'. Their fellow costumed maniacs are still few and far between-no Joker yet, not as we know him, but Oswald's got his business going and there's been some murmurings of a riddle-man in the criminal circles.

The bank is quiet. It's stiflingly hot and humid-a storm's building, but it won't break. It will, though-the skies are rumbling and the smell of rain is nearly suffocating.

There aren't many people in here today-everyone got their business done in the morning. So now, in the midafternoon, it's quiet and still.

As a result, everybody turns when the door opens. It's a large group-a handful of large men wearing tattered clothing, a woman in a gas mask and a long white coat, and a tall, thin man in a mask.

Somebody's finger goes for the silent alarm, but before she can make contact the masked man steps to the front of the group.

"Touch that alarm and you'll spend the rest of your days in a padded cell."

She knows he means it. She was there, in the narrows that night, but she managed to flee before being hit with the gas.

Her mother and daughter now reside in a home upstate.

She draws her finger back and steps away from the counter as he leans forward.

"I need to make a withdrawal." he says, his voice muffled by the burlap. "I'm in a bit of a hurry, so if you wouldn't mind…"

Out of the corner of her eye, she sees a guard raise his weapon. What happens next is fast and brutal.

Before he can fire off a shot, the thugs raise shotguns and open fire. When the smoke clears, the smell of powder mingles with the smell of blood and the guard is lying on the ground, no longer moving. The man in front of her sighs.

"We'll have to do this the hard way, I see. Kitty, would you…?"

The woman is already moving, corralling patrons and free-floating tellers into a corner. The Scarecrow leans on the counter, drumming his fingers against the glass.

"If anyone tries anything like that again, you'll all regret it. And somebody silence that brat!"

Everyone jumps and the mother responsible for the crying child hurries to shush it, her panicked 'shu-shu-shu' nearly unintelligible through her tears.

What should she do? The handbook doesn't cover robbery-by-madman. Gunman? Sure. Guy that
can set them all screaming with a flick of his wrist? This has to be handled with care, and she hasn't
the faintest idea what to do.

"Well?" He sounds a little impatient. "Are you going to do as I said, or do I have to come back
there?"

Braver souls than she would have told him to fuck off. All she can stammer out is, "You're a
monster."

He laughs at her and the mask makes it so much worse because she can't see him laughing, only hear
it…

"Oh, you're a fighter!" He sounds delighted. "Maybe I'll take you with me…come now, little girl, I
don't have all day."

"No." She remembers her little girl, sweet Jessica. "No. Get out."

He does not laugh this time, only looks at her.

"Final answer?"

She can feel her coworkers staring at her and she longs to turn around, see what they think she
should do, but she can’t turn her back on him.

"Go fuck yourself."

"Not possible, I'm afraid."

And then he's moving back, arms spread out as though inviting someone to shoot him.

"Masks on, gentlemen."

Somebody—the mother—breaks free from the huddle and bolts for the door, dragging her child with
her. The woman reaches out and pulls the boy back, ignoring his shrieking and squirming.

"You don't want me to shoot him, do you?"

Yes, she thinks, let her, it'll be over quickly for him then, please…

But of course the woman shakes her head and allows herself to be led back. Her son is not returned.

"Lively little chap." She lugs him over to the Scarecrow. "Now stay here and be a good boy, or
Aunty Kitty will have to shut you up."

She doesn't realise when the bank starts filling with white smoke, only that somebody's started crying
in earnest. She pulls her scarf over her mouth and nose and gets down. Could she run? No, there's
nowhere to run, he'd catch her.

She hits the alarm.

"Mommy! Mommy, not so fast, I can't keep up!"

"Come on, baby, keep running!"

The soft wrist in her grip is suddenly yanked away and she turns, screaming, but a police officer
grabs her and shoves her back.
"Get outta here, lady, get out!"

"No! No, my baby! Jessica!"

But she's carried away and on the news she sees a monster on horseback and oh god

There's a scrabbling noise and she looks up, the scarf beginning to slip from around her face.

He's scaling the glass*-probably didn't bother trying to pick the lock. He's coming in.

She gets up, coughing, and picks up a chair. She'll be damned if his skinny ass gets anything…where'd he go?

"Hello, little girl."

She screams, the scarf finally falling to the ground, and swings the chair. He sidesteps it and she hits something soft instead.

"I'll take this."

He grabs the drawer and turns to go.

"Happy screaming."

By the time the police come, he's long gone.

THE END

*My grocery store bank (maybe others, but I'm never in them) has a gap between the ceiling and the glass. I can't climb it, but I'm not freakishly tall, either. If he got on the counter, he could probably manage it just fine, and then just leave through the door.
He doesn't know why he's here. He suspects it's guilt-guilt that he didn't get there in time, didn't figure it out before…this…happened. Maybe this is his fault to begin with-if they hadn't spooked the guy…

It doesn't matter. He's here now and standing here wondering about it isn't doing any good. He'll just go in for a few minutes.

"Who the hell are you?"

He didn't see her at first, and he hates to admit that she gave him a scare. It doesn't help that she's on her feet, a hardback in her hand. He's surprised she didn't throw first and ask questions later.

"Detective James Gordon."

"I see."

The girl-girlfriend? has to be-settles back into the chair, one hand holding the book in her lap, the other tightly gripping Jonathan's limp fingers.

"You were there." she says. Something about her reminds him of Alfred. "Weren't you."

"Yes."

"Why are you here?"

He does not have to take the third degree from a teenager!

"Thought I'd see how he's doing."

He can see her mulling it over. He's barely made himself comfortable-well, sort of, these chairs are murder-when she speaks again.

"Kitty Richardson."

"Nice to meet you."

She ignores that and reaches over to comb Jonathan's hair out of his face.

"Why are you here?" she asks again. "You don't know him. You never even met him, not really."

He doesn't know what to tell her. She's right.

He resolves, in the end, not to tell her anything.
When he comes back a week later, she's there again. He stays at the door for a few minutes, unsure if he should risk entry.

She's reading aloud from something, and it takes hearing her imitation of Bela Lugosi to realise that it's *Dracula*.

"You can come in, you know."

He wonders how long she's known he's there.

"How is he?"

"You've got eyes, don't you?" She closes the book. The ribbon says she's still in the early chapters. "He lent this to me, said it was one of his favourites."

"Mm."

He's got deep bruises from the restraints and, not for the first time, Jim wonders what he sees when he's conscious.

"How long have you known him?"

"A year and a half." She looks tired. Don't teenage girls have social lives? She doesn't look like a loner-no black nail polish or random piercings or anything. "He was very…civil…to me when we moved here. Didn't try to hit on me or anything."

She's leaving something out, he can hear it in her voice.

"Did he ever talk about his father?"

"Why? Isn't he dead?"

"How do you know that?"

"It's amazing what the nurses say when they think you're not listening." She reaches over and takes his hand. "One of them mentioned it."

"Oh."

They're quiet for several minutes.

"No, by the way."

"Excuse me?"

"He didn't like to talk about his dad. Or anyone in his family, really."

He wonders if he knew, what Gerald told him.

---

He doesn't mean to laugh, but the fact that she's got a 'Keep Calm and Carry On' mug just *does* it.

"Something amuse you?"

He forces himself to calm down and points at the mug.

"Sorry."
She scowls and wraps her fingers around the mug, obscuring the picture.

"Jonathan thought he was being clever. He knows I hate this saying."

"Oh?"

"Yes. It's everywhere." She shoots a dark look towards the boy on the bed. "Cheeky."

"Don't you have school?"

"It's summer holiday." she says, her tone absolutely screaming, 'you idiot'.

"Oh."

"Did you kill Gerald Crane, or did your partner?"

"I don't know."

"No?"

"No." He fiddles with a pile of get-well cards. "Does anyone else ever visit?"

"There's no one else."

"But...those."

She snorts and takes a sip of whatever's in the mug.

"You should have heard them. Two weeks before they were shoving him into lockers, and now you'd think he'd been promoted to sainthood."

Jonathan suddenly twitches and whimpers, "Please..."

"Shh." She sets the mug down, takes his hand. "You're all right. Sedatives are wearing off." she explains softly. "They'll be in soon to give him another dose...you're all right, love, I've got you. You're safe." He doesn't try to pull his hand back, but he sure as hell isn't conscious, not really. "Shh, shh. It can't hurt you."

He should be leaving, anyway.

"Hullo, Detective."

"Hello."

"I thought the guilt would've worn off by now. Or are you hoping he can tell you something?"

There's nothing he can say that will matter now. Gerald Crane has been in the ground for weeks now, it doesn't matter what Jonathan knows.

Unless he was involved, but surely he won't tell them that.

The ribbon has moved to about halfway through the book.

"How is it?"

"Wordy and parts of it are a little awkward to read aloud." She rubs the fraying ribbon between her
fingertips. "He woke up yesterday."

"Oh?"

"He's not himself, not yet. But I think he's getting better."

She hopes he's getting better.

"Did he say anything?"

"Something about a scarecrow."

"Do you know what he was talking about?"

She shakes her head.

"No. But he **said** something, actual words. And he knew who I was, for a minute or two. He said my name."

"That's good."

"Yeah." She cards her fingers through his hair. "Yeah, he's going to be all right."

He wonders how she can be so sure.

In all honesty, he's given up hope that Jonathan Crane will ever be back to normal. But when he pays a visit one sunny afternoon, he's met with a surprise.

Jonathan's sitting up in bed, looking tired and pale but lucid. Kitty's abandoned the chair in favour of a spot on the bed. The book isn't here-she must have finished it.

"Hello, Detective. This is James Gordon-I think he's been stalking you or something, he's been here an awful lot. Did you kill anybody? Anyway, he brought you here."

Jonathan gives him a wan smile around the straw in his mouth.

"Nice to meet you. And no, I didn't kill anyone. I wouldn't be stupid enough to be caught."

"They always get caught."

"I wouldn't."

He wonders if this is something they've talked about frequently.

"Yes, you would. You're too cocky not to get caught."

"I'm too clever to get caught. Have a little faith in me, will you?"

"I've read crime novels, and you'd be caught! It might take them a few bodies…"

"Maybe we shouldn't talk about this in front of the police."

She laughs and taps the cup in his hands.

"Hurry up before Nurse Frankentroll sees I snuck that in."
"I was happy with hospital ice cream."

"You don't want that, it's sheep's eyes."

"It is not."

"Then what is it? 'Cause that's not ice cream."

His only answer is a hesitant, "It's a dehydrated…something or other…"

"It's sheep's eyes." she says firmly. "Ignore him, he could make a living arguing with me."

"Somebody has to."

"Don't be cheeky or I won't bring you food next time."

He rolls his eyes and leans against the pillows.

"Did you need to see me about something, Detective?"

"No." Does he know about his dad? Probably, but… "No, I thought I'd see how you were doing, is all."

When he goes back a week later, Jonathan's sitting on the bed, dressed in jeans and a loose sweater.

"Hello, Detective."

"Hello. How are you feeling?"

He shrugs.

"The doctors said I can go home today, but to come back if I have any side effects including but not limited to: dizziness, confusion, hallucinations and homicidal or suicidal urges."

"That's good."

"Yes."

"Jonathan…about your dad."

"Kitty told me."

"I'm sorry."

"I'm not." He drags his backpack over and starts fiddling with the straps. "I told him it was too much, he didn't listen."

"All right, love, Mum says…hullo, Detective."

She walks right by him and pulls Jonathan to his feet. She's short. He never really noticed before, but she's tiny.

"Hello."

"Jonathan? Ready to go home? Mum's already insisting that they starved you." She tugs on his arm. "I tried to tell her you always look like this, but she didn't buy it."
"Hang on." He turns to Jim and for a minute Jim swears he's…well…studying him. "Did you have any questions for me, Detective Gordon?"

Too many.

"No. No, you go on home."

Kitty pulls on his arm again and this time he lets her draw him towards the door.

"Okay. Good bye, Detective."

THE END
Three homicidal maniacs, two harboring no small amount of dislike for each other, confined to a small apartment.

This could only spell disaster.

The first day had been spent disposing of the apartment's previous owner by hacking her up in the tub. (God, that had been an ordeal.) Once the body parts had been carted to the river, they'd all turned in for the night.

But then day two rolled around. It took less than an hour for Jonathan and Edward to start sniping at each other, and by noon the chances of a fistfight were fairly high. Kitty went digging and found a Wii.

It would do.

They hadn't been thrilled with the idea at first. But she'd cajoled (okay, threatened them with immediate pain and misery) them into playing at least one round of Mario Kart. And, begrudgingly, they'd admitted it was fun. Well, sort of fun. Better than nothing, anyway.

Jonathan had bowed out early, a broken wrist making it difficult to hold the controller. He was now sitting in the armchair, watching the bloodbath.

"Kitty."

"What."

"What has wings and spikes and ruins friendships?"

"Don't you dare-!"

BEEPBEEPBEEPBEEPBEEP!

CRA-ASH!

Toad's kart flew into the air. Jonathan was fairly certain there had been an accompanying wail, but it was drowned out by the screech of rage.

"Fuck you so much, Nygma!"

Yoshi zoomed by the still upside-down Toad.

"I'm sorry."

"If the Batman shows up, I'm tripping you." she seethed. "Why can't you run interference?"

This last was directed at Jonathan, who shrugged.

"I wouldn't dream of fighting your battles for you." She harrumphed and leaned back against his legs, arms crossed.
"You'll kill some guy for hitting on me, but when I ask you for help…"

"Waluigi!"

Yoshi fell from the course with a plaintive, "Wagghhhh!" Kitty snickered.

"That's called Karma, Eddie. Hurts, doesn't it?"

This was worth it for Edward's misery alone.

THE END

Chapter End Notes

Don't even ask. A friend requested Nintendo. Jonathan would probably play as Dry Bones, by the way.
Lost Lenore

Chapter Notes

MUHAHAHAHAHAHAHA! I FEED ON YOUR TEARS!

Speaking of feeding on tears, I'm pretty sure Sebastian Stan does. Otherwise he'd tell us nice Bucky-things sometimes.

Jim Gordon is tired. Barb's upset with him-as usual-the kids have reached that stage where both parents are the enemy, and work's just been piling on.

But here he is anyway, because there's nowhere else to go.

He opens the door to his office and stops dead.

Jonathan Crane is standing there, fiddling with a pen. The man looks exhausted-paler and thinner than ever, with a raspy sound to his breathing that can't be healthy.

"Good evening, Commissioner." He goes for his gun and Crane raises his hand. "Let's not do this tonight, Jim."

He could run, maybe, but he knows Crane keeps a gun on him. He's a lousy shot, but it's not worth the risk.

"What do you want."

"Shut the door." He shuts it. Crane lets his hand fall and slumps against the desk. "Just to talk. That's all."

If anything, that's worse.

"Crane…” He keeps his hand on the doorknob. "I'm sorry."

Crane looks up, his expression blank.

"Are you." A bitter smile flits across his face. "Are you really, Jim?"

"If I could fix it, I would, but I…"

"You don't have a TARDIS, I know." He coughs. "It doesn't matter anymore."

This isn't like him. Even at his most polite, he's never been like this. He knew her death had upset him, but…

"I actually came here to apologise to you." he says quietly. "I'm sorry, Jim."

"Sorry for what?"

He doesn't move, doesn't even blink, for a long minute. Then, "This."
And he raises his arm.

THE END
Lost Lenore, Pt. 2

Chapter Summary

This arc consists of short, sharp snippets-for reasons that will become clear in the end.

Gotham's nightly news could be a horror film. There's always muggings, Arkham escapes, Batman sightings…

So when the notice runs that 'the following content could frighten younger viewers' the children are immediately removed from the room.

The news crew goes down screaming, but they're dragged away before the self-maimings start. The only person there now is a man, leaning heavily on the desk behind him and holding a limp burlap mask in his hand.

"Good evening, Gotham." Cold blue eyes lock on the camera. "Sorry for the interruption, but do you really need the news to tell you about the murder rate in this city?" He laughs, but promptly cuts himself off with a coughing fit. "You know me, I'm sure. But you don't know why I'm here."

There's a shriek from somewhere off-camera and he turns suddenly, hand gripping the desk. Before anybody can change the channel, he's drawn a gun and fired. Red spatters the carpet near his feet.

"There. Nice and quiet." He turns back and nudges a stray lock of hair back into place. "I'm here because you haven't paid enough. Because the Batman hasn't paid enough. If you're watching, Bats, this is just the beginning. This, Gordon…by the time I'm through, you'll be begging me to put you out of your misery. You and everybody else."

He turns, his grip tightening on the gun, and speaks to someone out of sight.

"We're done here. Get rid of them."

"But boss-!"

He fires again. There's silence, and then there's the sound of gunfire. The screen goes black.

THE END
Lost Lenore, Pt. 3

Chapter Notes

Cry, little children! Cry for Scary Scarecrows!

He coughs, feels something slide up his throat, and spits it out. Blood. Always blood. Fitting, he supposes. He won't be going out in a hail of gunfire, or even by lethal injection. No, he'll die in bed, probably choking to death.

He washes it down the drain and turns away. He doesn't care. He can't muster up the energy, not anymore.

"Jonathan?"

She's not here. She fell to her death two months ago. But he doesn't care about that, either.

"Hello, Kitty."

"You need a doctor."

"No." He coughs again, tries to swallow it down and can't manage it. "Too late."

She looks at him with sad eyes and says nothing. He finally turns back to the sink, gripping it to steady himself while he's sick. When he looks up again, she's gone.

She never stays for long.

He'd considered, for a while, ending things. Quick and painless and easy—an overdose, perhaps, or a gunshot. But that would leave Gotham-Batman-unpunished. He could have saved her. Could've reached out one black-clad hand and grabbed her. But he didn't.

He makes his way back to bed, rather surprised Batman hasn't tracked him down yet. Not that he cares or anything, but still.

God, he misses her. It had never really occurred to him that something could happen to her, to be honest. Life simply didn't work that way—they went out, caused mayhem, and were thrown back into Arkham, maybe with a few cuts and bruises. Never death. And not like that, not so suddenly. One minute she'd been there and the next...the next there'd been nothing but the echo of her scream.

He falls back, lungs aching, and thinks that maybe he should undress, get under the blankets. But he's comfortable now and doesn't want to.

Kitty?

She doesn't come back—she never comes when he asks.

He rolls over. God, he's tired...he hasn't slept well since...since it happened. He's tried everything, but nothing works.

Well, almost nothing. The exhaustion after an adrenaline rush knocks him right out, but it's risky
And it really doesn’t matter.

He gets up and prepares a nice cocktail—nothing permanent, hopefully, but enough to be effective—before lying back down and swirling the glass. Self-injections are messy and don't leave him the time to get comfortable. Besides, aren't you supposed to stay hydrated when you're sick?

"Jonathan, don't."

He ignores her, drains the glass, and settles down to wait for it to kick in.

THE END
"Boss hasn't come out for a while."

"Maybe he's dead."

They hope so. He was never the nicest guy, but lately he's been more murder-happy than usual. The Riddler dropped by to chat and was chased out the door at gunpoint two minutes later. He's lucky the Scarecrow's a lousy shot.

It's been a few days since they've seen him and they're beginning to seriously wonder if he is dead. But nobody wants to go up there and see.

Morbid curiosity wins out and they finally bully the new guy into going. They escort him most of the way there before hiding around the corner to see what happens.

"I hate you guys so much."

Yeah, well…

"Do it, do it."

He gives them a pleading look but knocks on the door. For one glorious minute there's no answer, but then it swings open and there's a gunshot.

New Guy drops dead, his head gone.

"Clean it up. Knock on this door again and you'll be sorry."

CRAP CRAP HE KNOWS THEY'RE THERE!

They drag the remains away and scrub the wall off as best they can. Sorry, dude. Guess he wasn't dead after all.

The only other sign of him that night is the opening and closing of the back door.

They don't follow him.

THE END
Chapter Notes

For god's sake, talk some sense into him before he kills himself.-Kitty

Recommended listning includes Christopher Lee's (RIP) reading of The Raven and The Submarine's '1940 (Amplive Remix). At the very least, look up the lyrics to 1940. They may prove…enlightening.

I have a Polyvore! There's outfits for Kitty, as well as some characters you haven't met yet. (You will...) It's here: http://scaryscarecrows.polyvore.com/

"Stop right there!"

He's not even moving, why are they acting so ridiculous?

He turns around, though, and does a quick head count. Six. He can deal with six.

"Good evening, gentlemen."

"Jonathan, please don't antagonize the police."

He did it all the time before, why should it matter now?

"Put your hands up!"

Well, they did say…

They realise their poor choice of words just a little too late. A second later, his hands are up—and they're on their knees, shrieking in fear. The sight doesn't amuse him as much as it once did.

"Jonathan…"

He ignores her and turns away, back to the flaming warehouse. It's empty, has been for some time, but this is the one she fell from. It cannot be allowed to stand.

Once he's satisfied that it's beyond rescue, he drags the officers closer to the flames and walks away, coughing thickly. He needs to lie down.

"Go to a doctor, you're sick."

"I'm fine." She doesn't answer and he looks up. He's alone again. "Kitty?"

Please.

THE END
Lost Lenore, Pt. 6

Chapter Notes

Events somehow (and by 'somehow', I mean, 'fuck if I know') based upon an incident in which, worried that he was too dependent on his toxins, he went on a murder spree. So much murder-to the point that some of his fellow rogues begged Bats not to bring him back to Arkham. Damn.

"Oh, my god."

"If everyone will remain at their desks, that would be lovely."

He's sure they'd draw their weapons if he hadn't brought backup. But that's what henchmen are for, really-keeping ill-mannered policemen at bay. They may be lousy shots, but they've got the advantage of already having their weapons drawn.

"What do you want, Crane?"

"Lots of things." He represses a cough and knows he'll regret it. "But right now…your attention."

One of his men turns and fires at a rookie on the upper level who was going for a gun. Good.

"In about two minutes, the toxin in your air conditioner will start to take effect. In fact, it may already be affecting some of you…anyone feeling a little paranoid?"

Nobody answers, but at least two people give him the finger. Ha. They can complain all they like, but Batman does not come out in the daytime. That's why he's here now.

"I killed Gordon, and now I'm going to kill you. And to make sure of it…" He gestures to two lackeys currently pouring gasoline around the edges of the room. "I'm going to burn the place down."

Self-preservation wins out at last, and they go for their weapons. He drops behind a desk and checks his watch. One more minute.

Less, judging by the decrease in gunfire. He waits another few seconds, stands up, and tosses a match onto the gasoline.

It isn't long before the screams of terror become indistinguishable from the screams of pain. Being burned alive is not pleasant.

He ducks out the front door-the henchmen will either get out or die-and starts walking. The fire department's showed up, but he disappears in the crowd.

There's something to be said for arson, he decides. Very satisfying.

Batman will know-the news crews are just arriving. What will he think? Will he know? Will he be angry? He knows he's mad about Gordon-a few of his men have been arrested with broken bones rather than bumps and bruises.
He considered paying a visit to the wife and kiddies and decided against it. They can live with this. He has to.

You want me to stop? Come find me.

Even that won't be enough. They had him before, after she died. He'd left. He doesn't really remember doing it, just that he'd been in medical and then he'd been…out.

If Batman wants him to stop, he'll have to break his precious rule.

And quite frankly, he doesn't even care anymore.

THE END
Chapter Notes

I admit, this does nothing. I just wanted to remind Oswald that just because he has a nightclub and power, that doesn't mean he can't be tossed around.

It's been quite a few years since Oswald Cobblepot has been *manhandled* like some common criminal.

He doesn't much care for it, either.

"I'll ask you again, Penguin. Where. Is. The Scarecrow?"

If he gets his hands on Crane, he'll snap his scrawny neck for causing all this trouble!

"I don't *know*, Batman. Now unhand me this instant."

His wish is not granted and he remains held against the wall, his feet dangling an inch or so above the ground. Ow. Bricks are now definitely out, and some sort of smooth, soft wall is in.

*Damn* Crane!

"I haven't seen Jonathan since Kitty died." he points out. "He's off his rocker, in case you haven't noticed."

Too late he remembers the steadily jumping body count. Oops.

"I've noticed." He's not sure how it's possible, but he's pressed harder against the wall. "I know you know something, Penguin. Out with it."

He'd be glad to, but he really doesn't know anything.

"I don't know!"

Batman's mouth twists into something that resembles a smile.

"Didn't quite get that, Oswald."

It's starting to become harder to breathe. He gasps and struggles to get free to no avail.

"I haven't seen him! Edward tried to pay him a visit, ask him."

Sorry, Edward, but the Scarecrow's not the only one suffering a sanity slippage.

Edward has never been more grateful to be in Arkham. Batman can't strangle him, though he's clearly itching to barricade the door and have at him.

"He tried to shoot me, actually." he points out. "He's a lousy shot, that's all."
"And where was he?"
"What has a mouth-"

He's not safe enough, apparently, because Batman hits the light switch and the next thing he knows, he's in a chokehold.

"Answers, Nygma. Now."

"Warehouse 48. Gotham riverfront."

"I think you're getting better."

He thinks he'll stay in here until all of this blows over.

---

Warehouse 48 is abandoned, has been for some time. Crane's left him a note, though—a clean, white envelope sitting on the bottom step.

He puts a gas mask on before picking it up.

Dearest Batman,

I warned you when you brought me in that we weren't through. I meant it. This is just the beginning, And believe me, if I find out about anyone that is related to you, a friend of yours, even the nice lady that bags your groceries—they will be found in a rather...unpleasant...state of being. If at all.

Catch me if you can, Bats.

-Dr. Jonathan Crane

Oh, he'll catch him soon enough. Somebody has to pay for what happened to Jim.

THE END
Lost Lenore, Pt. 8

Chapter Notes

Kitty's reaction was…calmer…(see 'Ticking' over in 'Encounters') because she has a support system in her parents. Jonathan's support system fell off a building not ten feet from him. Instant insanity, just add trauma and isolation.

The toxin doesn't work anymore. He tried it last night, desperate for a few hours of sleep, and ended up jittery and very much awake.

"I told you not to."

She's standing at the foot of his bed, white dress fluttering gently around her knees. He has no idea why she's wearing it-he never saw her wear it in life, not even in photographs.

"I'm tired." he protests. "I need to sleep."

She doesn't say anything, just stands there and watches him with sad eyes. He doesn't try to get up.

He tried, at first, to grab her, but he only ever went through her and then she'd disappear. He knows better now. Look, but don't touch.

"You're going to kill yourself."

"Hopefully."

"Jonathan, for the love of-!" She sighs. "Stop this. Please."

"I can't."

He coughs and struggles up, knowing that this fit is going to make him sick.

It does make him sick and then it doesn't stop, leaving him on his hands and knees and choking for breath.

"Kitty…please…"

She doesn't answer and he knows, somehow, that she's gone again.

Help me.

"Doc?"

No. Please, no, not now.

"Doc, ya up here?"

No, now go away.

"Doctah Crane?"
The door opens. Great. There's no escape now.

"Jonny!" She skids to a stop beside him. "Gee, ya look like crap. You okay?"

I'm coughing blood and probably suffering a psychotic breakdown. No.

He flaps a hand at her in hopes that she'll go away. His wish is not granted. Instead, she tries to pull him up. He stays where he is.

"C'mon, Jonny, help me out here."

He takes a shuddery breath and rasps, "Take your hands off me or I'll blow your head off."

She does remove her hands, but she does not go away.

"You're kinda dying."

Yes, he's aware. It's intentional.

"Get out, Harleen."

"But…"

His hand sets upon the gun and he forces himself up enough to aim it.

"I mean it. Get out. Don't come back, just go."

"Doc?"

He fires a warning shot at the wall behind her. That gets her out.

He locks the door after her and drops back onto the bed, wheezing.

"She's trying to help you."

"I don't want her help."

"Jonathan…"

"I'm sorry." he whispers. "God, I'm sorry. I should've…"

"Yeah, you should've. But you didn't."

He looks up. Her neck's at a very awkward angle and he closes his eyes again. That doesn't help—now he can see her, almost suspended in midair before plummeting downwards.

"Kitty, please…"

She doesn't answer. He risks another look. She's gone.

Take me with you.

THE END
Lost Lenore, Pt. 9

The Bat-signal, as it has come to be called, survived the fire. It’s horrifically melted, barely even recognizable, but it—against all odds—works.

He turns it on, pleased to see that the bat now resembles a Jack-o-Lantern. It’s only fitting.

He flicks it off. It’s not time yet. He has one more thing to do, something that is most certainly going to goad Batman into acting at last.

He turns his attention to the child handcuffed to the light. He found her a few days ago, digging through the trash bin a few blocks from his current lair. It took little more than the promise of food to get her to come with him. He was smarter at twelve years old, and his old self would have noted this to be proof of devolution.

“Please…”

She’s drugged, but that’s swiftly wearing off. Good. Let it wear off, let her be afraid.

“I want my mom.”

“Runaways don’t come home in Gotham, child.”

She looks at him, face puffy from crying.

He remains unmoved.

“Please, mister…”

“Shh.” He takes hold of her head. “Crying never did anyone any good.”

A neck snapping isn’t as loud as one might think, and it’s not as fatal. But it’ll keep her still while he fastens her to a pole, a chain tied around her neck just tightly enough to slowly strangle her. If she could move she could sit up and stop it, but she can’t.

And Batman will know it.

He gags her so she won’t scream and spoil the fun, then flicks the light back on.

He’ll come. He’ll know and he’ll come, and then he’ll see. It’s a shame he can’t stay, but he has places to be.

“He’ll kill you.”

“Perhaps.”

“You don’t mind.”

“No.” He coughs and adjusts his scarf around his neck. The one great thing about this city is that one can walk along, talking to nothing, and nobody will say anything.

“Do you miss me?”

“Yes.”
“Then come with me.” She’s suddenly in front of him and he stops walking. “Come with me, it’s the least you can do.”

“Batman hasn’t…”

“Batman’s not the only one that let me fall.”

“I know.”

He starts coughing again and slumps against a wall, shivering. She watches him impassively. He’ll get no words of comfort from her, not anymore.

“Follow me.”

“I’m trying.”

“Not hard enough.” She shakes her head. “Perhaps you should use one of those bullets on yourself.”

And then she’s gone and he’s left alone in the alley, shivering and wondering if Batman’s found the child yet.

THE END
Lost Lenore, Pt. 10

Chapter Notes

Between you and me, what little remained of his sanity fled down the rabbit hole. Written to Pink’s ‘Ave Mary A’, if you want background music while reading. And regarding Batman: just remember that this is how Jonathan imagines him. Hold that thought.

He’s exhausted and feverish and staying on his feet is harder than he remembers. But that’s what the scythe is for, to lean on.

There’s a parade today—some silly holiday, he can’t remember what—and it wasn’t all that difficult to commandeer a float.

*They float down here…they ALL float.*

And now the marching band and the gymnasts are shrieking in terror. He’ll get to the audience later, but first…they need to talk.

“People of Gotham!” They know him now, mask or not, and there’s a collective gasp. “Nobody move.”

They try anyway and he shoots one, an old granny in her chair. Go for the elderly and the children, that always makes them listen.

As one, they stop, cowering behind the ropes. A sea of red balloons floats skywards, released by mistake.

“You can blame the Batman for this.” he says. “Everything that has happened these past few weeks, everything that will continue to happen…all of it is his fault.”

For once, there’s no brave soul to stand up to him. They’ve learned much, it seems.

He represses a cough—for now, anyway—and tightens his grip on the scythe.

“I’m sorry.” he continues. “Truly, I am. But one can’t make an omelet without breaking eggs, and today…you are my eggs.”

“No.”

He turns, already grinning. He knew this would bring him out at last.

“Well! About time. You’re getting slow, Bats. Is it the grief of what happened to dear old Jim Gordon?”

“Shut up, Crane.”

“You know he died screaming, don’t you? Well, until he ripped his throat out with a pair of scissors…oh, they didn’t tell you that, did they? My apologies, I thought you already knew.”
Batman stalks towards him, cape billowing out behind him. Jonathan is not impressed.

“And then there was that poor little girl…I doubt you found her in time.” A sneer answers his question. “I thought not.”

He can’t hide in the shadows-Gotham picked today to not be quite so cloudy. Good girl.

“It’s over, Crane.”

“You’d like it to be.”

“This won’t bring her back.”

Oh, that’s not the point. That’s never been the point. Idiot.

“I never said it would.” Just to see what he’ll do, he fires into the crowd. “Ashes, ashes, we **all fall down**!”

This strikes him as hilarious—he ought to have been a comedian!-and he ends up leaning on the scythe, alternating between breathless laughter and harsh, wracking coughs that threaten to crack a rib.

“I warned you! I warned you’d be sorry! Believe me now, Bats?”

Shadows or not, he’s *fast* and Jonathan barely manages to block his lunge with the scythe. For a minute it feels like it’ll crack under the strain, but then its sharp tip slips and digs into human flesh**.** So. Batman is nothing but a man, after all.

He staggers back, the scythe now tipped with blood. The bystander effect is in full force—they’re not helping. They’re not even getting close. They’re just standing there, watching in absolute silence.

“Seems your Dark Knight can bleed after all.” he says. “There’s *that* question answered, at least.”

Batman tries to sweep the scythe out of his hands with a well-placed kick, but he sees it coming and steps back, now nearing the edge of the float. What can he…

FWAM!

The scythe flies off somewhere as he lands on his back, the jolt forcing a bloody cough from his chest.

“You going to kill me? Go on. You know it’s the only way, like a rabid dog…”

“I’m not you, Crane.”

He’s hauled up, still gasping for breath.

“No,” he says. “No, you’re worse. You let them suffer. I put them out of their misery.”

And then the explosive he planted on the float goes off and he knows nothing more.

* * *

He stirs, surprised to still be alive. His surroundings are in shambles-pieces of floats everywhere, corpses and unconscious people littering the street. There is no sign of Batman.
Well, until he looks. Then he sees an arm sticking out from under a pile of debris a few feet away. He pokes it and it does not move. Dead. Batman, Gotham’s beloved savior, is dead. He must be.

_Gone, gone, gone! Sméagol is free!_***

He sways and nearly falls, suddenly dizzy.

Dead. At last.

THE END

*Stephen King’s _IT_. Fucking Pennywise.

**Remember in _The Dark Knight_, when Batman got new armor? ‘Leave you more vulnerable to knives and gunfire’ in exchange for movement.

***Guess all that LOTR finally rubbed off on him.
Oh, you thought it was over? You thought it couldn't get worse? THINK AGAIN!
MUAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!

He looks at the bullet. Such a tiny thing, really. But lethal. And messy. But he’s built up an immunity
to his toxin-shame, that, he’d hoped for poetry.

No. He’ll join her soon enough, but Batman will do it first.

He came to the conclusion that Batman is not dead, because that is simply not possible. It goes
against the laws of…well…everything. He’ll show up, it’s only a matter of time.

He sets it down and looks in the mirror. An exhausted face looks back at him, haggard and flushed
with fever.

He’s tired now, tired and beginning to slide downwards. He can barely choke anything down
anymore, and what little he risks usually comes right back up. Two weeks, maybe three. It’s certainly
too late for a doctor.

He collapses onto the bed, the jolt sparking another wave of coughs. Once they fade, he takes a drink
of water, small as he can manage.

She doesn’t come.

This morning he tried something to goad Batman into coming-flooded an elementary school with
fear gas. When he last bothered to check the news, the death toll was around a hundred-more adults
than students, oddly enough. Not that he particularly cares. The intent was there, and that’s enough.

Why doesn’t she come?

He shivers and makes his way under the blankets. Batman isn’t coming tonight, either, apparently.
How unfortunate.

* * *

He wakes suddenly, choking and sputtering, and has no idea why.

At least, not at first.

“You’re still here.”

She’s sitting at the foot of the bed now, and there’s blood on her dress, so much blood. “Batman isn’t
coming, you know.”

“No.” He falls back with a low groan. His chest aches. “No, he’s not coming.”

“Wonder why?”
He shrugs. She bites her lip and looks at him through lowered lashes like she always used to do when she wanted something.

“I could take you with me.” she says. “You’re sick. You can barely get out of bed.” She holds out her hand. “You could come with me.”

He sits up and is just reaching for her when the door flies open and she vanishes.

“Crane.”

Dammit! God dammit, two more seconds would have been enough!

He opens his mouth to say so and winds up coughing again, nearly doubled over and now quite convinced that he’s going to cough up a lung.

He coughs up something, at any rate-a bloody lump of god-knows-what slides up his throat and into his palm.

Ah. Fascinating.

Batman is not moved.

“It’s not my fault she fell, Crane. It was yours.” He ignores that and lets one hand fall, moving to that little slit in the mattress. “Don’t you remember? You had her.”

“You did.” She’s behind him now. “You let me go.”

Here! A horrifically potent formula, one hundred percent fatality rate.

Fingers slipping through mine no no god please no Kitty!

“Remember?”

He adjusts the bottle in shaking fingers.

“Good-bye, Bats.”

But he can’t even activate the mechanism. And Batman hurters across the room, grabs him by the throat, and throws him backwards.

This room is small and Batman is angry. The result is that the window can’t take the impact. The fourth-floor window, to be exact.

He balances for a second and his eyes lock on hers.

“Kitty, please…”

“Good-bye, Jonathan.”

“Kitty!”

And he loses his balance.

THE END
“Kitty, please...”

“Jonathan.”

“God...”

“Jonathan.”

“God, no! Kitty!”

“Jonathan!”

He starts awake, coughing thickly and struggling to breathe. Where is he? He was falling, he should be dead...

He moves his hand to wipe away the blood and comes up clean. What...?

“Jonathan?” He doesn’t answer her, doesn’t even try to lift his head. “You awake, love?” Awake and in Hell. “C’mon, sit up.”

Warm arms wrap around his ribs and tug him upright. She can touch him. He must be dead. Dead is acceptable.

He blinks and tries to take a deep breath. He’s successful. Not dead, then. Dead people don’t breathe. So why can she touch him? Maybe this is a new level of hallucination. He’ll take it.

“God, you’re really warm...” He should be. She’s dead and he isn’t. “Think you’re running a fever...let me look at you.”

He doesn’t move and she grips his chin, guides his face over and up. She’s not wearing white now. Now it’s summer pyjamas-shorts and a tank top.

She feels his neck and presses her lips against his forehead.

“I knew it. How many times do I have to tell you to go to bed at a decent hour?” She tugs at his hands and he does not budge. “Hey. You awake?”

She’s warm, too and if he concentrates he can feel her pulse under his fingers.

“Kitty?”

“Yeah.” She looks worried. Why should she be worried about him? He let her die. “You okay?”

He looks at her hands, wrapped loosely around his wrists. Warm.

“You’re here.”

“Where else would I be?”

“No, you’re...you’re here.” He tugs a hand free and reaches up to brush her face. She doesn’t
vanish. She raises an eyebrow, but that's all. “You’re not…”

“Not what?” She tries again to pull him up. “You're burning up, love, you need to be in bed.”

“Not dead.” he whispers. “You’re not dead.”

“Jonathan, maybe you should go to the hospital.”

He flings his arms around her and pulls her close. Not dead, she’s not dead.

“Kitty.”

“Yeah. What happened, you have a nightmare?”

He nods and feels her ruffle his hair.

“I think so.”

“It wasn’t toxin, was it?” He shakes his head. It doesn’t feel like that. Hallucinations he remembers. Even now, the particulars are fading. “You’re sure? Because you were shouting for me-scared me half to death, I thought there’d been an accident.”

“No, it wasn’t.”

“Feel like talking?” NO. What little he does remember is not something he cares to discuss. He shakes his head again and she squeezes his shoulder. “Okay. Come on, I want you in bed. You sound terrible.”

“Don’t go.”

“Some dream, huh?” She makes him lift his head and kisses him. “Up you get. Want tea? Might help the coughing.”

“No.”

“Want to come with me while I make you tea?”

He has no choice, apparently. And he really doesn’t mind.

“Okay.”

THE END

Chapter End Notes

There. Status quo restored. Think this’ll stick with him for a while, though. Remember when I said that 'Jonathan imagines the Batman this way'? Not 'sees', 'Imagines'. Wording is important, kiddies. This is why everything was short and a little disjointed near the end, by the way-dreams are whacked.
I'm not a big fan of Nickelback. I don't loathe them, they're just sort of...there. But there's a few songs of theirs I like—this one included.

He's been watching her since she got on the train. She didn't notice at first, but more and more people got off and fewer and fewer got on and then...they were alone. He's not even trying to be subtle—he's just staring at her like she's an interesting exhibit.

It's nighttime now—hers is the last stop—and she tries to ignore him. No need to encourage him, right? She can't help sneaking glances, though, and she's relieved when she looks over and sees him reading a book.

She puts in her headphones and leans against the grimy seat. Ugh, thank god it's Friday. Although why her good-for-nothing boyfriend couldn't have picked her up...probably at a strip club. Fucking asshole. She's been meaning to dump him, but then her hours got cut and her mom got sick and she just...doesn't care enough.

Has he moved? She'd heard a scrabbling noise from the far end of the train, but when she looked over there he was still immersed in his book. Maybe her headphones are dying.

God, how long is it gonna take? She wants to go home.

She shoots another look over there. Yeah, he's gotten a little bit closer. Just a seat or two, but he's definitely closer.

The headphones come out and she reaches for her pepper spray instead. She doesn't take it out, just holds it in her hand.

The train comes to a shuddering stop and she gets up, walks quickly—but-confidently towards the exit. She hears him get to his feet behind her, but she's on the platform before he can catch up.

The streets are empty tonight—well, for Gotham—and she goes ahead and takes her pepper spray out of her purse. There's footsteps behind her but she does not turn to see.

She's never been so glad to get home.

She's forgotten all about the weirdo a week later—until she sees him again, on the last train of the day.

She didn't see him when she got in the car, but then somebody moved and she spotted him, standing in the throng, swaying gently with the train.

And watching her with that same, unblinking gaze.

She flips him off and he smiles at her, shakes his head ever so slightly.

Brr. What a creep. Shame—he's kinda cute—but she doesn't go for creeps, even cute ones.
Although she did date Jeffery for six months, but he didn't advertise his creep-ness at first.

She gets off a stop early, but that doesn't deter him and she ends up dodging into an all-night coffee shop to call a friend to come and get her. While she waits, she sees him across the street, hands in his pockets, just watching her.

And grinning.

It's her first night coming home to an empty apartment. She finally kicked Tom to the curb-caught his ass with a cheap whore-and she's looking forward to some ice cream.

It feels weird in here. Nothing's out of place-well, Tom's stuff is gone. Maybe that's it.

She tosses her heels into the corner and pads into the bedroom, undoing her bra as she goes. Ahh. Nothing like coming home and freeing the ladies from their cotton prison.

She flicks on the light. God, why does it feel like she's being watched?

The blinds are open. That might be why. She goes to close them and the blood drains from her face.

The guy, the guy from the train-he's standing in the street below, watching her. She knows he's watching her, this is too much of a coincidence.

She whisks the blinds shut and sinks onto her bed, shivering. What the hell has she done? She's done everything right-no eye contact, no skimpy clothing, no flirting with strange men. Isn't that supposed to deter these kinds of sickos?

She almost misses Tom.

"I don't know, man…I think he's stalking me."

"Well, you are hot, hon."

"Sarah!"

Sarah laughs.

"Sorry. Really, Charlotte, d'you need me to come over?"

She appreciates the offer, but she kind of wants to be alone.

"No, I'm okay. But if I disappear…"

"Yeah, yeah. I gotta go to work, hon. Be safe."

"Thanks, Sarah."

Charlotte drops back on her bed and closes her eyes. She's hungry today-he wasn't on the train, and he's not outside her house.

She'll make some bacon, she decides, Bacon makes everything better.

Wasn't her frying pan right here?

Huh. Must've left it in the sink last night. God, she's tired…
She throws a few rashers of bacon into the pan and rubs her head. Is he out there now, where she can't see him? Does he watch her at work? Oh, god, does he have some kind of shrine set up?

Now where'd her tongs go? God, she really needs to get it together.

She's grown increasingly scatter-brained since Weirdo started watching her. More often than not she'll reach for her book or her shampoo and realise that she's left it somewhere else and forgotten.

He seems to know she's afraid—every time she sees him now, on the train or on the street, he gives her a little *we've-got-a-secret* smile. She's quit flipping him off. The less interaction they have, the better.

Eventually, though, she can't take it anymore. One night, when they're alone on the train, she marches over to him.

"What do you want?"

He looks up from his book, cocks his head.

"Pardon?"

"You've been watching me for weeks. What the fuck is your problem?"

He says nothing, only gives her that snake smile. She slaps him hard across the face and goes to do it again when he grabs her wrist and squeezes hard enough for her to hear the bones shift.

The train turns hard and she's flung into him. She tries frantically to get away, to pull the emergency stop or *something*, but he doesn't let her go.

"When I'm through with you, you'll wish this was all," he murmurs. "Good night, Miss Verne."

Then he shoves her back, sends her sprawling, and disappears into another car.

It takes her a long while to get up.

The power's out when she gets home one night. Mother fucker. It was out this morning, too, and she'd been late to work because she was telling the manager. What the hell was she paying the rent for, then?

Assholes…oughtta move, for chrissake…

She goes into her room to get a flashlight. Now, where did she leave that it, it was here just two days ago…?

Something brushes the back of her neck and she flails, expecting to hit something with legs. Just hair. Ugh, she needs a haircut. Just last week she freaked out upon seeing what she thought was a giant spider. (It had turned out to be a hair clump that blew out of the trash.)

Ah! flashlight…

She clicks it on and turns around.

And screams.

Standing right behind her is the man from the train.
"Boo."

She drops the flashlight and it goes out. Nononononono!

"How are we tonight?" She can't hear him moving, but his voice is getting closer.

"Get away from me, get away!"

She drops down, fumbles for the light, and frantically pushes the button. It finally turns on, weak and flickering, and she casts the beam around.

He's not there.

She pulls her phone from her back pocket and gets in 9-1 when it's ripped out of her hand and thrown against the wall. She whirls, clocks him in the shoulder.

"Get away from me, you sick bastard! Help! Police!"

"Lived in Gotham long?" He's grinning. "Nobody comes for that. Nobody comes for anything. And your neighbors are both out."

"No they're not."

"My dear, I've been following you for weeks. I know their schedule as well as yours." He ducks out of the beam and she turns, trying to find him again. The light goes out and she unscrews the top. Maybe a good battery shaking, come on…

"Get out!"

"Hush, hush, sweet Charlotte…"

The light turns back on. Where is he, where is he…

She'll hide in the bathroom, she decides. She can climb out the window.

She doesn't even bother going for her phone, just sprints inside and locks the door behind her after a quick sweep to make sure he's not in the shower or something.

The doorknob rattles just as she's clearing her shampoo from the little sill.

"Well. This is unfortunate."

She doesn't answer, just looks under the sink for something to break the glass.

CRASH! SPLINTER! CRACK!

A thin hand shoots through the new hole in the door and unlocks it. A second later he's grabbed her ponytail and pulled her out, paying no nevermind to her shrieks and flails.

"Let go of me! Let go of me you sick, twisted son of a bitch!"

Something—a sock?-shoves itself into her mouth. She tries to spit it out and only succeeds in licking it. Oh, gross…

"Shh, shh. Come along, now."

She kicks him in the shin and makes a break for it. She gets maybe four steps before she's knocked to
the ground with a battered chair.

"Try that again." he says softly. "Go ahead. There's always others…"

She doesn't try it again. Her back hurts where the chair hit it. She does, however, rip the sock from her mouth and spit several times to get the taste out.

"It doesn't have to be like this." she whimpers. "Please, I'll do whatever you want…"

"Something tells me you won't." He yanks her up, his grip painfully tight on her upper arm. "Try anything again, and I'll rip your shoulder out. Clear?"

She's sobbing, snot congealing on her face and dripping a little into her mouth. She spits it out as best she can.

"Please, my mom…"

One hand is on her ribs and before she can say anything else he pulls back-hard. There's a dull pop and for a minute nothing, but then it's PAIN PAIN SO MUCH PAIN and there's a shrieking from far away. The sock is stuffed back in her mouth and it's only then that she realizes that the shrieking was her.

"Come along, child. It's time to go."

They pass an abandoned newspaper on the stairs and through the haze of agony she sees the front page-Scarecrow Escapes Arkham.

Right below the headline is a picture of her captor.

THE END
His head is suddenly wet and cold and when he reaches one gloved hand up to see why, it comes away with snow on it.

This one hits him between the shoulders and he turns around in time to take another one to the chest.

"How old are you, Kitty?"

She grins at him and shrugs, the picture of innocence.

He's not buying it.

"C'mon, love, it's snowing!"

So? That matters not to him.

"Come on, let's go in."

The grin turns devilish and she bends down, scoops up a mound of snow.

"You'll have to go through me."

He sees this one coming and dives behind a tree. Fine. If she wants to play this childish game, that's just fine. He has ways of getting around her.

He waits until she's unarmed before inching around behind her and picking her up, eliciting a squawk of rage.

"Put me down! Put me down right now!"

He will, he will. As soon as he finds a suitable—there!

He trudges through the snow, ignoring the increasingly more interesting threats she's hurling at him, and drops her in a snowdrift.

"I'm going in now."

Two arms fly upwards.

"Help me up."

"You didn't say the magic word…"

"Help me up or you'll be sorry!"

"Not quite it…"

"Please?"
"There, was that so hard?" He pats the nearest hand. "But no."

And he walks away, feeling very smug indeed.

*WHAP!*

THE END
Ever read Arkham Asylum: a Serious House on a Serious Earth? Yeah. Balls-to-the-walls crazy. Just like the weird dreams I got from reading it when I was coming down sick (upon which this is based, as best I can). I blame the 'I look…at the doll's house…and the doll's house…looks…at…me.' Go look up what the Joker looks like in that comic. Go on. Nighty-night.

Gramma had a doll's house, she remembers one night.

She hasn't thought about Gramma in years-her only memories of her are visiting the old lady in a home, and she was past mad by then. But Mum considered it her duty, and she got dragged along to entertain herself for two hours of awkward, repetitive 'conversation'. There had been no books, she wasn't to touch the television, and one could only play with the old rag dolls for so long before growing bored.

But there had been a doll's house-an old Victorian thing all rigged up with lights and fancy furniture and everything. She'd never liked it, but she can't quite recall why.

Never mind. Childish flights of fancy, that's all.

She yawns and nestles into Jonathan's arms.

"Kitty?" His voice is drowsy.

"Nothin'. Go back to sleep."

"Mm." One finger moves along her wrist. "Night, then."

Something about that doll's house…it's beginning to bother her now, why she hadn't liked it. What was it about that thing…?

Jonathan would probably have some psychobabble for her-association with unpleasant memories or something. But that wasn't it.

No matter.

"Kitty, say hullo to Gramma."

"Hullo, Gramma."

She's ignored, as always. She's glad of that-she's always been a little frightened of Gramma, with her milky eyes and twitching, grasping hands.

Mum sits down and claps a wrinkled hand.

"Hullo, Mother."
There isn't any answer aside from some sort of wheeze. She shrugs and wanders over to the shelf of keepsakes. Rag dolls, family photos, some horrid porcelain doll with staring eyes…brr.

In the background, the television drones on. She takes a quick peek and finds it to be boring.

On the floor in the corner is Gramma's other keepsake—a large doll's house. Kitty has only seen inside it once, when she was very young and a nurse had opened it for her to look at.

She doesn't like it. It always feels like something is in there, watching her. Sometimes she thinks she hears the pitter-patter of little feet on the stairs, but that's silly.

Although…

She takes a look at Mum and Gramma and finds them to be occupied with some letters from her aunt, who's in France for the summer.

She lifts the latch on the side and cracks the house open. Something jiggles and she moves it a little more to see what's inside.

She still can't see properly and she finally pulls it all the way open.

A skull drops out and lands on her foot.

She starts awake, breathing hard and clawing at her shirt to get it away from her neck. Christ. Damned doll's house.

There had been no skull. She would have remembered a skull. No more sweets before bed, that's all…

She slips out of bed to get a glass of water. She'll just grab it and go right back to bed.

It feels like she's walking through water—sluggish and blurry. God, she's tired…

Swiiiish.

"Jonathan?"

He doesn't answer, and she doesn't really think he'd bother trying to scare her at this hour.

Must've been a tree outside.

Or Batman. Fucking Batman.

If it is Batman, he'll have to wait for her to get her water, because her tongue is stuck to her teeth and that is not a nice feeling.

She can see the sink now, but it seems miles away. Almost there, almost there…

Swiiiish.

There! She can touch it. Now, to get a glass…

She turns to the cabinet and sees it.

The doll's house, sitting quietly in the corner of the kitchen.
No. No, it can't be here, she's been in the basement too long or something, Jesus…

Satisfied that that's the answer (but oh, if she's not shaking from the fright), she gets a glass down and trudges over to the sink.

Siiiiish.

It's closer. Why is it closer? It's not real, it's not real!

She hurries up and fills her glass. The water takes forever to fall in.

It's not real, it's not real!

It bumps her foot and she tries to get away from it, but it's like she's frozen here, slumped against the sink.

She looks at the doll's house, and it looks back.

Then it opens up and a bloody head, neck ragged and nibbled on, rolls out.

"Kitty. Kitty! Kitty, wake up."

NO NO NO NO

"Kitty!"

She jerks and the hands on her shoulders draw back for her to sit up, fumbling for the lamp. Her fingers brush wood and she jerks them back. Screw the light, if she stays in the middle of the bed it can't get her…

"Kitty." Click. "Wake up."

Light, soft and yellow and casting weird shadows on the walls, washes through the room. There is no doll's house in the room-she touched the drawer, which isn't closed all the way.

"Kitty."

" Jonathan."

She hugs him, feels him tense up before hugging her back.

"What was that about?"

"Gramma's doll's house." she whispers. "Gramma's creepy doll's house…"

"What are you talking about?"

"The rats."

"Kitty. You're making jumps that I can't. What exactly are you talking about?"

She takes a shuddery breath.

"Gramma…she was in a home, and she had this old doll's house. And one afternoon-we had to visit, you know-one afternoon I opened it up because there were noises in it." She swallows hard and inches a little further away from the edge of the bed. "A-and there were two rats in there…one of
them ate the other one…chewed right through it…she'd p-put them in there as pets and forgotten
about them and Jesus…"

"How old were you?" His voice is soft, reassuring, and one hand moves gently up and down her
back.

"Seven."

"But you were frightened of the house rather than the rats?"

She nods.

"I never liked that house."

"Why?"

"I don't know."

"Can you remember?"

She shakes her head and plasters herself against him, where it's safe. He tousles her hair and tries to
get her to lie back down.

"All right. Come on, go back to sleep."

She lets him turn off the light and tries the 'deep breaths, don't look' trick.

It doesn't work and she spends the rest of the night jerking herself awake at every little noise in the
darkness.

THE END
I was testing out a gas grenade launcher. Turned out to be too impractical-too unwieldy-but it worked well enough.-Crane

Written to Two Steps From Hell's 'Armada', which makes everyday activities epic and world-domination-y. Going to the store? Nope, you're taking over the world! KNEEEEEL!

A non-Gothamite would have surveyed the scene before them with no small degree of amusement. Police escorts, cleared roads, and an armored car, and all for a little slip of a thing! Talk about an overreaction.

Inside the armored car were four more officers. The suspect sat in the middle, hands cuffed behind her back.

"This is cozy."

Nobody answered. Nobody ever answered. It was safer that way.

She shifted a bit and four guns moved to cover her.

"Rude. The seats are hard, that's all."

Somebody's radio crackled.

"Road's blocked, taking alternate route."

"Having trouble?"

"Shut up, Richardson."

She stuck her tongue out at him and stretched her feet out.

"Make me."

He didn't answer, but it obviously hurt to keep his mouth shut. Too bad.

Outside, one of the police cars careened into a fire hydrant. A long shriek came over the radio before turning into what sounded like somebody hacking up a lung.

"What the fuck? Bob? Bob!"

The hacking stopped.

"That doesn't sound good." Dead air came over the radio. "Sounds like someone had an accident. Panic attack, maybe? You boys have such stressful jobs…"

"Shut the fuck up, bitch!"
"You kiss your mother with that mouth?" She batted her eyelashes at him. "Now, now, just because I killed your sister doesn't mean we can't be civil."

"Easy, Lucas. Richardson, be quiet."

"Anything for you, sweetie."

The radio crackled again.

"They're all over me!"

"Shit." She couldn't pick out who said that. Didn't really care, either. "He's here."

"Better make sure I don't have any bruises, sweetie. You know what happens if I get bruises. Or paper cuts, for that matter."

"GETTHEMOFFOFME!"

"I'm guessing insects. Anybody else?"

The car suddenly swerved off the road, picking up speed before suddenly stopping and throwing the occupants to the floor. She guessed they'd hit a pole. Typical.

There was gunfire and more screaming, and then the doors opened.

"Feeling better?"

"Still stiff. I can walk, put me down!"

The cuffs fell to the floor with a low clatter. The guards remained where they were. It was their only defense now, really.

"Did they behave?"

She bit her lip and jabbed a finger at the redhead.

"That one has no manners. Nice set of lungs, though, if you want a new one…"

"Is that so?"

"Mm-hm. And one of the drivers had entomophobia. Just so you know."

"Charlie!" A giant of a man—not much shorter than Croc, really—lumbered over, reloading his shotgun. "The redhead, please. Maim him, but don't damage his throat. Maybe just a broken leg, so he can't run off on me."

"Sure thing, boss."

"You." he continued, putting his hands on her shoulders. "Anything broken? No bruises, paper cuts, concussions?"

"I'm fine. Just a bit stiff. Those seats are murder."

"They can be. You're sure? Look into the light."

"Oh, come on."
"Do it."

"Pupils…normal…that'll have to do, Bats will be here soon enough."

There was a scream and a nasty cracking sound from inside the car and Charlie came out, the unfortunate Lucas slung over his shoulder. His leg was rather backwards-looking and he was unconscious.

Five minutes later, when Batman showed up, they were gone and the remaining escorts had screamed themselves hoarse.

THE END
Friendly Advice

Chapter Notes

I am, slowly but steadily, working on a fic-isation of The Dark Knight Rises. Anyway, I always thought Crane might not be too happy about being a mook, if only on principle. It's not like he gets to keep the people he's sentencing, and given Gotham's situation, it's unlikely he can make any of his toxin right now.

"Doctor."

He looks up from his book, only mildly interested in the man on the other side of the glass.

"Good morning."

"How are you, Doctor Crane?"

He shrugs, sets the book aside. He's not surprised at Bane's presence. It was only a matter of time before he came by Arkham. That doesn't mean he's very happy about it, however-Gotham had a system before, and this Bane has broken it. Very annoying.

"Well enough. But you didn't come here to exchange pleasantries, did you?"

"You're a smart man, Doctor." Naturally. "I am here to let you out."

"Is that so?" He's not so sure he likes that idea, actually. At least in here he's safe from rioting civilians. "Why would you do that? I actually do belong here, as it happens."

Bane says nothing. Jonathan's mostly sure he's smiling behind that mask. Mostly sure.

"I need a judge."

"You've got the wrong man for that, I'm afraid."

"They know you, Doctor. They fear you." As they should. "And as such, you will be perfect for what I had in mind."

"Which would be?"

"To hand down sentences to the guilty."

He picks up his book again.

"My apologies, I'm not interested in the job offer. Try the Joker."

"No." The word is forceful and he looks up again, the idea crossing his mind that Bane could very well decide to snap his neck for declining. "The clown will be a problem."

True enough.

"I have no other names for you, I'm afraid."
"Let me rephrase this, then, Doctor." Bane sighs. "If you don't accept, I will have Miss Richardson brought here and...taken care of." What. "Puts this in a new light, doesn't it?"

Damn. Whatever Bane means by 'taken care of', it probably isn't free shampoo. Or even quick and painless.

"I see." He closes the book, adjusts his glasses. "Given the circumstances, I'll consider it."

Bane nods and opens the door.

"Wise choice, Doctor."

Yeah. Choice. Funny thing, that.

"What exactly do you expect from me?"

THE END
An episode of B:TAS (not 'Mad Love', interestingly enough) had Harley come THISCLOSE to killing the Joker. Seriously. It was through sheer dumb luck that she didn't. And...he apparently found that to be fabulous. Okay, then.

Every so often Batman will get lucky and pick up more than one or two of them at once, meaning that the back seat will become rather...crowded.

Normally, that isn't so bad. But every so often they'll end up with the Joker. If that wasn't bad enough, every so often they'll end up with Harley, too.

Like now.

They were sitting quietly—it was a painful capture, involving an escalator and a shelf full of staplers—when Harley and the Joker joined them in the back.

And proceeded to begin attempting to devour each other's faces, with all the accompanying...sounds.

The car ride continues for some time this way, but it's only when the sucking sound gives way to the attempted removal of clothing that Batman slams on the brakes and sends them careening into a fire hydrant.

"Quinn. Clown."

"Not now..."

"If you do not separate, you will be riding to Arkham in the trunk. And I will be seeking out pot holes."

Joker shoves Harley into the door-ouch, door handles in the kidneys hurt.

"Good as gold, Bats."

"Good."

The rest of the ride is silent.

THE END
Aftershocks

Chapter Notes

Takes place after the 'Lost Lenore' arc. Let's not mention this to him, shall we?

He says he doesn't remember. She doesn't believe him.

Well, she does, sort of. But only sort of. The fact remains that he'll wake, coughing and barely able to breathe, but still manage to choke out her name and a soft, "Please don't go."

She makes him go to the doctor when the coughing doesn't stop. He comes back with bloody hands and the diagnosis of pneumonia.

Keeping him in bed is hard. It's never been easy, but now it's damn near impossible. (Shame physical activity sets him coughing, that would keep him down well enough.) Oh, sure, he'll say he can't sleep, or that he's sick of lying down all day, or that he's just bored to death, but he still won't let her out of his sight for longer than strictly necessary.

She drugs his tea (her mother would be appalled) twice. Despite the fact that he's done the same thing, he is not amused.

She's starting to worry about him. They've both had nightmares, and they've both had some bad scares. So what about this one is so terrible? Fever? That's gone down, but…

"You ought to be lying down." That's half of what she says these days. It's because he suffers stubborn-man-itis. "If you get me sick, I expect nothing less than a genie."

"Sorry, Kitty." That's half of what he says these days, and she wishes he wouldn't. "Couldn't sleep."

Rubbish.

"Yeah, yeah. I know." She pushes a glass of limeade over to him. "Drink that. It's not drugged, I promise."

He takes a sip and promptly chokes on it.

"At least sit down."

He drops into the chair, clutching the glass. She prods the chicken noodle (grocery store, with a bit of help because they're skimpy with the carrots) and settles down on the arm.

"How're you feeling?"

"Lousy." He rests his head against her ribcage. "Kill me now."

"Sorry, can't." She leans over to take a sip of his limeade. If she's going to get sick, it's too late now. "You should be sleeping."

"Mm."
He hasn't even bothered with his glasses. She's willing to bet he'll pass out down here, given the
opportunity.

"Jonathan…" He says nothing, just presses against her side like a puppy. "You haven't been yourself
the last few weeks."

"Sorry."

"Don't be sorry, just tell me what's going on."

"Sick."

"It's not just sick, and you know it. Come on, talk to me."

"I'm just sick, it's nothing…"

"Jonathan Crane." He stops. "I know you well enough to know it's something else. Now spill. Is it
that weird dream of yours?"

Nod, nod.

Called it!

"Why don't you tell me what you do remember?"

He coughs, takes another sip, and makes himself a little more comfortable. She slides down to his lap
instead. He's still very warm. Maybe she can coax him into a cool shower later…

"You were dead."

"I know that part."

"No. You were…you fell. Off a roof."

Ohh.

That certainly explains the sudden clinginess. That should wear off, then. She's been wondering if
he'd gotten a freak cancer diagnosis or something.

"I didn't fall off a roof." she reminds him. "Well, that one time, but that doesn't count. Farthest I've
ever fallen otherwise is off a stepladder."

And, now that she thinks about it, she took a nasty spill a few days before he got sick. Knocked her
out for a minute or two. She'd come to with him kneeling by her side, two steps from a panic attack.
That had worn off fairly quickly, once he'd determined she didn't have a concussion, but…

"I know. It's irrational, I know it is."

He's leaving something out, she can tell.

"What else happened?"

He pauses for a second too long before saying, "I don't remember."

"Yes, you do."

He coughs and she sits up a bit. Maybe she shouldn't press him, should just force him to go to bed…
"I don't." He insists. "M'sorry, Kitty, I just don't. Honest."

She gets up, pretends not to notice his look of alarm.

"Come on. Up you get, you need to be lying down."

"But I…"

"Come on."

She tucks him in bed and flops down beside him. The soup is on low, it'll be fine unattended for a little while.

"You're warm."

He's shaking, that's all. She hugs him.

"Go to sleep."

He doesn't say anything else and when she takes a look at him later, he's out. Finally. She should go back downstairs, get some things done, but…

It can wait. For a little while, at least.

______________________________

She stays for about half an hour before going back down to see about the soup. It hasn't caught fire or anything horrible. She considers that a success.

There's something else, and she's starting to wonder if she really wants to know. He's never been this reticent about anything. Ever.

Weird.

"Kitty?"

Damn. She'd hoped for more than half an hour.

"What are you doing up?"

He shrugs and drops into the chair.

"Couldn't sleep."

"Jonathan…" She doesn't mean to be cross with him, but this is ridiculous. She's not going to just randomly vanish or anything silly. "What is going on?"

"Don't be mad, m'sorry…"

Great, now she's guilty. This is all very unfair.

"I'm not mad, love." She hugs him. "Just confused, that's all. You're normally not like this. I'm not dead. I'm not even sick or anything, you know that."

"Not just that." he mumbles. "My fault."

"Just a dream." she soothes. "And I doubt it was your fault, for heaven's sake…"
"N-no." He swallows hard. "No, it was my fault, I let you go, Kitty, Jesus…"

And the dam breaks.

Not counting toxin episodes—and once when he was very, very sick—she's seen him cry twice, and both of those times were in college. Today marks the third time.

"Shh, shh." She rubs his shoulders and wonders if he'll forgive her for sedating him. "Just a bad dream, that's all. You're sick and exhausted, love, that's not a recipe for puppies and rainbows."

"Y-you said…"

"I didn't say anything, because it wasn't me." His fever isn't that high…just stress, that's all. Maybe he had been exposed, a little-cracked vial or something. It's happened before. "It's all right, everything's all right. Deep breaths, now, come on."

He tries, but that finally sets him coughing. She goes to pull back and he shakes his head and whispers, "Please don't go."

"I'm just getting you a glass of water." she says. "I'll be in your line of sight the entire time, I promise."

He watches her prod the soup and fill a glass as though she'll disappear if he doesn't.

"Here. Drink this down." He takes a sip, pauses, and drains the glass. Good.

He remains silent, his eyes closed and his breathing ragged. He looks a fright, but he's gotten himself mostly under control. She'd love for him to go back to bed, but she hates to send him up there now.

"Feeling better?"

"Mm." His voice is thick. "No."

She refills the water glass and drops a handful of napkins in his lap.

"Might help."

"Sorry, I don't know what…"

"Shh." She kisses the top of his head. "It's all right. You believe me, yeah?"

"Mm-hm."

"Good. Now go on, up to bed."

"No, please…"

"I'll be right behind you with a bowl of soup. Go on, now."

He lingers for a minute until she flicks the towel at him—for some semblance of normalcy more than anything. That gets him going, but she can hear him coughing on the way up. NyQuil…they have NyQuil, don't they? She's pretty sure they're not out—she made a grocery run when she drugged him last time—but…

Later. She'll worry later.
Soup, crackers, orange juice…all good.

He's gotten himself cleaned up, but he's not what she would call 'in bed'. More like 'still standing, pretending to look at the bookshelf but not really looking'.

"Bed. Now."

"I was looking for a book…"

"Bed."

He makes himself comfortable and takes the soup from her.

"Thank you." She drops down beside him and nabs a cracker. "Congratulations on not blowing it up."

There's the Jonathan she knows. Much better.

"Any idiot can make soup." she grumbles. "You poke it every so often, that's all." She nabs another cracker and gets up. "I'm gonna grab a shower. Don't choke, what'll I put in your obituary?"

That gets a laugh out of him, weak and shaky though it is, and he sinks back against the pillows. Good. If she's really lucky, he'll pass out before she gets back.

She doubts it, but a girl can dream.

He's mostly out when she's through, one thin hand resting on the remote.

"You take your pills?"

"Yes."

"You're sure?"

"Yes, yes. I'm sure."

She checks anyway-he hates these horse pills, always tries to insist that he's feeling better and doesn't need them. Rubbish. That's how plagues start.

They do indeed have NyQuil and she sets that down within reach.

"I'm going to get the lights. Take that and get ready for bed."

"I've been in bed."

"And you've got pneumonia."

He has no counter-argument, but he does try to cheat his way out of the NyQuil with sad eyes and a soft voice.

"C'mon, Kitty, I don't really need it…"

"Now."

He takes it, grimaces, and gets up to brush his teeth. She gets in bed.

Once the lights are out and she's snuggled up against him with his arms around her, she lets herself
relax.
"Kitty?"
"Mm?"
"You're not...I know it's ridiculous, but..."
"I'm here, love. Go to sleep."
He sighs and she feels him relax.
"M'kay. Night."
"Night."
The NyQuil takes him out fairly quickly and she hopes that—just once—he won't dream.
Just for tonight, at least.
THE END
There's three of them, in various states of disarray. All have bruises, and all are frightened.

The youngest, a girl of sixteen, is blathering about anything and everything that comes to mind—her mother, will she get an automatic 'A' on her test for being kidnapped, ohgod they're not rapists, are they? The others just want her to shut up. Except about that last one, that's a reasonable fear.

The basement door opens and their captor is illuminated for a moment before it closes again. They can hear it coming down the stairs, its steps light and its breathing nearly inaudible. Once it reaches the floor, they lose track of it altogether, until a voice floats from the shadows behind them.

"Good evening."

The youngest screams, provoking a dry chuckle.

"Quite a pair of lungs on you." Cold fingers snake out and brush her face. "That's good."

Everybody else stays quiet, but she starts to blabber again.

"My mom's important!" she sobs. "She'll give you whatever you want, just please…"

"Be quiet, child."

There's enough venom in that voice to make the others attempt to quiet their breathing. The girl, however, is too panicked to listen properly, and instead of just shutting up, she starts praying.

"O-our father, who art in…"

That turns out to be a mistake.

They can't see anything, but the prayers are choked off and the voice hisses, "Try that again and I'll snap your neck. You are replaceable, don't ever forget that."

She falls silent then and they hear him walk towards the stairs.

"Be good."

A sliver of light reaches them for a second, but then it's gone and they're alone again.

"Oh, god, oh, god…"

"We'll be fine." the boy says. "Anybody got a knife?"

Nobody does and he falls silent for a minute. His girlfriend finally gets her tears under control and starts whispering to the other girl, trying to calm her down.

"There's gotta be a light switch in here." He starts trying to hop towards the door and promptly falls flat. "Dammit!"

There's a noise from behind them and the younger girl starts crying again.
"Someone's here!"

"It's okay, it's okay."

She starts praying again and the boy tries to right himself. He is not successful.

"Let us out!" She pulls at the duct tape. "Let us out, let us OUT-"

BANG!

The girlfriend is spattered with blood and brain matter. She's too shocked to scream-probably for the best, wouldn't want bits in her mouth.

"I told you that you were replaceable, child." the voice hisses from the dark. "This goes for all of you. Now, for the last time, shut up."

They're too frightened to do anything and this time he really does leave. For a split second the light illuminates the dead girl-there's already a rat climbing towards the remains of her head.

THE END

Chapter End Notes

Would you believe I started writing this as 'comically annoying hostage goes to Gotham'?
"You'll be sorry." she says from the cell. "You'll see."

Jim has to feel sorry for her. Deep down, she's still the teenage girl sitting at her friend's bedside, being ridiculously optimistic about him waking up.

Sorry or not, she shot at them. Twice. And then she put up a nasty fight when they finally closed on her, leaving Harvey with a beauty of a black eye and him with a bruise blossoming on his ribcage.

They put her here for the time being, and she's been very cooperative. And very, very sure that Crane will come by to pick her up. He's seen this kind of thing before, and he knows she's in for heartbreak. If the man's got half a brain, he'll have gone to ground.

The power goes out.

"I told you so."

Coincidence.

The emergency power comes on, bathing everything in an eerie yellow sheen. She's gotten to her feet and leaned against the bars. Harvey is not happy about that.

"Back away, Richardson."

"Might want to be nice to me."

"He's not coming. Trust me, they never do."

She smiles at him, bats her eyelashes.

"They don't. He will."

Jim's starting to worry that she's right. The last time she spoke with such conviction, she turned to be absolutely correct despite the odds.

The main doors swing open and the first thing he sees is a wave of men dressed in heavy jeans and thick coats and cheap gas masks. They're armed, but he's not particularly worried about them or their shotguns.

He is, however, worried about the man who came in behind them. Tall and thin and wielding a goddamn scythe, he is the cause several disappearances these past few weeks.

"I told you so."

Yeah. She told them so.

"Hi, Kitty." He comes across the room. "Hello, Jim. Harvey."

"Crane…"
"I'd keep a civil tongue in your head, Harvey Bullock."

For once, Jim is inclined to agree. He's outnumbered, but it's not worth him hurling capsules of insanity at them—which he will, guaranteed.

Harvey appears to have to come to the same conclusion, and he falls silent. Thank god.

Crane borrows the keys from somebody's desk and opens the door.

"You're not hurt, are you?"

"No, no, I'm okay."

He gives her the scythe to hold and checks her over-going so far as to borrow a penlight to check for concussion-before nodding.

"All right, then."

"Told you."

"You told me you were fine when you were bleeding out from a gunshot wound." he says. "Forgive my skepticism."

He takes the scythe back and turns around.

"I'm not very happy that I had to take time to do this." he says. "You really should have just minded your own business, Jim."

He draws his gun and is met with the cocking of several shotguns. Crane raises an eyebrow.

"That wasn't the best idea, was it?" He starts for the door. "We'll be leaving now. Follow, and you'll wind up in a nice padded cell with a snug jacket all your own."

He swipes a candy from Harvey's desk and calls, "Keep them here for a few minutes, then do what you like."

And then he's gone, leaving his goons here with their shotguns at the ready. Harvey shifts and Jim hears him mutter, "Bastard took my candy."

THE END

Chapter End Notes

No way is he getting into a firefight with the police. They're better shots. He respects Jim enough not to straight-up poison him (though he is fair game for death traps), but if he'd been out...it would've been ugly.
Chapter Notes

Takes place shortly after 'Thong'.

Updates will be two a day now, because I would like to get this caught up SOMETIME this century. There are other stories to move over-including a set of one-shots involving Kitty's more homicidal cousin, Jill. Jack and Jill went up the hill to plot a little murder...and at some point a pen is involved.

It wasn't that he particularly cared that the clown had come back and needed his jaw wired shut. If anything, it was cause for celebration.

(Joker disagreed and after one too many snickers from the guards, had landed himself in solitary. This incident led to the banning of jigsaw puzzles from Arkham.)

But, with the clown silent (and now not even around), the theories as to what happened were getting a little outlandish. Crazy he may have been, but the likelihood of him breaking his jaw trying to give Batman...anyway.

It quickly became apparent that the only one talking would be Harley Quinn. The doctors, for whatever reason, were more concerned about protecting his precious feelings than quelling the rumours, but Harley...

Once she was allowed in public and the guards were satisfied that nothing was going to be torched, they descended upon her like a pack of hyenas.

"Hey, Harley."

"Hi."

They probably should go easy on her. She hadn't come back in pristine condition, either.

Eh. She'd live.

"How are you?"

She sniffed. Typical. Depressed. Separate her from the clown and brace yourself for tears.

"He'll be fine." Hopefully not. "Harley…what exactly happened out there?"

"I don't wanna talk about it, Eddie."

"We need to-!"

"What Edward means is that it might be therapeutic." And entertaining. Very entertaining. "Why don't you tell us about it?"

"I don't…"
"Come on, sweetie. We won't breathe a word."

"Kay."

Perfect. They took another glance to make sure the guards weren't getting too upset and crowded round.

"Bats didn't like the Tribute." she said. "We got into a spotlight and Mistah J thought he'd show him...yah know."

They all knew, but it wasn't voluntary knowledge.

"Oh?"

"Yeah. I guess he didn't like it, 'cuz he grabbed him and sorta...went to town."

Oh.

Ohh.

Apparently he wasn't the only one who thought the thong was a bit much.

"Stop laughing!" She hit him in the arm and he moved away.

"Play nice, Quinn!"

"Fuck you!"

That got her dragged off to solitary.

Worth it.

THE END
Fantasies

Chapter Notes

Takes place very early on—the first time there was a real problem, I should think. The birds sucked, but that was more a ‘I may not see him again’, not an ‘oh god he could die at my feet’ situation.

When she was thirteen, she had some silly fantasy of nursing her crush (at the time it had been a boy named David Marlowe) back to health after…oh, the situations varied, but the popular ones were an animal attack out in the middle of nowhere or an escape from being kidnapped. Somehow. She’d never gone into great detail about the unimportant parts.

They had always been…unrealistic, really. Situations aside, she’d had some idea of his collapsing gracefully in her arms (she somehow wouldn't drop him despite their weight difference) and insisting, through delicate mouthfuls of blood, that everything was fine, just fine, and not to worry. And they’d gotten worse from there.

This is nothing like that. Oh, he drops gracefully, all right, because he's a bastard and looks better than she does when he's sick, and she somehow manages to not drop him, but it's a close call and she does go down a little rougher and faster than she'd like.

The similarities end there.

Fantasies never mention the feeling of warm, dead weight or slick blood that washes over everything like spilled juice. They don't mention the panic of not being able to find signs of life, or the ridiculous relief of finally realizing that he's still breathing, if only just.

They don't mention the need to call for help and being unable to because they'll take her to jail and if he dies she'll have to live with not being there, with not…

"Kitty."

She thinks he might try to reassure her and she wants to laugh, wants to time-travel and tell her thirteen year-old self that it's heartbreaking in real life. But he doesn't try to reassure her. He just takes a shuddering breath and…stops.

The one good thing about this whole situation is that their first-aid kit is much more extensive than other people's, but getting it open proves difficult with bloody, shaking fingers.

In her fantasy, she was calm, collected, capable of murmuring soothing nothings to keep him calm. In real life, it takes so much work to make her lips form his name.

"Jonathan…"

He doesn't respond and she remembers that fantasy-Kitty would have taken a moment to smooth his hair back, to comfort him. There's no time for that now.

Fantasies, she decides, are very wrong indeed.
When she was thirteen years old, those fantasies always led to her sitting by his bedside (the bridge was always washed out or something, preventing those pesky doctors from ruining everything), reading and helping him get through a fever.

Those ones, it turns out, are somewhat accurate. They're just much less fun in real life, because he barely knows his own name, let alone hers, and as such will not calm down when she tries to soothe him.

"C'mon love, you're all right."

He says nothing, only tries to pull away from her, his eyes glassy and not-at-all lucid.

She cuffs him to the bed for his own protection.

When she went through her folk story phase, she'd imagined a Banshee coming to claim his soul. Fortunately none appear in real life, but he hallucinates his grandmother come to drag him to Hell and will not be quieted. She sedates him when his pleas for mercy threaten to break her heart beyond repair.

She ends up slumped over his bed and when he wakes her with an affectionate hair-ruffle, she thinks they never mentioned the headache and the backache and the dry mouth. The little quirk of his lips says that he's lucid.

"Would you mind uncuffing me?"

Somehow that had never come up in those fantasies of hers. 'I love you', maybe, 'thank you, sweetheart', sometimes. Maybe even a teasing, 'you look terrible'.

She gets that last one when she leans over, sure her boobs have shrunk a size from being smushed against the mattress.

"You look terrible."

"You look worse, for once."

"Mm." He melts back into the bed, eyes already fluttering shut. "Glad to hear it, Kitty."

He's asleep again almost before her name leaves his lips and she sighs.

Fantasies are horrible liars, and if she ever gets a TARDIS, she's going straight back to slap her thirteen year-old self upside the head.

THE END
In Which...

Chapter Notes

...button-ups are praised and the author is chastised. Seriously, they will not let me. Jack and Jill, on the other hand, are like, 'yeah, there's a chair, might wanna move it, blood spatters'. O.O

If he were poetically minded, he might consider writing an ode to the button-up shirt. It can be undone with one hand and removed without disrupting anything.

And it doesn't give him trouble, unlike the-

"What the hell?"

Don't mind me, carry on.

"What are you doing? Wait, never mind…just get out. Get out, and take them with you."

This is fanfiction, the world's biggest erotica subgenre!

"Not with me involved, it isn't! You'll only encourage them."

It doesn't matter what I do, they're encouraged enough already.

"Leave."

Under-eighteens, get out.

There, happy?

"No! All of you out, we are not your personal entertainment! God, kids today, I ask you…no sense of privacy…"

"Quite right. You've got til the count of three."

Uh, Kitty? What's with the shotgun-SHIT SHIT EVERY MAN FOR THEMSELVES!

Who the hell keeps a shotgun by the bed, anyway?

BANG!

You guys are on your own!

"That wasn't so bad. Now, where were we?"

THE END
Musical

Chapter Notes

I don't know why they like this song. I tried to steer them towards...really, anything else. But nope.

Edward always felt very pleased with himself when he tracked down the Scarecrow before Batman. Not that it was hard-Jon liked places near bookstores, but he'd take 'creepy, maybe haunted' buildings with no complaint.

Like this one. Abandoned hotel (Joker's fault), supposedly haunted by a Victorian lady and a pair of grinning children. Lies, of course, but the superstitious peasants of Gotham would stay out-especially if Jon had a screaming subject.

Right now the place was quiet and Edward strolled right in and stepped into the cage elevator. Oh, the things he could do with this...such a waste. If Bats showed up, he was taking over this one the minute the coast was clear.

Shame the music was so worn-down and creepy sounding, but that was Jon for you.

There was a newish-looking video monitor in the corner and he waved at it before using it to comb his hair and straighten his tie and make sure he didn't have spinach in his teeth.

*Ding*

Hopefully this was the right floor...it was the thirteenth, so probably...oh, of course it was.

1402, 1404...*

"Whispers at the bus stop, I heard about nights out in the school yard-"

EEEEE! What was that racket?

Wait.

Wait.

Was that...surely not...

1408.

"Well you know it's all I think about, I write your name, drive past your house, your boyfriend's over, I watch your lights go out..."

He nudged the door open. It was apparently cleaning day-Jon and Kitty were both wearing dust masks and giant, tight-fitting sunglasses. And they were singing. Together.

For a moment, Edward thought he'd fallen into the twilight zone.

He wasn't sure who spotted him, but he barely got out a 'hi' before Jon grabbed his scythe and Kitty
grabbed a shotgun.

"Wait, wait, I heard nothing-"

**BLAM!**

**SLICE!**

Those who feared the Batman were idiots. Batman didn't kill. These two most certainly did.

"Shit, shit, shit-"

"EDWARD NYGMA!"

"Gotta go, bye!"

Elevator! Oh, sweet Jesus, salvation!

He flung himself into it and starting frantically hitting the Ground Button. Close, close, close, close-

The creepy, worn-down music started and the doors shut a second before a pair of homicidal maniacs skidded to a stop.

"**We'll be in Arkham together eventually, Eddie.**" Scarecrow hissed. **"I KNOW WHERE YOU SLEEP."**

Edward decided then and there to stay out of Arkham until October, when Jon would be busy and hopefully have forgotten this.

**Found out about youuuu-GOD DAMMIT.**

But wouldn't it figure that they'd pick the catchiest song ever to stick in his head?

**THE END**

*Sometimes older buildings will omit the number thirteen, despite it being the thirteenth floor. Superstition, y'know. I'm not sure if they do it now-I don't visit a lot of taller buildings.*
Impatience

It was nothing at first—well, not really. She probably didn't need to be here, if he was being honest with himself, but she'd been sick and then she'd been shot and—anyway, better safe than sorry. That had been a bit more than a dry cough before the police showed up, and they'd both agreed that a hospital was the better choice. Well, he'd agreed and then cajoled her into going, and it wasn't like she'd been in much shape to argue.

She's been looking steadily worse since he brought her in, really. Granted, he could have dug the bullet out on his own—they've both had worse—but...

"Go home."

"I'm fine."

"You'll get sick, you always do."

This is true, but he's not moving. Not after terrorizing the night staff into letting him stay right here. No need to let his efforts go to waste.

"I'll take Airborne or something."

She sighs and promptly coughs. When it doesn't stop, he reaches for the call button and she flaps her hand at him.

"I'm—" She holds up a finger until the sputtering dies down. "I'm fine. Don't fuss."

"Two minutes, they said they'd be here in two minutes." He loves the ones with families. They always cooperate. "You're sure?"

"Don't frighten the nurses."

A bit late for that.

"You're sure you don't want me to call-"

"No."

Oh, very well. But he doesn't have to like it.

He settles back into the uncomfortable plastic chair, hands folded around the styrofoam cup. He's tired, but hospital coffee has extra caffeine, so at least there's that.

"Two minutes."

"I'm fine."

"I'm just telling you."

"Would you get the light?" The light, a chocolate bar, Robin's head on a platter, it's all doable.

"Thanks, love."

Anything else?"
"Don't threaten the nurses when they come in later." she mumbles sleepily. "They're jes' doin' their jobs."

Humph.

"Fine."

"Nigh', Jonathan."

"Good night, Kitty."

He takes a sip of the now lukewarm coffee and grimaces. He'll get a fresh cup when she's asleep-this room is 'luckily' near the coffeemaker.

She yawns and he hears her trying to get comfortable. Hopefully she can go home tomorrow. If she's about the same, he can sign her out. And will, whether they like it or not.

He's startled out of an accidental nap when she starts coughing again. Since she can't exactly stop him, he hits the call button and starts timing it.

Two minutes and thirty-three seconds later (cretins), the nurse comes in, looking flustered. She's new—he can always spot the new ones. They're always so nervy, so desperate not to screw up. She'd better not—he's killed people for less.

"Okay, it's okay..." He's not moving, she'd better just get used to the idea. "Don't repress it, it sounds like you've got something in there..."

"She's a nurse, she knows." he snaps, not really caring that she recoils like she's seen a rattlesnake. "What's wrong with her."

"I-I don't know-"

"Then find out." Idiot. "Or go get someone who can."

She likes that option better, apparently—the second Kitty no longer sounds like she's going to choke to death, she flees the room. Idiot.

"Be nice."

"Other people can be nice. And less idiotic."

She sighs, coughs a bit—no longer the harsh wet ones, thank god—and mutters something about it probably being walking pneumonia.*

"What about pneumonia?"

"That's probably what it is." More coughing. He cracks open the water bottle and gives it to her. "I wasn't feeling well, and then being shot and all, it developed."

"We'll see."

"You know that's what it is. That's what usually happens to you."

He hates it when she has a point. He really does. But it's true. Every time he checks in here with an injury—even if he's not sick at the time—he checks out with something.
Where is that damned nurse? If he has to go and find her, so help him god...

"Don't."

"I didn't do anything!"

"Don't go pester the nurses."

Damn.

He contents himself with squeezing the cup until it threatens to crack and glaring at the door as though it might spontaneously combust if he doesn't blink. It doesn't, but he's pretty sure it at least thinks about it.

Ten minutes and thirteen seconds later (not that he's counting or anything), the doctor steps into the room.

"What's goin' on?" Jonathan finds him very annoying. Too chummy. There's no reason for this level of attempted friendship. "Nurse Bea said you had a cough?"

How much of a hassle will it be if he murders him and has to find someone else?

"I'm pretty sure it's pneumonia. We've both had it before."

Too much of a hassle, he thinks. There's the actual murder—which will have to be bludgeoning, he's not wasting toxin on the man—and then the sanitization, and the disposal of the body...

"We'll run a couple of tests..."

And then comes the joy of explaining to the replacement that if anything happens to her, their friends and family will pay the price, not to mention the fact that Kitty will not be pleased.

Not worth it.

"Okay...we'll do an x-ray first, then you can get back to bed."

Fantastic. This is just so much fun.

Yeah. It's pneumonia. Of course it is. Lucky for them it's mild, and they seem to be convinced that she had it before checking in. He's not sure if they're just saying that to keep him from murdering someone. Silly doctors, if he was going to go on a rampage, he'd have done so.

He's about to strangle that idiot nurse, though—she keeps coming in and trying to be 'helpful' but really only making a nuisance of herself and waking Kitty up.

The last straw comes when she turns to him and says, "It's gonna be okay now, if you wanna go home and catch some sl-eeep!"

"If you don't leave, shut the door, and stay out until it is light out or someone presses that call button, I will use this on you." He rattles the canister at her. He's bluffing—it's easier to just snap her neck, but he doesn't want to get up unless he has to. "Do I make myself clear?" Frantic nodding ensues.

"Good. Now go."

There's an inner struggle as to whether to turn and run or back away, but then she turns and flees the room. Kitty groans.
"Surely that wasn't necessary."

"Surely her continued breathing wasn't necessary."

"Leave her alone."

"If she doesn't come back in, I will. Do you need anything?"

"For you not to overreact."

He ignores that.

"Go to sleep."

"Be good."

He ignores that, too.

True to her word, the nurse stays out until six-thirty. It's only a little light outside, but he'll let it pass because Kitty's quit trying to sleep anyway.

"Okay! How are you feeling?"

So cheerful. Ugh.

"I'm really fine." She puts her hand on his arm and squeezes gently. Be nice. "I've had worse." That's right. And if this nurse knows what's good for her, it'll stay that way. "Whatever pain medication you've got me on is giving me weird dreams, though, and making me feel all...fuzzy. Think you can fix that?"

"I can find-" He shifts a bit-just getting comfortable, honest. "Yeah. I can."

The hand on his arm squeezes again and he forces a smile.

"That'd be great." he says. "Thanks."

'Being nice' gets him a frightened little giggle and a, "Yeah, um, I'll...I'll be back later...okaybye."

She leaves and Kitty turns to him.

"Seriously?"

"What? I was nice."

"You know, when you smile you look like you're two seconds from murdering everyone in the room."

"That's why I'm not smiling in my driver's licence photo, Kitty."

She shakes her head and reaches up to ruffles his hair, wincing when the movement tugs on her stitches. He catches her fingers and puts her hand back in her lap, where it belongs.

"Don't."

"I'm fine, honestly."
"Kitty." he says, cutting her off before she even think about going there. "'I'm fine' were the last words you said before passing out from blood loss the last time we were here. Humor me."

She huffs, coughs thickly-yeah, she'll be here another day whether she likes it or not-and leans back into her pillows.

"I hate it here."

"I know."

"I can't sleep, I just want to go home." She fixes large, sad eyes on him and he resolutely refuses to look at her. "I'm fine, you've done this before."

"I know what you're doing." She coughs again, weak and pathetic, and plucks at his sleeve. "And it's not working."

"Huh?"

"I'm not signing you out yet, so you may as well go back to sleep."

"Jon-a-thaaan..."

"No. And that's final."

"I'll sign myself out."

"They're more scared of me than you. I'll just tell them not to do it."

"But-"

"No."

"You suck."

"I know." He drops a kiss on her forehead. "Go to sleep."

The doctor-he can't remember his name-comes in later with a clipboard and an extra chair. Jonathan doesn't bother smiling at him. Clearly it doesn't help, anyway.

"Medication problems?"

"Uh-huh. Weird dreams, fuzzy head."

"Okay...let's see...what about Lypozil***?"

"No." Jonathan says at once. "Makes you sleepwalk."

"It does?"

"The last time you took it, you called me Gollum and told me to lead you to Mordor."

"Oh."

"Yeah. We're not doing that again."

"Where'd you lead me?"
"Back to bed. No Lypozil."

The doctor coughs a little and makes a scratch on his clipboard.

"Okay. Um...let's try...Appazine?"

"Gives me a rash."

"Zotec?"

"Nightmares."

Jonathan suspects that some of these come from exposure to his toxin and the antidote(s), but it's not like there's much he can do about that now.

"Trolliumn?"

" Haven't tried that one."

"We'll try that, then. It's new."

"How new."

"The necessary tests have been run." the man blathers, face paling. "It's perfectly safe, just new."

"Jonathan, for heaven's sake-"

"Other people can play guinea pig!"

"Don't be such a hypocrite."

"I'm not, that's different-"

"It's fine, I'll try that. Ignore him, he worries."

Humph. He does not worry. He has sense, that's all. And if this idiot so much as thinks about ignoring him...

"I'll...just...right. Um. I'll be back."

He leaves and Kitty gives him an exasperated look.

"Leave. The doctor. Alone. It's not his fault I'm sick."

"Yes, it is."

"How."

He refuses to answer and she rolls her eyes at him.

"Leave him be."

"Of course, Kitty." he says, all innocence. "Whatever you need."

And he'll keep his word. He won't interact with the man, not even a little. He'll just sit here and make an effort not to blink, maybe shine the canister a little bit. It's dull, it's been sitting in here for too long.
But he'll leave the doctor alone. Promise.

Come morning, she still sounds terrible, but she sounds less terrible and she's less pale. And she's in good enough shape to scold him for sleeping in that chair for four days.

"That isn't good for you, you know that, you could've gotten a hotel or something, I'm fine."

He's about to protest when he sits up and hears his spine go crick-crick-crick-CRACK.

"You didn't hear that."

She shakes her head at him.

"Can we go home?"

He sighs. She really isn't that bad off now, he supposes, and she'll only pester him more if he says no.

Sometimes I wonder who is the adult here.

"Fine." he grumbles. "But the first sign that you're worse, the first five-minute coughing fit-no, three minute coughing fit-you're back in here without arguing."

"Four minutes."

"Three, final offer."

"Fine."

He grins and presses the call button.

"I'll just call for a wheelchair."

"I don't need a wheelchair."

"They'll insist, and I wouldn't dream of arguing with them."

He may deserve the balled-up napkin thrown at his face.

THE END

*I've had pneumonia loads of times-six or seven, I think, that I can remember-and most of the time when I've had it it's sucked but presented itself like a bad cold more than anything. The flu sucked more. (I was a sickly child, I'd have bit it of consumption in a victorian novel. Hopefully taking people with me-too good for this sinful earth', my ass.)

**None of these are real drugs, far as I know. If they are, they're not what I meant. Probably.
Currently chipping away at a Dracula/Batman...something. Stoker forgive me. This is a piece of that-takes place after Jonathan Harker (Crane here) flees Dracula's (Joker's) castle and is reunited with his fiancée (Mina in the original, Kitty in...this). BUT he's getting over a case of brain fever-basically, he checked out because VAMPIRES WTF-hence Kitty's initial restraint. Title from the Moodorama song of the same name.

The sound of the door opening woke him and he wondered how long he'd been asleep. It felt like a few minutes, but...oh.

Oh, he wasn't awake at all. Just another dream, a very real one.

"Jonathan." He hated these dreams. They always made waking up that much harder. "Jonathan, I-"

Her voice caught and she fell silent before stepping into the room. He wished he'd wake up, he couldn't deal with this, not so soon...

She sat down by his bed, hands curled in her lap. Nothing new. He'd wake soon, then, and worry Sister Helga when he wouldn't talk for an hour.

That was the idea, anyway. But she didn't vanish and he didn't wake and the silence grew thick between them. Well, ignoring the perpetual flapping of bat's wings at the window, but that was always there. At least it wasn't the howling of wolves.

The bat grew angry and a sudden screech made him flinch and sit up in bed. He was awake now, he had to be, when he turned she'd be gone like she always was...

But she wasn't.

She was still there, looking at him as though she'd seen a ghost.

Perhaps it's me seeing ghosts.

Mostly just to see what would happen, he lifted a hand and let his fingers brush a loose strand of hair out of her face.

She didn't vanish.

"Kitty?"

The ghost-look disappeared and before he could brace himself she'd flung her arms around his neck.

Warm and here and real she's not a dream?

He risked putting a hand between her shoulders and when she didn't turn to smoke he hugged her, running his fingertips over a patch of velvet ribbon on her dress.
"Kitty-"

"Jonathan, where have you been, what happened-"

*Oh, Kitty, I don't know myself.*

"The nuns wouldn't tell me anything, they said you would-"

*Was it all a feverish delusion?*

He could tell her now, and if he changed his mind he could put it off as the ravings of an invalid. But he couldn't...not now. Maybe not ever.

He tightened his grip on her and shook his head.

"I don't know, Kitty." he managed. "I don't know."

It didn't matter. They'd go home and he wouldn't have to think about it again, except during those late hours when the world slept and the Count reclined in his library, speaking of old battles and-

*Enough!*

It didn't matter. None of it mattered, none of it had happened. He'd been ill, that was all.

Kitty suddenly pulled back and he repressed the urge to cling to her.

"Kitty?"

"Shh." She stood up. "That bat has no manners..."

Before he could stop her, she opened the window and took a swipe at the bat with a broom. It screeched but flew away without a fuss.

"There." She closed the window and tugged the drapes closed. "What *is* it with these places, absolute infestations...I take it back, love, when we're married, let's stay in England and *not* go traveling."

He'd agree to that.

She came back over and sat beside him. He sank back against the pillows, exhausted but reluctant to sleep lest this all turn out to be some grand hallucination.

*Did I ever leave?*

"You should rest." Her voice was thick, on the verge of tears. "They told me you've been ill-"

"Don't go."

Warm, trembling fingers

*Cold and firm, threatening to choke the life out of him*

stroked his hair before taking his hands.

"I won't."

He believed her, clung to that belief like a drowning man clung to driftwood.
"Promise?"

"Promise."

He finally let his eyes drift closed. If she was here then he was safe and maybe...maybe that whole nightmare hadn't happened at all.

If only that damned bat would stop flapping its wings against the window, he might have believed that.

THE END
By request...Mrs. Richardson has arrived in Gotham. Not compatible with any canon, mine or otherwise.

Ladies and gentlemen, the shit is about to go down.

"Ma'm, I don't know—they broke out three weeks ago, they didn't exactly leave a forwarding address—!"

Molly Peters hates the late shift. Well, really, she hates all the shifts, because Arkham, but she especially hates the late shift. But Sarah got the stomach flu and had to be taken home with a bucket because she couldn't stop puking, so now here she is, arguing with a little woman who is demanding to know the whereabouts of Jonathan Crane and Kitty Richardson.

"Of all the incompetent—"

"There." Molly sighs with relief—something's gone right tonight. "They're right there."

A little the worse for wear, to be sure, but Batman's got hold of them. Great. She's so glad she's going on vacation next week—Richardson hates her.

"Watch it, are you trying to pull my arm off?"

"Cretin, I need these glasses to see, if they fall because you couldn't wait half a second—"

"Kitty Richardson!"

Richardson and Crane go dead white. Richardson makes a little whining noise and Crane looks as though he would very much like to flee the country.

"M-Mum."

"Mrs. Richardson."

Oh.

Ohh.

This is gonna be good. She'll have to move to Florida, because they won't want a witness to this, but it'll be so worth it.

"Where have you been?"

"We, ah, we've been...it's complicated, Mum, sort of—" Richardson falls silent and inches back behind the Batman. He yanks her back to the front.

"Well?"
"We've...it's..." Crane finally looks at the floor. "We had no phone."

"A postcard would have sufficed." She stalks forward and they draw back as far as Batman will let them. "When the last I heard was that you two were being shot at, and then I don't hear from you for three weeks..."

"S-sorry..."

Molly claps her hands over her mouth. Luckily for her, no one seems to notice.

"Never mind."

"We were a little busy-"

"Cht."

"I promise, we meant to get a hold of you-"

"CHT."

"Ma'm." Batman sounds confused. "I'm going to have to ask you to step back."

"And you!"

"Mum, really, you shouldn't-"

"This is Batman, Mrs. Richardson, you know, the-"

She holds up a hand.

"I know who it is."

"If you hurt my mother, so help me-"

"Be quiet, Kitty."

Her mouth snaps shut and her mother marches forward.

"What is wrong with you?"

Nobody says anything for a few seconds. Richardson and Crane exchange worried looks and Crane gives his arm a little tug. A second later he winces-Batman must've tightened his grip. Molly hopes the cameras are working tonight.

"Ma'm, they flooded the subway tunnels with a hallucinogen that causes insanity or death."

"They are sick people!"

The people in question look mildly offended by this. Batman just looks exasperated.

"Eighty people were admitted to psychological wards this evening."

"That's it?" Crane says suddenly. Mrs. Richardson raises an eyebrow and he looks back at the floor. "I mean...um. I was not...not myself this evening."

"That's enough, Jonathan." He falls silent. "I don't know where you got this superiority complex of yours, Mister Batman, but you have no right, absolutely no right to manhandle people in this way."
Your mother must be ashamed—oh, Kitty, don't be so dramatic."

Richardson has been a little more successful in hiding behind Batman, but at her mother's rant she's started making frantic 'stop it stop it NO' gestures. Crane appears to be willing the floor to swallow him.

"Ma'm-"

"I don't want to hear any excuses!" Molly is forced to chug her drink to keep from giggling. "What is wrong with you?"

Batman, for possibly the only time in anyone's memory, is speechless. Mrs. Richardson huffs at him.

"Men...don't even think you two are off the hook, we'll be having a discussion later."

"There's no need-"

"Really, we're good-"

"CHT." They fall silent. "I don't want to hear another word." She steps back and stands aside, hands on hips. "Well? I suspect at least one broken rib, and I know there's a hospital wing in here. Get going!"

Yeah. Molly will be in Florida next week, but she'll remember this forever.

THE END
Couple's Therapy

He's not sure what possessed him to take both of them at the same time. Curiosity, maybe. Or maybe he was drunk when he had that idea.

Whatever the case, it's too late to back out now, and they're in his office, sitting on his couch. Well, Crane's sitting up. Richardson's lying across his lap like a giant cat, playing with his hand.

What the hell? Let them out in public and people die horribly. He honestly can't reconcile the monsters on the news with...these people.

It's all very disconcerting and he doesn't like it.

"Good afternoon."

Crane nods. Richardson pays him no attention whatsoever.

"How are you, Doctor? You look tired. Poor sleep?"

"I am conducting this session, Jonathan." he says wearily. They both chuckle at that.

"Of course you are." He glances down at her. "Probably stayed up all night worrying over this session."

"Likely."

"I slept fine, thank you."

"Denial. Not healthy."

"Mm." She looks over at him at last. "You look frightened, dear. Don't be, we're harmless."

Unbidden, the image of Doctor Combs comes to mind and he shudders.

"Maybe we shouldn't have killed the last one."

"I didn't intend for him to die, how was I supposed to know he had a letter opener in here?"

"Enough!" He doesn't mean for his voice to crack like that. "Enough."

"Fear of losing control."

"That can't be healthy...is that why his wife left, d'you think?"

"Can you blame her?"

"Stop!" They turn to him again, all wide-eyed innocence. "Enough. We're not here to talk about me, we're here to talk about you."

"Trust is important in any doctor-patient relationship."

He feels for his stress ball and squeezes it.

"Yes, it is."
"We don't trust you."

That last is spoken in a much lower tone and even though he knows Scarecrow isn't here (they keep Crane on a strict drug regimen to make sure), he shudders again.

He'll have to see about the dosage, maybe.

"Do you know why you're here?"

"Here on Earth, here in Arkham, or here with you?"

He squeezes the ball again.

"Maybe another day we'll get to the existential conversation." he says lightly. "Here with me, specifically."

"Because you're nosey."

"No." She gives him a look that says she knows he's lying. "I thought it might be nice to talk to you both. Together."

They exchange *looks*.

"Are you sure you shouldn't be locked up here?"

His nails prick a hole in the foam ball and he grits his teeth.

"What were you doing when you were caught?"

"Date night."

He blinks.

"Eighty people died."

"Some family had a screaming child that wouldn't behave itself."

"Eighty people!"

"Collateral damage."

They don't seem to care. They don't seem all that interested in him anymore, either, and he's not sure what to make of that.

"Do you often...have date night?"

"Once a week." she says brightly. "Usually on Monday, because that's a dead night and there's not so many idiots out and about."

"What do you normally do?"

"Dinner and a bookshop." She stretches out and reaches up to toy with a frayed patch on his uniform. "Why, what did you think we did?"

Murder, mayhem, kidnapping...

"I had no idea, actually."
"Don't tell lies." That low warning tone is back and he cringes. "Not a good way to establish trust, Doctor."

He says nothing. Crane removes her fingers from his shirt and catches her hand when she tries to poke him.

"Stop that."

"I am bored."

"So you torment me?"

"Maybe." She tugs at her wrist. "Let go."

"No poking."

"Fine, fine."

He releases her wrist and promptly grabs it again when she moves to poke him.

"Kitty."

"Had my fingers crossed." He grabs her other hand and she glares at him. "Stop it."

"Don't poke."

"But, but…"

"Don't. Torment him, if you must."

His finger reaches towards the silent alarm. He doesn't intend to push it, he just wants to be reassured of its existence.

"He's too far away, I don't want to get up."

He shrugs.

"You'll just lose the use of your hands for a bit, then."

He is in charge here, isn't he?

"That's enough…"

"I will release you, if you swear on Tolkien, not to poke me."

"That's not fair."

"Swear it."

"Can I swear on the TARDIS?"

"No, you always cheat on that one."

She groans and tugs at her wrists.

"Fine. I swear on Tolkien not to poke you." Crane lets her go and she punches him gently in the arm. "It wasn't a poke."
"If we could get this back on track…"

Her eyes drift to him and the playful girl is gone.

"I don't like him." she says, gaze boring into his. "D'you like him?"

Crane's hand, which was previously carding through her hair, stills.

"I dislike most of my doctors, Kitty, you know that. Weak, pathetic little mice."

He hits the silent alarm and they start to laugh, still relaxed and comfortable on the couch.

"It's been disabled." Crane says easily. "Everyone wanted to see how long you'd hold out, but we couldn't have you leaving early."

He mustn't scream. That's what they want. He'll remain perfectly calm and continue the session. He is in charge here, after all.

"Doesn't that frighten you?"

"No."

"You're not a bad liar, when you try." The hand in her hair moves again. "Decent eye contact, minimal twitching. Not bad at all."

He swallows hard and folds his hands atop the desk.

"What shall we talk about?" His voice trembles, he can't help it. Crane reaches up to adjust his glasses.

"You tell us. Surely you had questions to ask."

He can't remember any of them now, actually.

"I...don't you have a subject you'd like to discuss?"

"I'm not allowed to discuss most things I enjoy." His tone is mocking. "What about you, Kitty?"

"They don't like it when I pick the topics."

He swallows hard and wishes he could rely on someone coming when he screams.

"Don't be so nervous, Doctor." Crane says gently. "We're not going to hurt you."

They find this funny.

And then they stand up. He shrinks back, hand scrambling for something, anything he can use to defend himself.

"We'll have to go now." Richardson says. "It's been a lovely chat. We should do it again sometime."

"Where are you going?"

"I could tell you, but then I'd have to kill you. Oh, wait-I already have to kill you."

Crane is gone. The Scarecrow stands there now, arms spread wide to welcome his father home.
"No, please-!"

But Dad is already swinging the bottle at his head.

THE END
Watchers

Chapter Notes

They left two days later—he mostly wanted her there because she'd lost a lot of blood.
Takes place early-ish on—these days this sort of thing wouldn't warrant a hospital trip.

He didn't know who it was, or he would have been more careful in his wording. All he knew was
that about three hours ago, a man walked in with a bleeding woman in his arms, demanded help
now, and now had no intention of leaving the room, whether or not he was actually permitted to be
in it.

He found him dozed off slumped over the bed, glasses halfway down his face and the woman's hand
in his own.

"Sir?" He stirred, raised an eyebrow. "Are you awake?"

"Ah. Doctor." He replaced his glasses and sat up. "Come to report, or just a check?"

"I think it would be best…she won't be awake tonight, do you have a place to stay? If you leave a
number we can call you…"

"No."

"No?"

"I am not leaving this room, Doctor, and that is final." His voice was cold, clipped, and left no room
for argument. "Now do what you came to do and get out."

"Sir, please don't make me call security."

His eyes sharpened behind his glasses and it struck him that perhaps this man was not quite sane.

"Do you know who I am?"

"No."

"Pity." He stood up, joints cracking. "You'll find out the hard way, then. How unfortunate."

"What?"

"Good lord, I'd forgotten how bright they keep these rooms." He adjusted his glasses and sighed.
"No matter. My name is Jonathan Crane."

"Should that mean something to me?"

"God, you must be new. Do you know what Gotham is famous for?"

"The Batman?"

"Besides him."
"The masked crazies?"

The man-Crane-looked beseechingly at the ceiling.

"Acceptable answer. You may know me better as the Scarecrow."

Oh.

Oh, shit.

"I didn't..."

"Enough." He was very close now, and before he could back away long fingers grasped his chin with a firmness he wouldn't have suspected. "I'm very tired and very worried, Doctor. In short, irritating me is not the best idea."

"I'm so sorry..."

"Jon'than?"

The fingers pulled back and he was at her side in a heartbeat.

"How are you feeling?" he asked, his voice soft. "Drugged, I know, but other than that?"

The hell? Split personality? Sleep deprivation? Was there a trick to keeping him like this all the time?

"Heavy." She reached a hand up and brushed her fingers across his forehead before taking hold of his wrist. "Tired."

"You had to have surgery...do you remember what happened?"

"Stomach's numb."

"Close enough." He patted her hand. "Go back to sleep, I'll be here when you wake up."

"Promise?"

"Yes. Now go to sleep."

"No killing."

He sighed but settled down by the bed.

"Very well. Get some rest, Kitty, it's going to be fine."

She fell silent and Crane shot him a look.

"I don't like to break my promises, Doctor, so I suggest you leave. Now. And if the police come, I'll know who called them, and I will seek you out. Don't think that I won't."

"But she said..."

"Right now. That wish does not extend to her departure, I assure you. You may come back later to see how she is."

He beat a hasty retreat and nearly bowled over a nurse walking by.
"Crane back in?"

"You know him?"

"He's in and out. Just leave him alone, and whatever you do, don't try to get him out. Last person that tried to drag him out of there ended up in Arkham."

He would have appreciated knowing this beforehand.

"Anything else I should know?"

"Hope she doesn't die. She got pneumonia once-it's a hospital, shit happens-and he freaked."

Lovely. Just lovely.

When he went back in later, Crane had fallen back asleep, one hand gripping hers like a lifeline.

He let him alone this time.

THE END

*It's less a matter of mercy and more a matter of, 'please don't get the cops called on us right now'. Such a hypocrite: three guesses who sits there with a shotgun, just waiting for an excuse.
OKAY, update time. Firstly, y'all are still kinda new to the ride, but every year for October I do a themed set of thirty-one one-shots for Scarecrow. Last year's was 'Nursery Rhymes', this year's is going to be called 'Don't Turn on the Light' and will be urban legends. Prepare to scream.

Secondly, the awesome Mistress_Of_Space_92 made me pretty fanart of Kitty and Crane and I am very happy. :D It's here (Ao3 won't put it in the story): http://www.deviantart.com/art/Tol-Crane-and-Smol-Kitty-632009979

BLAM!

"Nobody move!" Her request is obeyed. "You can take her to surgery, if you need to."

The gurney-pushers book it without a backwards look. The woman comes in the rest of the way, shotgun gripped firmly in her fingers. If it was just her, she could be dealt with, but she's brought backup. Lots of backup.

"I'm going to need Jonathan Crane's room number."

"I-I don't know if I can…"

"Let me rephrase that. If you don't give me his room number, I'll find him myself. And there'll be death until I do."

"I don't even know if he's here…"

"For your sake, he'd better be."

She types quickly, hoping to God this guy is in their system. Jonathan Crane, Jonathan Crane… there.

"Room three-fifty."

"Thank you, sweetie." She turns to walk away. "You lot stay here until I get back."

"H-he's critical." she calls after her. It's a lie, but maybe it'll dissuade her.

"I was there, sweetie."

And then she's gone, leaving her goons in the waiting room.

"No callin' the cops." one grunts. "Miss Richardson won't be happy 'bout that."

She wouldn't dream of upsetting the homicidal maniac. But if the police should…appear…she'll be very grateful indeed.

"What're we doin' here, anyway?"
"Pickin' up the boss."

"That one said he was critical."

"Never stopped 'im before."

"True."

A collective shudder runs through the mooks and they fall silent. A few minutes later, the doors open back up and the woman from earlier returns, supporting a pale, thin man who looks barely able to stand.

"We good, Miss Richardson?"

"You get the car. You come here, and if we get home, and he's in worse shape than he is now, you'll regret it dearly."

"M'okay, Kitty…"

"I know." He sways and she presses one hand to his chest. "Just don't fall, you'll bring me down with you."

He laughs weakly.

"Probably."

"You heard me. Don't break him, or you'll be answering to me." She hands him off and comes to the desk. "Thanks for looking after him. And for being so cooperative."

"You're welcome?"

She grins and walks towards the door.

"Come on, boys. Time to go home."

THE END
I suspect that it's more 'been caught with people in a death trap', but this came from the Jane's Addiction song, so there. Don't ask about the motorcycle—it was what was there. Idea came from a comment somewhere that said, 'Arkham Asylum: Friendship is Tragic'. Struck me as funny.

It's the middle of the day—a safe time to be out, considering they're rather highly sought after—when they hear the sound of a siren. And not an ambulance siren, oh, no. It has to be a police siren.

Their reaction is immediate—adjust sunglasses, duck into a nearby doorway, and try not to attract attention.

"I knew I should've left the Walgreens clerk alone."

"Forget the Walgreens clerk, what about that college girl?"

It isn't that they're unarmed, oh, no. They've got a handgun, copious amounts of fear toxin, and mace. (Mace mixed with this particular batch of toxin is amazingly explosive.)

But…well…they'd rather not engage with the police. That usually doesn't end well.

**VROOM-SCREEEEECH!**

A monster of a motorcycle skids around the corner and they catch a flash of red hair and green jacket before it shoots down the road, clipping a fire hydrant and flooding the area.

"Was that Eddie?"

"With those driving skills? Undoubtedly."

The police swing around the corner a moment later, but the motorcycle is long gone. Jonathan adjusts his sunglasses and shouts, "Officers! He went that way!"

They follow his finger—could be coincidence, but who knows—and Kitty socks him in the arm.

"What was that for?"

"He annoys me."

"Jonathan..."

"Think of it this way, Kitty," he says, watching the police zoom around the corner, "if he's as smart as he says he is, he'll outwit them. I'm giving him an opportunity to prove his intelligence."

Kitty gives him a look and loops her arm through his.

"C'mon, love. Let's go home."
THE END
That opening bit in The Dark Knight? He's totally on the 'Bat-Watch' forums, isn't he. Probably has an account-'ScreamKing1' or something-and probably posts on there. 'You idiot, of course that's not him, look at his cape!'

It started innocently enough. He'd been checking the internet for sightings of the Flying Rodent for his own safety. The last thing he needed was to be grocery shopping in the Batman's neighborhood.

But these people…people were idiots. He knew this, had mostly come to terms with it. Growing up surrounded by people who were convinced cavemen had ridden dinosaurs would do that to you. But…well…

Bats wasn't the sort to wear a mouth guard. Which meant that he had, somehow, spawned copycats. (Or was it copybats?)

Clearly these idiots needed to be educated on this matter. The copycats were bad enough, but the fact that they were being mistaken for him? Absolutely unacceptable.

He stole a laptop and, since their current hideout was literally next door to a Starbucks (he was starting to hate Starbucks-if one more girl wearing shorts and boots started squealing about 'OMGEEEE PUMPKIN SPICE LATTES!', he was going to scream), he made an account.

Having an account, as it turned out, allowed him to access 'locked' forums (how did you 'lock' an internet page, anyway?). These were not all that exciting. Still grainy videos and blurry pictures, 90% of which were not Batman anyway. He was starting to suspect these fools wouldn't know Bats if he threw them into a vat of chemicals.

He was just explaining to somebody why that was clearly not Batman (for the last time, Batman did not. Use. Guns!) when the e-mail icon got a little '1' next to it and the words 'ClownPrince sent you a private message!' appeared on the screen.

What sort of name was that? He hated this person already.

All the same, he clicked it and scanned through it, cringing the entire time.

*Hiya, Screamy! :) U seem to kno an AWFUL lot about our flying buddy. What happened, u break up? :(*

Huh.

What?

He took off his glasses and rubbed his nose. Just an unmonitored child, surely. There were many of those, he had discovered.

*No. The Batman and I have disagreed in the past, that is all. Good day.*
There. That should shut this down-

_Ohnhhh, I gotta kno! What happened? Unrequited lurve? Huh?

He was not getting into this. He ignored the message and was just about to close the window when another one appeared. And another. And another.

_Hey._

_Hey!_

_Don't be mad! C'mon, tell me!_

_Plz?_

_U make me sad. :( _

_U kno how hard it is 2 make me sad?_

_HARD._

_I kno ur on, the green dot by ur PP is still there._

_ANSWER ME._

The one nice thing about the internet was that it had a 'block' button. He pressed it with gusto, logged out, and walked away.

THE END
Chapter Notes

And it is not recommended in Gotham. Seriously, don't do it. Just don't.

This went in an entirely different direction than I meant it to. Oops.

For once, he hadn't been planning on murder.

Really, he doesn't plan that many murders. Not the individual ones. Mass chaos that might include some deaths, sure. But the random, individual murders? Those are usually done on a whim, because of screaming toddlers or giggling teenagers or some sort of annoying 'bro'.

But tonight in particular, he'd meant to behave. Hadn't even come out overly armed-the standard canister of toxin, for safety, but nothing more than that. It's nice out, it's warm, and after the rain, everything's cooled down and almost clean.

You know. For Gotham.

So when some punk kid monkey-jumps over the park bench and waves what appears to be a can of bug spray in his face, he is not impressed.

When he gets a good look at said kid and sees that he's wearing some sort of...of...burlap mockery of his mask, with a witch's hat on top of it, he's fairly well pissed. What is this, a joke? Is this a joke? Jonathan Crane does not like to be the butt of jokes, especially not stupid ones.

"Scream for me!"

He bursts out laughing. He can't help it. The drama, the whole get-up (is that a pumpkin pin? Really?)...it's hilarious and tragic at the same time.

"Go home, child. You look ridiculous, and Halloween is months away."

"I am the Master of Fear!"

Oh. He sees how it is. Some stupid kid, playing at being scary and powerful. Oh, Gotham...

The kid's not expecting him to do anything but panic. He's certainly not expecting him to swipe the can and beat him over the head with it.

"Ow! You dare to attack me?"

Christ, he's wearing a cape. Jonathan can't stop his palm from colliding with his face and sliding down, dislodging his glasses on the way.

"You picked the wrong pedestrian, kiddo." he says regretfully, fishing around for a spare zip-tie and binding the kid's hands. "Sorry."

"Let go of me! You'll be sorry!"
Eh. Unless Bats drops down at this exact moment, he doubts it.

He grabs the thrashing ankles, pauses, and jams a bit of the mask into his mouth to shut him up. Then he starts dragging. If he happens to pass over some large rocks on the way, well...can't be helped.

"Thought you were going out for a-what is that."

"I found him. Can we keep him?"

She doesn't think that's funny- whatever, it was-and comes over to kick his new friend in the ribs. There's a cry and he leans down and plucks the witch hat off, flings it away. A few bobby pins go with it and he shoots Kitty a look.

"Really?"

"Hey, you have to keep it on somehow."

Sure.

He grabs the mask and yanks it off. Judging by the resistance and the ripping noise, he takes some hair with it. Oops.

The kid really is a kid-knobby and with ginger hair that sticks up every which way.

"Seriously?" He nudges him a bit. "Seriously? Do you have any idea who I am?"

"Fuck off!"

"And they call me crazy, Kitty."

*Move, bitch. Who's pretending to be me?*

*Stay out of this-

*Out the way!*

Scarecrow squints down at the little prick.

"*You.*" he rasps. "*You rotten little brat, what do you think you're doing?*"

The guy blinks up at him, looking confused as hell.

"Uh..."

"Do you know who I am?"

"Some Batman wannabe?"

WHAT? This little-he-

HAHAHAHA!

*Shut up.*

*You do kind of sound like him.*
Shut your whore mouth.

"No." he hisses. "You picked a bad night to play dress-up, kiddo. I'm the Scarecrow."

"Where's your mask then, huh?"

Kids today...

He snatches it off the table, jams it on his head, and lets the little taste half a canister of fear gas. Screaming ensues immediately.

There. All better!

"Really?"

Scarecrow melts away and Jonathan sways, puts his hand against the wall so as not to fall.

"Scarecrow did it?"

"He looked up to you!"

"Clearly he was an idiot."

"Fair point." She leans up to kiss his cheek. "You killed him, though, so you can get rid of the body."

"He's not dead yet!"

"He was going to live?"

This is true.

For now, though, body disposal can wait. He has to draw up a good place to put it, so nobody else makes a fool of him like this.

Idiots.

THE END

*Parkour. He means parkour. He is not with things.
Yup, Razor is the same poor sap that appears in the Arkham games. Poor baby. He has shit luck.

"Now." Richardson looked at the group of assembled henches. "I am going out to pick up a few things. Jonathan is-finally-asleep. While I'm gone, I would like him to stay that way. So listen up. If you wake him, even for two minutes, I will know, and I will ensure that you do not do it again. Is that clear?"

"Yes, M'am."

"Good. I shouldn't be gone for long. Remember..." She held a finger to her lips. "Silence."

Razor shuddered. Crane was a crazy, volatile bastard, but Richardson was the one who liked to cut things off.

Once she was gone, the group breathed a collective sigh of relief and the tension in the room eased.

They hadn't actually seen either of them since a badly botched robbery a few days ago. All Razor knew was that the Bat had showed up, shit had gone down, and they'd come back very much the worse for wear. The boys had swapped some rumors about them maybe dying up there, and then this afternoon Richardson had come down in a piss-poor mood.

Razor, for his part, did not want to make that mood worse. If he had any say, Crane wouldn't hear so much as a peep.

The universe had other ideas.

CRASH!

Every nerve he had tensed to run and he spun around, fingers flexing around an imaginary neck.

"Who. Did. That."

"I lost my grip?"

Charles. Fucking Charles and his fucking water glass and-

Namaste. Oom.

"I am not killing your stupid ass because if-by some miracle-that didn't wake the boss, murdering you will wake him. Clean that up and go sit in the corner."

The sound of glass being swept into a dustpan sounded unreasonably loud and he kept glancing at the stairwell, expecting Crane to have stumbled down to see what had happened.

Somebody up there loved him. For once.
He breathed a sigh of relief and sagged against the wall, thanking his lucky stars that Crane hadn't come down.

Once the mess was cleaned, Charlie pulled out his phone and it beeped. Razor swallowed a squeak of panic and leapt across the room to snatch it from his hands.

"Quiet."

"Dude, he's up there, probably with the door shut. Relax."

"I don't care. Either he'll come down and shoot us all, or Richardson will do unspeakable things to us. And I don't know about you, but I like my dick where it is."

"She wouldn't."

"She would. I've seen it." Or, rather, the aftermath, when she'd tossed the poor bastard out with the 'doctor's orders' of putting ice on it and to go in if it looked like there was an infection. "So if you want to take that risk, do it somewhere else, where I won't get blamed."

"Whatever. Wimp."

What? Fuck this punk. Shit was going down now!

"Come here."

"Hey, man, what the-ow! Leggo, that hurts!"

"Take it back."

"No!"

He frowned and pulled on the arm harder, until it was near to popping out. Charlie grimaced and suddenly went still.

"I'll wake the Doc."

"You wouldn't."

"I would."

Damn.

"This isn't over."

"Whatever." He turned and started walking away. "Wimp."

The minute it was safe to do so, he was kicking this fucker's ass.

All was silent. Richardson had been gone for fifteen minutes, and so far nobody had really done anything apart from sit down and not touch.

"I'm bored."

"Shut up."

"Come on, man."
"No."

"Just a board game or somethin’, geeze."

*Scrit-scrit-scrit.*

Razor twisted around and found himself staring at a big, fat, grey rat. Ew. He flapped a hand at it to scare it off and it fled-

-knocking a beaker over on the way. He dove for it and caught it before it hit the ground, but the rat kept going, narrowly avoiding glasses and beakers and notebooks.

Shit.

He placed the beaker back on the table. Where had it gone, it had just been there-

**THUD!**

Notebook down! Notebook down!

For all Charlie's bravado, he was just as jumpy as the rest of them and he made a rather impressive dive to catch a falling vial.

The rat jumped off the counter and booked it. Razor let it go-it was no longer going to break shit, and that was the important thing.

Crane had not come down. Against all odds, he hadn't woken up. Thank. Jesus.

Razor was just thanking his lucky stars-again-when there was a **CRASH!**

"Charlie!"

"Shit."

At this point, Charlie was going to be murdered for sheer clumsiness.

"Clean it up."

---

After the rat incident, nobody complained of boredom. But the universe was apparently pissed at Razor for some reason-dude, seriously, he did what he was told, that was *all*, no reason to be on God's shit list!-and something...happened.

He was sitting quietly on the floor, playing Candy Crush, when he smelled...smoke?

Was that smoke?

Shit, it was smoke! Fuck-fuck, they were gonna die...

Wait. That was *toast* smoke, his stupid cohorts were making a snack...

And the smoke alarm was very, very sensitive.

Everything seemed to happen in slow motion. He jumped up and began to run towards the kitchen, mouth shaping, "**NNNNNOOOOOOOO!**", as the smoke wafted towards the innocent little plastic circle on the wall.
Gonna make it...gonna make it...

His fingers just brushed against the plastic. It was gonna be okay. Everything was gonna be okay.

**BEEPBEEPBEEPBEEPBEEP!**

Nothing was gonna be okay!

He ripped it off the wall and yanked the battery out. The beeping ceased.

But not quite fast enough.

"What is going on down here?"

_Fuck my life._

"S-s-sir." He swallowed hard. "These idiots...I tried to keep 'em quiet, Sir, I swear, they're just dumb...like kids, y'know, and...um..."

Crane raised an eyebrow.

"I do not hire children, Mister Razor."

"Of course you don't, Sir, I didn't mean-"

"Silence."

He shut up. Crane rubbed his eyes and muttered something about imbeciles.

"Just go outside."

That was it? They weren't going to be taken to the basement?

"Y-yes, Sir, right away-"

"Jonathan?"

**WE'RE GONNA DIE.**

"Kitty." Crane turned around. "Where'd you go?"

"Wal-Greens, they got the new Essies*. What are you doing up?"

"Smoke alarm."

"Is that so?" She gave Razor a wide smile. "I see. Come on, let's go back upstairs, hm?"

"Indeed."

They walked away and Razor sank to the floor. Maybe it was time to start seeking new employment.

THE END

*Nail polish brand. (They have a really pretty shimmery yellow colour that I so want that NOBODY in my town is stocking. Ugh. Internet to the rescue!)
Between Granny ('you will not sound like the rest of these hicks!') and himself ('I will never be associated with these...nngh') he's gotten rid of it...mostly. I was actually going to have Eddie pop by, but I think he might actually get himself murdered, and that's bad, so Harley came by instead.

And we're caught up now! (This is ongoing, future updates will be random.) Tomorrow I'll start moving 'Jack and Jill' over. Jill is Kitty's cousin. Jill is insane. I'm a little scared of her, actually...

"Jonny?" Harley juggled her box o' stuff up a bit, raised her leg, and tried the knob. She was expecting it to be locked.

It wasn't.

"Jonathan? Kitty asked me to make sure you weren't dead...you okay in there?"

She nudged the door open and set her box down as noisily as possible in hopes of getting his attention. Still no answer. No sign of him, either-maybe he'd moved?

But Kitty'd said he was sick...shit, maybe he was dead.

"Jonny?"

Maybe he'd gone out?

She shrugged, decided to see if there was anything to eat-Kraft, maybe, the Spongebob-shaped kind-and headed for the kitchen. She was halfway there when she spotted the lump of blankets on the sofa.

"Hey! Why didn'cha answer me, huh?" She marched over, the bells on her jester hat jingling wildly, and yanked the blankets halfway down.

Jonathan started awake, coughing thickly. Not dead, then. Good! Now she could get food.

"Mornin', sleepyhead!"

The blankets were yanked from her hands when he pulled them back over his head.

"Go away."

"Kitty said to make sure you weren't dead."

"I'm not, get out."

Eh. Food first.

"Want food?"
"No, Harleen, I do not. Out. Now."

Fine.

Hang on.

"Jonny?"

An exasperated groan came from under the blankets.

"My name is Jonathan, now please go away."

Harley chewed her tongue for a few seconds before gripping the blankets again and pulling. He was quick to grab them, but not strong enough to keep them over his head—he ended up gripping them under his chin and trying not to cough.

"For God's sake, child, what do you want from me? Go pester the clown."

"Puddin's in a bad way." The bruises on her upper arm would attest to that...he just needed some time to cool off, that was all. "Y'know."

"That is not my problem, now jes'."

Gotcha.

"Jonny, where are ya from?"

"Why."

She'd seen his file, when she was an intern, but only briefly and there'd been blank spots in it. Had it said...she didn't think so...

While she was trying to remember if it had or hadn't, he pulled the blankets out of her hands and over his head.

"Leave."

"But it's bugging me!" She shoved his legs off the couch, ignoring his hiss of irritation, and plopped down. "There's no way you're from Gotham, but I can't place-"

"It's none of your business, now get out."

Kitty might know. But she'd either have to wait or go back in there, and she wanted to know now.

"But Jonny-"

He struggled up, yanked her off the sofa, and marched her to the door.

"Out."

"I gotta know! C'mon, Jonny, pleeeeaaaaase?"

No luck. Two minutes later, she and her box o' stuff were firmly on the other side of a locked door. She pounded on it for a few minutes, got no answer, and resigned herself to having to either pester Kitty or raid Arkham's records next time she was in.

Rats.
THE END
I’ve got three inches on her (she hates me for that), and I still can’t trip some of these. It’s bullshit.

“Kitty…”

Uh-oh. That tone was deceptively innocent, and that never boded well.

“No.”

He ignored her and draped one arm over her head. She flailed at him, missed, and resigned herself to sulking.

“Can you even get the automatic doors to open for you?”

“Shut up. Yes.”

“Are you sure? I mean…look at you.” He ran his hand from the top of her head to his ribs. “You’re little.”

“I’m closer to Hell than you, that’s all.”

“Hell doesn’t trip the sensors.”

“I can trip the sensors by myself.”

“Let’s find out.” No. “For science.”

“No! We don’t need to find out.”

“It’ll be fun—is that my sweater?”

“No.”

“It looks like mine.”

“It’s a sweaterdress, god.”

“With the sleeves rolled up twenty times?”

She flicked her arms, unrolling said sleeves, and flailed again. This time she was successful in smacking him in the face.

“Hey!”

Served him right.
“Jonathan-!”

He waved at her from safely inside the store. When she got a hold of him, she was going to murder him.

Fine. She’d just go in there and-

-why weren’t the doors opening.

God *damnit.*

He was laughing at her. Not for long.

She hit the ‘handicap’ button and stalked inside.

“You sorry-”

“I knew it! You can’t get the doors-”

“What the hell is wrong with you?”

“Science?”

She scowled at him.

“You are a terrible human being.”

“Gotham agrees with you.”

“You left me out there in the cold, with strangers- *strangers,* Jonathan, that could harass me or just pick me up and walk away-”

“As though we don’t both know you have a knife up your sleeve.”

“It’s the principle!”

“I smell Starbucks.”

“Are you even listening?”

“Wonder if they have peppermint yet?”

“Jonathan!”

One of these days, she was going to kill him.

Or at the very least, get even.

THE END
Chapter Notes

Title and inspiration from the Florence+the Machine song of the same name-particularly the lyric, ‘no more calling (cawing?) like a crow/for a boy/for a body in a garden’.

I have been waiting for TWO WEEKS to post this. I love this one. Dunno why. But TWO WEEKS. My self-control is amazing. (Not so much when presented with bubble wrap, though.)

She wakes to the sounds of birds screaming. They won’t stop why won’t they stop they’ve never been like this-

Something’s wrong.

She knows it way deep down, that something’s got them riled up and they shouldn’t be like that they just shouldn’t be like that.

She runs outside, the dirt damp from the recent rains, the dampness seeping into her slippers, and follows the caws.

The caws vanish as she gets closer and they take flight in a horrible whirlwind of feathers, leaving behind a scarecrow-

-no.

No.

No.

That’s not a scarecrow at all, dear god please no-

She doesn’t realize she’s screaming his name until he doesn’t react to it, and then she silences.

“Jonathan.” she whispers. God, they tore him apart…she can barely recognize him… “Jonathan, please…”

She needs to get Mum, she needs to get help but she can’t just leave him like this…it’s cold and what if he comes to and it’s just so cold tonight-

His skin’s not cold. His skin’s slicked with blood and ragged edges and god no-

“Jonathan, wake up.” She shakes him. Never mind his injuries, he needs to wake up before they come back. “Jonathan.” Why isn’t he moving? “Jonathan Crane!”

He chokes, blood bubbling up through

what’s left of

his lips. She shrieks and jerks back before gripping his hands
cut and bleeding she can see down to the bone

* * *

Jonathan’s startled out of a semi-sound sleep (sound as ever, what with the ever-loomi...
to the formula? There’s always the anomalies, after all.

Her lips are moving, tiny twitches more than anything, but he can hear snatches of things.

“Wake up, wake up-”

“Kitty.” Her hand is lower now, moving gently across his throat and collarbone. “Kitty, look at me.”

“Wake up, please wake up-”

Wait.

The words still don’t make sense, but the motions—that light, fluttery touch, the quick pulling back at random areas—they do.

Birds. She used to do this on rough nights, with a washcloth rather than her hands.

“I’m all right, Kitty.” he says softly. “Everything’s fine now. Wake up.”

“Please-”

“Kitty. Wake up.” Her hand stills against his chest and her eyes finally clear. “See? Just a dr-hey!”

She flings herself into his arms, knocking him onto his back.

“Jonathan.” Her voice is thick and hoarse—she’s probably going to lose it by tomorrow—and her grip on him is tight enough to be painful. “You’re all right, you’re alive-?”

“Uh huh.” He attempts to squirm free and is not successful. “Kitty-”

“She left you she left you out there and they ripped you apart and-”

Oh.

That explains so much.

“She didn’t leave me out there.” he says. “Come on, sit up.”

She doesn’t. Her shoulders are shaking and it’s only after he notices that his shirt is a little bit wet that he figures out that she’s crying—harsh sobs that silence each other in their attempt to get out.

“All right, Kitty, it’s all right. Just a nightmare.”

He reaches for his glasses—really, that’s all he’s doing—and she shakes her head and forces out, “Don’t go.”

“I’m not.”

That doesn’t seem to help—she coughs and for a second he thinks that maybe the flood is over, but then she buries her face in his shirt again.

She doesn’t stop crying for another half-hour, and he suspects it’s more because she’s out of tears than it is that she’s cried herself out. Whatever the case she sits up—keeping his hands gripped tightly in hers—and whispers, “Don’t be dead.”

“I’m not dead.”
“Promise?”

He’s tempted to say, ‘well, actually…’, but she doesn’t look she’ll find that even eye-roll worthy.

“Promise. Come on. You’re probably dehydrated after that.”

She lets him tug her out of bed and into the kitchen. He intends to get her water, but thinks better of it and digs the kettle out instead. She’s shaking again, but now it’s less terror and more sweat-soaked pajamas.

“Want me to get you new pajamas?” She shakes her head and he sighs. “Want me to come with you while you get new pajamas?”

“Yes.”

“Okay.”

In all honesty, he needs a new shirt. This one’s been cried on.

By the time they’ve found dry clothing, the kettle’s gone off. They wait in the kitchen for the tea to steep. Everything is quiet, and it’s a little disconcerting.

“What do you think brought that on?” he asks at last.

“Dunno.” Her voice is hoarse. “I dunno, m’sorry-”

“Don’t be sorry.” Surely the tea is ready by now. “Just thought I’d ask. Here.”

She wraps her hands around the mug.

“Thanks.”

“Don’t talk, you’ll end up mute by tomorrow.”

“Mm.” She takes a sip. “Throat hurts.”

“I’m sure it does. Come along, back to bed.”

“No-”

“Yes.” He tugs at her hand. “Come on.”

For his part, he doubts he’s getting back to sleep. He settles back under the covers with his mug in one hand and his book in the other. He’s scarcely set his mug down when Kitty inches up between his arm and his ribs.

“Don’t go.”

“I think you’d notice if I-”

“Please.”

“All right, Kitty.” He opens his book. “Think you can go back to sleep?”

“Mm.”

He’ll take that as a ‘maybe’.
“Good luck, then.”

“Jon’th’n?”

“Hm?”

“You promise?”

“Promise. Finish that and go back to sleep.”

After a bit, she sets the mug aside and moves so her head’s resting on his stomach.

The screaming doesn’t start again.

THE END
Chapter Summary

Jonathan’s initial visit to Arlen’s ‘crybaby bridge’ is detailed in ‘Don’t Turn on the Light’, under ‘Things That Scare Me’. This, however, takes place during ‘All Those Things You Fear’, though it is not a deleted scene. Title, in case you live under a rock, from Poe’s 'The Raven'.

When I was writing this, I managed to associate ‘I Won’t Say (I’m in Love)’ from Disney’s ‘Hercules’ with his dorky teenage self. Oops. Needless to say, he’s madder than Batman at a Joker crime scene. But Scarecrow thinks it’s fitting. That’s fine!

Kitty, Jonathan has discovered, is something of a conundrum in that she loves ghost stories and is, at the same time, scared to death of actually seeing one. That doesn’t stop her from pestering him to tell her all the ones he knows, though. So it’s inevitable that she finally gets around to coaxing the story of old Babbit Bridge of out of him, and it’s his own fault that he mentions having gone down there as a kid and maybe hearing something.

He shouldn’t be surprised, therefore, when she throws the oh-please-pretty-please-Jonathan eyes at him and begs him to take her. And he isn’t. Not much.

“C’mon, Jonathan, you can’t just tell me things and expect me to be happy with that.” she says, winding her arms around one of his. He thinks absently that he’s getting used to her touchy-feely ways-he doesn’t want to pull his arm back. “That’s not fair at all.”

“It’s falling apart. It’s a health menace.”

“But what if there’s something there?”

“There’s nothing there. I imagined it. I had a vivid imagination as a child.” More vivid than you’ll ever know. “Besides, you’re scared of ghosts.”

“That’s why you’d go with me!” she says, as though it’s the most obvious thing in the world. “I don’t know where it is, anyway. You’d have to come.”

“It’s a small town, you’d find it.” He is not going back there. Nah-uh. There’s nothing there and Granny will be cross if she catches him sneaking out. “But there’s nothing there anyway, so…”

“You’re scared of it!” What. “That’s what this is, you think you heard something and you’re scared of it!”

He most certainly is not. That’s silly. There’s no such things as ghosts, and as such he is not scared of them.

“I’m not scared of it.”

She grins up at him and whirls away, her fingers catching his and pulling him along after her.

“You are so. And that’s why you won’t go back.”
“It really is falling apart. Besides, my grandmother will kill me if I’m out late.”

“She will not.” Oh, Kitty, you don’t know the half of it. “Besides, what if there is something there? We could lay it to rest. It’d be like The Changeling, but with a better ending.”

“What’s that?”

She stops and comes back to his side.

“Scary movie. Ending was lousy. But nevermind that.” He shrugs. She moves ahead again, still attached to his hand. “So come on. Please?”

“No.”

“Jonathan…” She stops and takes his other hand, swings their arms back and forth. “Please? She’d never know, I promise.”

“No.”

“I’ll go on my own then. Where is it?”

Dammit.

“And break your neck, likely as not.” he grumbles. “Fine. But if she kills me, I’m haunting you.”

* * *

Granny’s in bed at her usual nine PM, but he gives her two hours before risking going downstairs and outside. It’s cold outside, cold and windy, and every so often he can catch the scent of the oncoming storm. He wishes he’d put on another shirt, but it’s too late now-no way in Hell is he going back upstairs.

If he’s being honest with himself-of course he is, he has no reason not to be-he has no idea why he’s doing this. It’s very stupid. It could get him in trouble, and there’s nothing there. Nothing! It’s not that dangerous, anyway, she’d be fine. Besides, this could be a set-up. The last time he did something for a girl, he regretted it.

But she asked him, and the word ‘no’ likes to skip off into the cornfields when she asks him to do something for her. Because she’s nice, is all. Nothing will come of this, it’ll be fine. Because she’s nice.

Kitty meets him in the No-Man’s Land between their houses. She looks warmer than he does, and she doesn’t look too happy with his lack of weather foresight.

“It’s cold!”

“It’s not that cold.” He has goosebumps on his arms, but at least they’re hidden by his sleeves. “Come on. It’s this way.”

“But-”

“It’s not that bad.”

She rolls her eyes but follows him anyway.

Babbit Bridge has become badly decayed since he’s been here-the top’s been torn off and several
chunks of railing are missing. The recent rains have turned the creek into something approaching a river and, really, it looks like it would be right at home on the cover of a horror novel.

“This is it?”

“This is it.”

“It looks haunted.”

“Preconcieved ideas-” he starts, but he lets it go. She’s right. It does. It isn’t, obviously, because that’s impossible, but it does.

“Is it sturdy?”

“Part of it is. Why.”

“Come on, then.”

“Kitty-!”

But she’s already heading through the field of weeds.

Damn!

He follows her, wishing the bridge had burned down at some point in the last nine years.

Should’ve kept my mouth shut...

The bridge creaks under their weight, but it doesn’t threaten to crumble or anything. Not that it’s that far off a drop-it would hurt, probably, maybe a sprained ankle, but nothing awful.

“Now what? I told you there’s nothing here.”

“Now we wait.” She scuffs at a patch of wood with her shoe, nods, and sits down. “Don’t loom.”

“I’m not!”

“You are. Sit.”

She grabs his shirt and tugs. He sighs and sits down across from her.

“Better?”

“Yes.”

A chilly breeze whips through the trees and he tries to hide a shiver. He fails.

“Here.”

“Huh?”

She takes off her scarf and winds it around his neck.

“I’m fine-”

“I dressed for the weather. You did not. No one yet died from purple stripes.” He sighs and fiddles with the fraying end. It’s soft against his fingers. “Besides, you can just owe me one sweater loan if
I’m cold at school.”*

He smiles a bit at that.

“Fine.”

She tugs the scarf a bit tighter.

“You should smile more.” she says softly. “You’re too serious. And a few wrinkles won’t kill you.”

All right, just for that he’s tempted to frown. Forever. He tries it and she snorts. “I can see you trying not to laugh, it’s not working.”

Yeah, well…

She sighs and draws a smiley face in the dust. He wraps his arms around his knees and closes his eyes.

There’s no light out here, and it’s a new moon tonight—there’s nothing to be had.

“Does it start at midnight or somethin’?”

“I don’t know.”

“Mm.” She moves and he feels her lean against his back. She’s *warm* and he’s happy to sit still and soak it up. “How long did you wait last time?”

“I don’t remember.”

She tilts her head so it’s pressed between his shoulders and he sees the beam of the flashlight moving back and forth on the remains of the roof. At least the frogs should be-

“Ich-a-bod!”

The frogs can go to hell and roast on a barbeque.

He shoots a dirty look towards the direction the noise came from and wonders when she’ll get bored and they can go home.

Hopefully not for a while. It’s nice. Because he’s not at home. That’s all he meant. Being away from Granny is nice.

“D’you think you’ll stay here? After graduation?”

“No.” Not by choice, though he’s not sure how he’s going to get out. Granny won’t let him if she can help it. “Do you?”

“No.”

He wonders if they’ll keep in touch. They may, at first—he can see that. Promises, phone calls…or maybe not.

Probably not.

The flashlight clicks off and the darkness looms in close, swallowing them up like a grave. The silence is loud, so loud, and he’s tempted to make *some* kind of sound to let himself know that he’s not deaf or dead.
Kitty yawns and he hears her set the flashlight down.

“You’re warm.”

“Mm.”

“The ghosts are lazy.”

“There’s no such thing.”

“What’d you hear, then?”

“I was eight, it was probably a dog or something.”

“Skeptic.”

“It’s only common sense-”

Rumble.

Great. Rain is coming. Lightning will probably strike the bridge and set it on fire, because of course nature would wait for there to be people on it…this is just fun…

Kitty picks up the flashlight again but doesn’t turn it on. There’s another rumble of thunder in the distance and he presses his forehead to his knees. He doesn’t like storms. They never bode well.

“Maybe we should go…”

“S’just a little rain.” She moves-no, why’s she moving? Because it’s cold, is the only reason he’s asking. “You’re the Witch of the West, are you?”

“I’m melting!”

She laughs and leans against him. Okay, she’s just moved to get a better-warmer, he means warmer-position. That’s fine.

Rumble.

Closer. He thinks he saw lightning that time.

“D’you think it drowned?” she asks softly. “Or hit its head? Or just laid there?”

“I don’t know.”

“Morbid, I know.” She clicks the light on for half a second. “But I have to wonder…s’like seeing an accident. Awful, but you want to see a head rolling by.”

“Mm.”

“I’m probably going to Hell.”

If there’s a Hell, it’s not for you.

“You and me both, then. If there turns out to be such a thing.”

Rumble.
Hopefully it passes over. He doesn’t really want to walk home in the rain.

They sit in silence. The wind’s picked up now and if he squints he can see a tree whipping back and forth. Kitty’s still scrunched up against him and he’s starting to wonder if she fell asleep.

_Creak-creak-creak!_

Huh?

He reaches for the flashlight, but Kitty’s already clicking it on and shining it in the direction of the _Footsteps_ creaking.

There’s nothing there. There can’t be—that side of the bridge is badly damaged from a tree that fell here a few years ago. Most of the planks are broken or missing. The roof’s completely gone there, save for a few splintered bits of wood.

_Creak-creak-creak!_

What _is_ that?

Kitty’s practically hanging over his shoulder now, her breath light against his ear.

“Tree?”

Yes. Of course that’s all it is.

The creaking stops abruptly and Kitty uncoils a little bit. He is not disappointed. That’s silly. She’s warm is all.

Lightning splits the sky and for a second he’d _swear_ to there being a man on the bridge, but the flashlight shows nothing. Shadows. Just a shadow from a…bush. Or something.

Whatever it was, Kitty saw it, too—she squeaks and flings her arms around his neck, and it’s an effort not to pull away. The urge to do so dies down soon enough, though, and he’s glad he toughed it out. Better to know where she is, is all. In case that was an escaped murderer or something. Which it was not.

“What was that?”

“Nothing.”

“How do you know?”

“Because it’s not there now-”

He’s cut off by a hideous shrieking, the same shrieking he heard all those years ago. Kitty lets go of him, but he’s too busy covering his ears to care.

The flashlight turns up nothing and he tries—god, he tries, he does!-to come up with something, _anything_ that would explain the crying, but his head is throbbing and he can’t think-

Silence descends upon the bridge. He uncovers his ears in time to hear a fading _creak-creak-creak!_ and then nothing at all.
“What was that?”

He has nothing. Logically, he knows, there has to be something—a bird, the wind blowing through just the right hole in the wood—but he can’t come up with anything.

“I-”

CRACK!

A flash of lightning splits the sky and for a second, he sees what looks like a baby lying spattered on the bank below. Before he can register anything, the sky opens up and water falls down.

This old bridge is not meant to take this sort of abuse, and it shudders and groans in protest.

“Get off the bridge, get off the bridge!”

The rain is freezing and sharp and they sprint home. Jonathan half-wishes he’d brought an umbrella, but this rain might just tear right through it.

They end up on Kitty’s porch, only a little protected from the torrent outside. His can’t feel hardly anything and he is not looking forward to sneaking back inside.

“Well?” Her teeth are chattering. “What’s your logic-c-cal explanation for that?”

“W-wind.” And that’s final. “H-here’s yourrr scarf.”

“Keep it.” She rubs her arms. “You c-could stay the night. Mum and Ada aren’t home.”

It’s tempting. God, is it tempting—a whole night without having to listen for Granny. But she’d know.

“C-can’t.” He starts to unwind the scarf from around his neck. “G-Granny…she wouldn’t like it.”

She reaches up and puts her hand on his.

“Keep it. You can give it to me Monday.”

Arguing will end poorly, he thinks. He’ll just have to make sure Granny doesn’t notice it, that’s all.

“F-f-fine.”

“You’re sure you d-don’t want to ssstay here?”

He does want to, very much so, but he doesn’t want to spend the night out in this—and he will, if Granny catches him.

“I can’t.” He rubs his arms. “I shhould go…see you Monday.”

“Sssee you.”

He gets lucky tonight—Granny’s still asleep and he makes it upstairs without being caught. Once the door is shut behind him, he begins the arduous process of getting out of his wet clothes.

Tonight was worth the risk, he decides. There’s worse ways to spend an evening.

He digs out the old clothes horse and flicks his shirt a few times before draping it over it. Granny made him take this thing because of the sudden storms, and for a long time he was convinced she’d enchanted it to spy on him or something. Childish fancies.
Brr. His shirt was miserable, but now he’s freezing. He can’t feel anything but **cold** from the waist up.

Pajamas, pajamas…there! He pulls the shirt on and does up the buttons. There’s the easy part, now comes the joy of getting out of wet jeans. Wet denim is more effective than a bear trap, he thinks.

It takes him about five minutes to squirm out of those, and they are a terror-filled five minutes. Considering she’s practically deaf, Granny has a habit of hearing everything he wishes she wouldn’t.

In the end, though, he frees himself from his denim prison, drops them over the clothes horse, and pulls on scratchy-but dry, at least-pajama pants.

It’s still freezing and he can’t feel his toes. He’ll never be warm again, he just knows it…

Kitty’s scarf. He can’t hang it over, because if Granny sees it she might literally kill him. Or worse. Um…

He opens the closet, shoves a few empty hangers aside and hopes that *screech* didn’t wake her, and hangs it over the rod. There. He’ll give that back on Monday.

He crawls under the covers, shivering badly, and tries not to think about those earsplitting screams. A bird. Or the wind. That’s all, that’s all.

And if Kitty wants to argue that, he’s more than willing to take her back. If only to prove that he’s right.

    THE END

*This loan was cashed in later, and thus began a long tradition of ‘I’m just borrowing it!’ and the item in question never returning under its own power.*
Skating

Chapter Notes

Happy Holiday Season (read: happy pie season). May your relatives not suck as mine do and may you not be snowed in with no internet. Written entirely because I had the mental image of Crane in a Grinch beanie. He didn't find that funny.

"Come on, it's not hard once you get moving!"

"Kitty-hey!"

She yanks him onto the ice, gloved fingers tight on his wrists. He'd like to pull back, but his balance is precarious enough already and he'd like even less to fall and die.

"Why."

"Because it's fun."

It's windy and cold and she insisted on 'disguises', which means she shoved a Grinch beanie on his head.

In a nutshell, this is ridiculous and not fun.

"Kitty..."

She moves back, dragging him along with her.

"Oh, come on, love, it won't kill you."

Yes it will.

"No."

She lets him go and he wobbles frantically before latching onto the wall. She laughs at that and whirls away from him, scarf slipping off her head to lay around her neck.

"Come on!"

"Are you insane?"

"Supposedly..." She comes back and pries his hands off the wall. "Come on, trust me."

"It's cold."

"Of course it's cold, it's ice." She tows him towards the center at a faster rate than he'd prefer. "At least there's no one in the way."

Want Black Friday* all to yourself? Need to get somewhere in a hurry? Doctor Crane's Fear Toxin to the rescue!
"At least they've stopped screaming."
"You weren't enjoying it?"
"I have a headache."
"You're a lousy liar."

Before he can grab her, she releases him and speeds away, effectively abandoning him in the middle of the ice.

"Kitty!"
"Come and get me!"
"Are you trying to kill me?"

"Don't be so dramatic." She coasts around him. "Come on, it's not hard."

"Yes it is!"
She laughs at him and moves back, arms spread out.
"Come and get me!" she mocks. "If you can."

Is she crazy? If he moves, he'll fall and die.

If there's such things as ghosts, he's coming back to haunt her for this.

"Kitty..."
She laughs, but then her face goes blank.
"Um, Jonathan?"
"What."
"About that new batch of toxin..."
"Yes?"
"Is it fatal?"
"Usually."
She coasts towards him, takes his hand, and turns him around.

Standing on the edge of the ice is Batman. He does not look at all cheerful and Jonathan's fairly certain he won't take 'they were annoying' as an excuse for poisoning civilians.

"Why isn't he coming out?"

He'll probably break the ice. Or he can't skate, but seeing as he-somehow-can form antidotes with amazing regularity, Jonathan doubts that he can't skate. The man is the most prepared being on the planet.

_We're so screwed._
"What now?"

The path of least pain involves going over there like naughty children and being thrown into the back of the tank. The path of broken ribs and concussions involves staying right here and-WAUGH!

They fall, landing hard, and begin sliding across the ice thanks to the cables around their ankles. He knew it. He knew ice skating was a terrible idea.

He hates the outdoors.

THE END

*Gotham does not do Black Friday. Too much of a risk.

**Must be nice to be you, Kitty. I can't skate. Then again, my balance is poor. (Unless I'm climbing on the counter or on a ladder, then I'm a ninja.)
Dove Marquis is positive that Crane will have vanished between last week and now. He didn't look at all happy with Cobblepot's request, and she just hopes he hasn't set up a bunch of booby traps as punishment.

At least the drive is better this time. The Kabuki twins are back at the club-Gabe was not a happy camper about that, but too bad-and Edward Nygma has tagged along. She likes Ed. Murder aside, he's nice. Always says please and thank you and doesn't try to cop a feel or anything. He gets bonus points for putting Cobblepot in a good mood, without fail.

They're singing now. They can't sing for shit, but if it makes Cobblepot happy and not-stabby, she'll keep her mouth shut and take some Advil when they're not looking.

Really, if she didn't know better, she wouldn't peg them for homicidal lunatics. Well, Cobblepot, maybe-his default expression is 'I am thinking of the best place to hide your body'. But Ed? Nah.

But leave it Ed to make something as dorky as 'the Riddler' sound as scary as hell. Gotham seems to do that, though-who'd have thunk that 'penguin' would mean anything but 'too precious for this world'? Cobblepot is a lot of things, but he is certainly not precious.

And then there's Crane.

She doesn't want to see Crane. It might be bad minion etiquette, but she hopes he's been hauled back to Arkham or found a new hideout or something.

The farmhouse looms up ahead of them and Ed snorts.

"Surprised Jon picked here."

Why? He's the Scarecrow, scarecrows live on farms.

"He was a little worse for wear last week, he might not have noticed until it was too late to turn around."

Okay, now she's just confused. But saying so is a bad idea, and she keeps her mouth shut. She stops the car and they all pile out. A flock of crows caws in the distance and Ed smirks to himself, that little I-know-something-you-don't smile. Cobblepot rolls his eyes.

"Ring the doorbell, Miss Marquis."
She doesn't wanna ring the doorbell, he's had a whole week to do something to it!

She rings it anyway and it opens immediately to reveal a giant of a man missing an eye.

"Don't do that, ya wanna get us all killed?"

What.

"We are here to see Jonathan Crane. He has something for me." Cobblepot says coldly. "Step aside."

"Lemme see if he's busy."

"He'd better not be, we had a deal."

"Yeah, that don't mean he's not busy. So sit here and don't make no noise."

"Do you know who I am?"

The mook shrugs.

"Don't care. The boss says we gotta shut up, that includes yous. So quit your squawkin' and lemme ask 'im if yous can come in."

Cobblepot does an astounding impression of angry bird, his hair practically fluffing up like feathers. Before he can go into full bitch-mode, the door's been closed and locked.

"I am going to kill him."

"The man or Jon?"

"Whichever is easier." Cobblepot seethes. "Insolent little-"

"Harley probably tried to drop in, is all."

Oh, Harley. So sweet. So annoying. Dove dreads to see her coming, because she's got a voice like a damn fire alarm and she thinks everything is there for touching.

She and Joker are made for each other, they really are.

The door opens again.

"Doc says ya can come in if ya keep your mouths shut."

Cobblepot visibly counts to ten before deflating a little.

"Fine."

"SHHH."

They follow the man into the dim little room Dove remembers from before. Crane is slouched in the armchair, looking only moderately better than he did last time. Before anybody can say anything, he holds up a hand and makes a violent slashing gesture. Silence. She's got that. Crystal-clear, uh-huh.

He stands, his movements a little less stiff than they were last time (great), and motions for them to follow him. She doesn't want to follow him. She wants to wait in the car, where it's safe.

That's not an option though, and rather than be left behind in the dim room, she scurries after them.
Crane leads them downstairs to what must have been the fruit cellar. Now, though, it's got beakers and bottles and it smells sharply of something unnatural. There's also a small garden on the far right—a handful of pots, really, all hosting pretty blue flowers that look a little like dandelions.

"Touch nothing." His voice is hoarse. "And in case it wasn't clear, not too much noise. Kitty is asleep, and if you wake her up, you will regret it."

Dove's lips clamp shut of their own accord, but Cobblepot and Ed seem unperturbed.

"Nothing wrong, I hope?"

"Laryngitis. She's fine."

Dove believes him. Whatever their relationship might be, she has the nasty feeling that Crane will light an orphanage on fire if it'll make Richardson happy. She also has the nasty feeling that if they wake her, they won't be leaving.

She really, really wants to wait in the car.

"Sorry to hear that." Cobblepot takes a few tottering steps towards the flowers. "They're looking well."

"The soil was the ticket, I think. But nevermind them. Stay there and touch nothing."

The minute his back is turned, Ed, who has been staring at an arrangement of bottles on a table, reaches out and turns one of them so its label is facing the same direction as the others. Man's got balls, Dove decides. She's frightened to so much as breathe on something.

Cobblepot shoots Ed an incredulous look and Ed shrugs, gestures to the bottles. What follows is a rapid flurry of pointing and facepalming that Dove thinks translates to, 'if Crane finds out, I'm not helping you'.

If Crane finds out, she's booking it for the car and speeding away. She'll say, uh...they were eaten by bears.

"Here we are." She hates those eyes of his, like blue searchlights. He knows, she thinks wildly, he knows, he has eyes in the back of his head or something, oh shit... "Precisely as specified."

He holds up a small, twisting vial that would look right at home in a Disney villain's lair. Cobblepot extends his hand, pianist's fingers just brushing against the glass before Crane draws it out of his reach.

"Forgetting something, are we?"

"Miss Marquis, pay the man."

She doesn't wanna...

She inches forward, takes the white envelope out of her purse, and holds it out. He takes it from her, glances through it, and raises an eyebrow.

"Are you finally tired of her?"

"The other half is in the trunk."

"Mm. Pity." He taps one finger against the vial. "Dosage will vary based on the size and aggression
of the bird. To use, apply to object of irritation. Do *try* not to get it on yourself—it is instantaneous and you may not live to regret it." What's *in* there? Jesus Christ! "Keep it out of high heat and direct sun, it may explode."

With that, he drops the vial into Cobblepot's waiting fingers and steps back. Cobblepot tucks it into his coat pocket and inclines his head.

"Thank you, Jonathan. I'm sure this is exactly what I need."

"Yes, that's very nice, now get out of my laboratory." He reaches over and resets the bottle Ed adjusted with an exasperated sigh. Ed's eye twitches. "And what part of Do Not Touch do you not understand?"

Dove shudders and inches back behind Cobblepot. Ed shrugs.

"How does that not drive you mad? Well, madder than usual." He laughs. Crane does not.

"Out. Now. And remember...*shhhhh.*"

She hates that voice. Crane's bad enough on his own, but when his voice gets all rough like that, bad things happen.

They leave the basement and Dove's just breathing a sigh of relief when the Voice of Hell reaches her ears.

"Wheeen diiid yyoouu get heeere?"

Crane sighs and steps around them.

"Kitty, what are you doing up?"

"Couldn't sleeeeeep."

She looks like death-pale and shaky and her hair in a mussed ponytail. She really was in bed, apparently—she's wrapped from neck to ankles in a blanket. Dove isn't sure if this is going to get them out faster or get them all murdered.

"Go back to bed." Okay, it's really creepy that he sounds so...concerned. "They're just leaving."

Yup, two minutes and this horrid little house will be shrinking in the rearview mirror.

Maybe four minutes, because there's that guy in the trunk.

Richardson shivers and nestles into Crane's chest.

"Mm-mm."

"Kitty..." His voice trails off and he pats her head. "Just don't talk, then, you'll make it worse."

They're missing something, and part of her's curious but the other part of her feels like she's looking through a window at something she's not meant to see.

It doesn't matter. They'll give Crane 'the pair of good lungs' that he asked for and drive away and never speak of this again.

At least, that's the plan. Then Cobblepot throws her to the wolves, because he is an *asshole.*
"I'm sure Miss Marquis could make you a cup of tea."

"M'fiiiiine..."

"I insist. She has a good one for sore throats." Actually, it's his, but he wrote it down so he wouldn't have to make it for himself. "Miss Marquis?"

"Reeeeaally, I don't neeeed-"

Crane looks decidedly annoyed, but he's also rather stuck. Cobblepot isn't.

"It's no trouble." she says shakily. "It'll only take a few minutes."

"Then get going."

She hates him. She really, really hates him.

All the same, it gives her an excuse to get away from the group of psychos (is there a name for that?) for a few minutes.

The kettle's easily found, at least-it's on the stove. Everything else, not so much. She eventually unearths the ingredients she needs and is just looking for a mug when Richardson rasps, "Top cabinet on the leeeft."

Dove prides herself on not freaking out. Visibly, anyway.

"Thanks."

"Get the box of Earl Greey down for-"

"Just point!" Crane calls from the other room. "She can cope!"

Holy Mary on toast, he can see through walls! Come on, man, she didn't sign up for this...

"Iiignore hiim, heeee worriiiieees." Richardson coughs. "Teeea. For everyone else."

No, she just wants to get out!

All the same, she opens the cupboard Richardson points to and gets the box down. Hopefully she boiled enough water...she always overfills, so it should be fine.

"I can get this, if you want to go lay down or something..."

"I'm fiine. Jonaathaan's-" She coughs again and Dove braces for Crane to somehow appear.

"Overreacting."

Yeah, but usually his 'overreactions' result in death or insanity. She wants neither.

The kettle goes off and she's lucky enough to have, as per usual, overfilled it.

"How long..."

"Siiix miinutes."

Great. Maybe she'll go back to bed now? Or at least go back to the others.

Initially, Dove thought it was silly to be scared of her. She's tiny. Okay, so try not to piss off her
boycfriend, manageable.

But then there was the...incident...with that woman, the one who got her uterus cut out, and Dove changed her mind pretty quickly. Richardson's a fucking psycho.

Richardson doesn't leave, either. She hops up on the counter, blanket hanging down past her feet, and takes down a bag of sugar.

Four more minutes of awkwardness. Yay.

Dove has to pity her, a little, for having to drink this shit. It's sickly sweet-like ninety percent honey-and she has yet to meet anyone who likes it. It works though, she'll admit to that, and last time she had a cold she caught herself mentally thanking Mrs. Kapelput for the recipe.

Three more minutes. Should she just sit here? Try to make conversation? Richardson can't talk anyway, and if Crane thinks Dove made her...she saw pictures of the last victim they found. No, thank you.

Did he test his toxin on her, is that why she's lost her voice? Or accidental testing? It might explain why she's acting a little weird. She's going with accidental testing-creepy as he is, she can't see Crane testing on her intentionally, even if she agreed to it.

One more minute. She's wondering if she can shave it off and get away with it when there's a loud WHAM! in the other room. Richardson vanishes and Dove starts preparing to insist that she knew nothing about any of this, she is the driver and that's it, Batman, honest.

What? It's not a complete lie.

Like it matters to him, she didn't sign up for this shit...what happened? Used to be there were police to be paid off and the mob had things under control and everything was fine! Now there's costumed freaks everywhere!

There's no more noise out there. The only sound is the incessant beeping of the timer. Maybe it's not Batman. Maybe Crane lost his patience with Ed.

She gathers up the mugs and makes her way out, prepared to fling said mugs at Batman if she has to. She doesn't wanna (that jawline...it's be a shame to burn it), but she'll do it.

Batman's not here. There's a bunch of feathers stuck to the window and Dove realizes that a bird must've hit it. A big bird, to make that kind of noise.

Richardson's practically glued herself to Crane's side again and Dove wonders what the hell is going on.

"Tea?"

"Thank you, Miss Marquis." Cobblepot is at his most insincere. Yay.

Neither Ed nor Crane acknowledge her, but Richardson gives her a small smile. It's something.

They stand there in silence for a few minutes before Cobblepot gestures to the door.

"Shall we?"

"Yes." Crane looks down. "It's cold, maybe you should-" Richardson shakes her head. "If you end
up in the hospital, I will leave you there."

"Liiiaar." she rasps. "Beesiiides, noo one ever-" Cough. "Went to the hosspiitaal for laaaryngiitus."

"Stop talking, or that's exactly where you'll end up. Alone."

Richardson snorts.

They go outside. It is cold-she can smell rain in the distance, and it's windy.

She pops the trunk. In it is a man. He sings at his church-Cobblepot took Crane's request a little too literally, she thinks. Cobblepot has placed a little red bow on the man's head.

Crane does not look amused.

"Mister Mash!"

The big man from earlier lopes around the side of the house and Dove is struck by how fast he can move. Like a big cat.

Brr.

"Yeah, Doc?"

"Take our guest to the grainery and feed him-I don't need him starving before I get to him."

The man-Mash-hauls the church singer out of the trunk and tosses him over his shoulder. Dove pretends not to see his panicked struggles. There's nothing she can do for him anyway.

She slams the trunk and the noise sends a flock of crows spiraling into the air, cawing angrily. Crane and Richardson both flinch and he calls after Mash, "When you're done, get rid of those damn birds!"

Ed grins.

"Surprised you don't deal with them, Scarecrow."

Dove will swear in court that it gets colder after that.

"Watch your mouth, Eddie."

Motherfucker...can she make it to the driver's seat before shit goes down?

Cobblepot tugs Ed away-probably for the best, but he started it, if someone needs to be left behind, it's him-and gesutres towards the still cawing birds.

"If you need any help removing them..."

Crane grins, a bitter one with far too many teeth for Dove's liking.

"Eddie's right, I can deal with them."

"They hold a grudge, you might want to be careful."

The grin turns vicious.

"You know what I do to crows, don't you, Ozzy?"
Fuck this shit, she's out! They can deal with whatever the hell's going on, she wants no part of this!

Cobblepot stills and looks Crane up and down.

"No need to overreact-

"Crick, crack, break their backs!"

Dove shudders. Cobblepot frowns.

"Scarecrow-

"Iii thiiink iiit iiis time youu leeft." Richardson rasps. "Thaank you for the teeaa, Dove."

Dove's happy to hand over the mug, but Cobblepot is still hung up on what Crane-Scarecrow?-intends to do with the birds.

"It would be easier for me to send someone out-

"You look a bit like a bird yourself." Uh-oh. Time to go! "I wonder...

"Scarecrow." Ed's voice is a bit sharper now. "I think that's enough."

"Why? Scared?"

Dove glances at Richardson, hoping for backup, but she doesn't look so inclined. Well, shit.

Cobblepot offers a wintery smile and hands his mug over. Finally! Almost out, just another minute or two-

"Well, you have my number if you change your mind."

"Leaving so soon? We've barely talked!" She steps back, intending to hide in the car, and Crane's head turns towards her. "Don't be frightened...not yet, anyway." He untangles himself from Richardson and and draws something from inside his coat. "Fly away, little birds, fly while you can, fly for your lives, but watch out for the straw man!"

She knows what that is that's that fucking mask oh shit-

He pulls it on and she lunges for the car, more than willing to abandon the crazies if it means she gets out of this alive.

She's not alone in this thought-Ed's already pulling the back door open and Cobblepot is headed for the passenger's side. Scarecrow cocks his head.

"Aww, stay a bit!"

Fuck that shit.

She's just started the car when there's a sudden SCRAAAAPE! on the trunk. The rearview mirror says that Scarecrow has a scythe.

Never mind if nobody's seat belts are on-she's outta here. She hits the gas and the car shrieks before shooting forward.

"I hate it when Scarecrow pops up like that." Ed grumbles from the back. "It's unsettling."
Okay...so...Crane and Scarecrow...her head hurts, she gives up.

"I'll send someone out to relocate those crows." Cobblepot says. "Make a note of that, Miss Marquis."

She's driving, really?

Ugh, whatever. She'll try to remember, but no way in hell is she going with the crow-relocaters.

A phone rings. After a few rings, it is determined that the phone is Ed's.

"Hello."

"Come back anytime, Eddie! We gotta talk about your compulsion to touch things."

Click.

Ed sighs.

"Is there any chance-"

"No."

"But-"

"You touched them, you suffer the consequences."

If she never has to see Crane again, she thinks as they bicker, it'll be too soon.

THE END
Edward Nygma has been standing on this doorstep for exactly two minutes and forty seconds. In his humble opinion, that is two minutes and forty-fourty-two, now, pardon-seconds too long.

He raises his cane and raps sharply on the door again.

"Jon! I know you're in there, it's daytime! Now open the damn door!"

**TAP-TAP-TAP!**

The door opens and Edward braces to have the cane nearly yanked from his hands, but that doesn't happen and he narrowly avoids hitting his sometimes-colleague in the face.

"What do you want, Nygma."

Jonathan Crane sounds, to be perfectly frank, *awful*. He looks it, too-wrapped up in a blanket and glasses askew. Other men, Edward knows, would pity him. The real suckers would even come back later.

Edward knows better.

"You look terrible." he says cheerfully, brushing Jon aside and stepping in. Yergh. True to form, the hallway is dark and does not appear to know what a vacuum is. Or even a Swiffer. And that might be a bloodstain on the left wall. "What did you do to get in here?"

Jon sneezes, the force of it sending him stepping back. Good. The further away he and his cold are, the better.

"We don't live on this floor, now go away-"

"Five minutes." He flaps a hand and straightens up. "I have a proposition for you."

"No."

"You haven't even heard it yet!" Jon coughs and burrows further into his blanket. Edward rolls his eyes. "That doesn't work on me. Five minutes, you'll like this."

"Does it involve your painful demise?"

"What? No!"

"Then leave."

"But-"
"Edward." Jon tries to straighten up and ends up slumped against the wall. "I am suffering from some form of the plague. My hair hurts. Unless this scheme of yours involves you sacrificing your voice or dying, I don't care. Now get out before I make you get out."

Yeah. Sure he will. Jon's stronger than he looks, but right now? Jervis could take him down.

"Take some NyQuil, you'll be fine."

"Edward..."

The door opens. Oh, dear. This just got much harder.

"Jonathan, what are you doing out of bed?" She hasn't seen him? He's a little insulted. "I swear, if you're trying to-Eddie." Oh. "Did you do this?"

There is a ninety percent chance that Jon was up already, and he's about to point that out when he looks at him and knows, just knows, that he's about to be thrown to the wolves.

_No, no, don't do that, don't do that-_

"I _was_ asleep, Kitty. Really." No! That's not fair! "But he knocked on the door and wouldn't leave."

If it were anyone else being thrown under the bus, Edward might be able to appreciate the performance. Within the span of thirty seconds, Jon's gone from miserable to death's door.

"Is that so." She makes him bend down, presses her lips to his forehead, and frowns. "Back to bed, go on." That's it? That's not so bad. "You." Uh-oh. "You did this."

"I..." Probably did, yes, but how was he supposed to know? "did not mean to."

"Out."

"Kitty-"

"You've got to the count of three."

He inches back towards the door and catches a glimpse of Jon-or, more accurately, that _fucking_ smug smirk.

"He's not even that sick! Look at him!"

"He's got a fockin' respiratory infection!" Uh-oh. Thicker accent equals imminent pain and suffering. He is going to die. "Out! Out you go, and so help me, Edward Nygma-"

He sees her go for the shotgun and he decides that you know what, fine, he'll commit his grand scheme by himself.

He darts out the door _just_ as Jon wheezes, "Watch out for bats, Edward, there's been an infestation lately."

Jonathan Crane can go to hell, and take his psycho girlfriend with him.

THE END
Chapter Notes

This is the product of trawling r/LetsNotMeet before bed. 10/10, would do again. Even if my first thought to the wind blowing a trash bin over was ‘SHIT I’M GONNA BE MURDERED’. (The second was ‘if I get murdered before Sherlock airs, I’m gonna be so fucking pissed’. Priorities.)

Jim knows he should wait for backup. Harvey is going to kick his ass for not waiting. Okay, maybe not really, but he’ll yell and gesture and pull out the patented Harvey Bullock Lecture about ‘you fuckin’ dumbass, Jim, what if you died because you couldn’t wait five fuckin’ minutes, see these gray hairs, they are your fault, Jim, your goddamn fault-’.

But…

He finds a back window that doesn’t latch right and just…lets himself in.

The house is old and dark and silent. His flashlight reveals a small horror story—bloodstains, crumpled rugs and pictures with broken glass. A closer look reveals a few fingernails, snapped off in jagged chunks. A woman’s—they’re long and tapered and glitter-pink.

Jim feels sick.

He swallows hard and picks his way through the small hallway, trying and failing to ignore the details—curtains halfway derailed, closet door hanging unevenly thanks to a badly-losened hinge, faint, bloody scratches in the paint on the wall.

The trail of destruction leads to a closed door. He shouldn’t open that door, but he’s about to see—really, just see!-if it’s locked when there’s a noise from behind it. Sounds like someone’s coming upstairs, but…

Thud-pat-thud-pat!

Dog? Maybe it’s a dog. That’s his best guess for that weird-ass gait. He hopes not, he doesn’t want to have to shoot a dog.

Thud-pat-thud-pat!

“GCPD!” he warns. The noise doesn’t stop and a second later, the door opens. Jim’s backing up before his brain registers what’s coming at him.

A woman, wearing broken heels and crawling, crawling like a goddamn lizard.

“Ma’am-”

Thud-pat-thud-pat!

He keeps backing up, rambling desperately.
“Ma’am, my name is Jim Gordon, I’m gonna get you outta here, okay, it’s gonna be okay-”

She screams, hoarse and borderline inhuman, and scrambles backwards.

“Ma’am-”

“Well-trained, isn’t she?”

Motherfucker-

He turns, gun ready, and finds nothing.

“Crane!”

A hissing chuckle echoes through the house.

“What’s the matter, detective, you don’t appreciate my work?”

“No.” he snarls. “Come out here.”

“They never do.” The dry voice sounds exhaustedly put-upon. “You’ve no idea the amount of effort it takes…it’s no easy task, you know, to shatter a mind.”

“Shut the fuck up.”

The hissing chuckle again-Jim thinks it’s coming from…that way? Maybe?

The woman whines, more animal than human, and Jim thinks he’s going to need some help from Friend Jack to sleep tonight.

“It took time, you know. Isolation, drugs, several therapy sessions.” Where is the skinny bastard? “But now…look at her. One of my finest pieces. A real work of art.”

“You sick son of a bitch.”

“You’re partly right.” The woman sways, jagged nails clawing at the wood. “Abigail…basophobia.”

He has no idea what that means. Turns out he doesn’t have time to care-the woman (Abigail, her name is Abigail, dammit) screeches and moves towards him.

**THUD-PAT-THUD-PAT-THUD-PAT!**

He’s not going to hurt her, she’s not in her right mind. He backs up, finger off the trigger, and throws one hand behind him in case Crane’s back there.

She keeps coming, joints cracking and eyes nearly bulging out of her skull, and Jim’s fingers hit a cord.

A cord?

_Speakers?_

“Crane!”

“Amazing, isn’t she? I never thought a human being could move like that, but she’s managed-”
Jim yanks on the cord. Sure enough, Crane’s voice cuts out.

“Jim! Jim, dammit-Jesus take the wheel!”

Harvey. Harvey’s here, Harvey can restrain Abigail-

“Abigail.” Jim can see Crane now, silhouetted in a doorway to the left. “Thanatophobia.”**

“Harvey-”

Abigail’s fast, even floor-bound like this, and they can’t get to her before she dashes to the top of the staircase-

-and flings herself down it. There’s a horrible **THUD-CLUMP-THUD-CLUMP** and then silence.

“Son of a bitch.” Harvey breathes, and then they both start shooting. Crane vanishes into the darkness behind him. “Get him, I’ll check her.”

But Crane’s nowhere to be found, and Harvey shakes his head when asked about Abigail.

Son of a bitch.

THE END

*Jonathan’s idea of a sick joke-this is the fear of falling, but it can be associated with the fear of standing/walking.

**Jonathan’s other idea of a sick joke-this is the fear of death.
A Study in Humanity

Chapter Notes

Nobody ever likes to hear these theories, but Dr. Crane is right. Clearly—we have whole channels dedicated to murder. And don’t lie, there is something—a child, a lover, a hurt against your own self—that you’d kill for. You may not know it yet, but everyone’s got a button.

Jonathan Crane knows two things about people, knows them as surely as he knows the sky is blue.

One: everyone, from the oldest vegetable to the youngest squalling brat, is morbid. People don’t have a morbid streak, they are morbid. They feed on others’ pain, no matter how hard they deny it. Hypocrites, all. Though their denials fit in well with known psychology tactics: accuse others of what you do yourself.

Two: everyone has something they’ll kill for. Some people have a lower threshold, others develop a taste for it, but everyone has something. Power, love, lust, fear…most people never find that trigger. The world they live in is safe, by and large. Must be nice.

He’s enlightened, has been for years. He’ll admit to lingering, watching an inevitable hit-and-run with a mild, that’s why you don’t text and drive. Murder? He’s got a taste now (even if it is mostly an unfortunate side effect), but his trigger, once, had been survival. Nobody could fault him that.

As a side effect of this knowledge, he knows nobody wants to admit it, because such an admission would knock them from their moral high ground and into the black cave with monsters like himself. Please. ‘Monster’ is just a word for that which they don’t understand…and don’t want to.

So he’s decided to prove his point.

It’s taken work, nearly a year’s planning and set-up, but he’s got what he needs in the end. Subjects—nice, ordinary people. He checked their Facebooks, their criminal records (nonexistent, he wanted them as innocent as possible), shadowed them for weeks to make sure they were what he needed.

An appropriate location—a warehouse by the docks. Easy to clean, nice and roomy, easily locked. And then, because experiments must be recorded, a news crew. He lured them out with an anonymous tip (people are morbid, like he’s always said) and then, well…

People are such funny little things. So predictable. They fancy themselves clever, above the animals, but he wouldn’t have made it this far without their limited reactions. Scared? Run or fight. Curious? Go and see. Always. There is a set number of actions that people will preform for an individual circumstance, and those are simple to predict once you sort them into a personality box.

He gathers up the keys to the shipping crates downstairs—he’ll need to let his subjects out, of course—and rubs a speck of dust off his glasses. There. All set.

He strolls downstairs to where the film crew is setting up under the watchful gaze of the hired help. The reporter has gotten herself together, at least. Good. It’s Gotham, he wouldn’t expect anything less.
“Are we ready?”
“A-almost.”
“Good.”

It hasn’t been long. Fifteen minutes or so. And Batman will be unavailable, because it’s the middle of the day—an ungodly hour to be up, with his schedule, but such is the price one pays for uninterrupted work.

There are three shipping crates in the room. All of them have muffled screams coming from inside, but he’s only interested in the one on the far left. That’s got the motivation in it.

He opens it up, metal raw against his fingers, and lets his shadow climb the far wall before he steps inside and calls it back. It smells in here, of fish and urine and Gotham City, but that’s all right, he’s not lingering. Now, where is that little-ah!

His arm shoots out, grabbing the thin, pliable arm from the shadows of the crate, and jerking it up.

“Come along, child. It’s time to go.”

The child in question is dripping snot and whatever other liquids children under the age of ten seem to ooze from their pores. The lengths he goes to for science...he deserves an award, not a cell.

No matter. Nothing a little hand sanitizer won’t fix.

He drags the crying blob out of the crate and resists an eye-roll at the collective look of horror the news crew is wearing. Oh, please. Without things like this, they wouldn’t stay in business. They should be grateful for this exclusive opportunity he’s giving them. He could, after all, have kidnapped a lesser news crew, like Fox. They would have appreciated this more, but they also would have tried to twist it, idiots that they are.

He hands the child off to a nearby mook to keep track of, squirts a liberal dot of sanitizer into his palm, and turns to the reporters.

“Well?”

The reporter swallows, darting glances towards the still-crying child, and nods.

“Y-yes.”

“Good.” He rubs a few specks of dust off his glasses—oh, glasses, it’s like they’re designed to be as inconvenient as possible—and straightens up. “Let us begin.”

The cameraman pushes a few buttons and gives him a shaky nod. At least the boy’s mostly gotten himself together—his blubbering was growing old. Granny may have been onto something with her, ‘I’ll give you something to cry about!’ way of thinking.

“We’re on.”

He gathered, by the nod. If they’re hoping he smiles, they’ll just have to be disappointed. This a serious scientific study and will be treated as such.

“Hello, Gotham.” he says politely. The Joker can act like the most obnoxious being on the planet, but he was raised better. “I’m pleased that you agreed to participate in my experiment on human nature this afternoon.”
Great. The reporter’s starting to sniffle again, keeps glancing over at the child. He’s never been more tempted to murder someone. It would at least stop the crying.

“I will be testing two theories today. One, the more obvious, that everyone, man woman and child, has something they’ll kill for. You’ll deny it, I’m sure, but trust me when I say that it’s true.” He pauses to let that sink in. “The other theory, which you are proving now, is that you are all ghouls. You enjoy others’ pain, don’t you? You’re sitting in front of your screens in rapt attention, waiting to see what I’ll do.”

He motions for the crew to follow as he walks towards another shipping crate.

“This contains a college student, come up from Florida to study law at our fine university. No criminal record to be had, volunteers at animal shelters, feeds the homeless on Saturdays.” It makes him sick, and he’d searched up and down for some proof of a murder. But there’d been nothing. They’ll see if that remains so. Survival is a powerful motivation. “You can come out now, Mark.”

“Please, man, just lemme go-”

“We’ll see. Come here.”

Mark makes his way out of the container, legs loosely shackled and hands bound. He’s not much the worse for wear, really. Considering how annoying Jonathan finds him, he should be grateful he’s not hallucinating.

“Thank you. Say hello to the cameras, Mark.”

“Please-”

“Never mind, shut up, Mark.”

When he continues to blubber, Jonathan sighs, pinches the bridge of his nose, and kicks him over—his bound limbs make him an easy topple. There. At least that’ll keep him busy for a minute.

The final shipping crate contains the one Jonathan’s really betting on, if only from his own personal experience.

“This crate,” he informs the crew, “contains the mother of that charming little tot over there.” He points, and the camera obligingly swings over for a minute before coming back. “Jennifer Williams, native Gothamite, widowed thanks to one of my colleagues. That over there is her sole surviving relative.”

He opens the crate to a stream of swears.

“-ing asshole, when I get to you, if you’ve hurt him-”

“Come here, Jennifer.”

He needn’t have asked—tripping and stumbling, she tries to rush him and barely avoids falling at his feet.

“No criminal record here, either. These two are possibly some of the purest people in this city. And one of them may well kill the other.”

Both Mark and Jennifer have gone quiet and are eyeing each other. Let them get used to the idea. Most people don’t like having their morals threatened.
Jennifer speaks first. He’s not surprised—motherhood seems to have the unfortunate side effect of ‘supreme holier-than-thou’. He wonders why, sometimes.

“I’m not killing anyone.”

“Very well.” And now he does smile, a fractured thing, and holds out his hand to help her up. “You may go. But your son will remain here with me, as my test subject.”

She stiffens and doesn’t take his hand. He withdraws it and turns back to the news crew.

“To the victor goes their unimpeded freedom. If you refuse…I’m sure I can find a use for you.”

But they won’t refuse. He knows they won’t, because he knows people.

He retrieves the boy from his employee and the man goes out to uncuff them before returning, relieving Jonathan of the child, and accompanying him to a small office on the upper floor. The child begins to wail in earnest.

“Shut him up.”

“But boss—”

“I’m not asking you to kill him, I’m asking you to silence him. Now do it.”

Below, Mark and Jennifer are circling each other warily. Jonathan flips on the small TV and hunts up the right news station. Sure enough, it’s on (he would expect nothing less, they know his reputation) and he makes himself comfortable with this new, up-close-and-personal view. Then, when nothing happens and the brat is still crying, he rises.

“Give him to me.”

A swift slam against the glass accomplishes two objectives. One, stuns the little brat into silence. Two, galvanizes his subjects into action.

To his surprise, it’s not Jennifer that attacks first, it’s Mark. Well, well, the golden boy has a dark side! And it is vicious—he’s grabbed his handcuffs to use as a garrote.

Beware the nice ones, indeed. Though he wasn’t so very different, once. Before it was pecked out of him.

His idiot henchman is starting to fidget and Jonathan thinks snidely, who did you think you were working for?

“Leave.”

“Boss?”

“You are making concentration extremely difficult, now get out.”

“But—”

“Get. Out.”

The man ducks out and clatters downstairs. Jonathan spares a glance to the boy, lying huddled on the floor.
“Looks like it’s just you and me, kiddo.” he says. “I hope your mother loves you…”

Jennifer, once she’s recovered from the shock of being rushed, isn’t proving to be too bad of a fighter-she’s gotten Mark to the ground and appears to be trying to strangle him.

Adrenaline is an amazing thing-Mark throws her off in what looks like a controlled seizure, tackles her to the ground, and starts slamming her head into the cement.

After a few minutes—a few minutes too long, probably, there’s not much left of the Let-Me-See-Your-Manager haircut, the skull’s too fractured—he stands. Jonathan releases a breath he didn’t realize he was holding and goes downstairs.

“Congratulations.”

“I can go? I can leave? You said I could go-”

And now here comes the fun bit.

“I lied.”

“What?” The fight visibly drains from Mark’s shoulders and he sinks down besides the bloody pulp on the floor. “But you said—oh my god, what have I done-”

“Proved a point.” He summons his mook. “Take him to the basement, I’ll visit him later.”

As Mark’s being dragged away, the reporter finally swallows and whispers, “You’re a monster.”

“So they tell me.” He eyes her crying crewmates and starts towards them. “But that door, back there? It’s unlocked. And you didn’t even try for it. So tell me…who’s the real monster here?”

They try to run. He sighs and flicks his wrist. They go down screaming.

As he knew they would.

THE END
Overlord

Edward isn’t the type to scare easy, especially not out of surprise. The weak-minded can be surprised, but he is above all that.

Annoyed, however, is an emotion he can indulge in. And indulge he does—when one finds the Scarecrow in one’s lair, annoyance is acceptable.

A little alarm is also acceptable, when said Scarecrow is grinning like a schoolboy who’s just learned an especially filthy joke. Jonathan Crane isn’t emotional. Glee? Never.

So this can only be bad.

“Hello, Jon.”

“Edward.”

Any hopes Edward might have been entertaining of Jon fighting a dose of Joker Gas are dashed at that—he sounds far, far too amused to be anything but sane. Well. As sane as he ever is.

“What brings you to my humble abode?”

“A stopover. Batman dropped by.”

Hm. Perhaps something nasty has befallen Batman. Jon’s usual response to Bat-visits consists of ‘my research!’ and ‘numbskull kidnapped my patient!’ and a fair bit of ‘no respect for science!’

Truthfully, Edward is…confused. Which is not something he enjoys, so he channels it towards being irritated.

“Why me.”

“You were close.” Kitty grumbles from behind him. “Can you stop, it’s not that funny!”

Well, now. This could be interesting.

“Oh, but it is.” Jon’s grin grows a little wider. “I’m sure Batman doesn’t think so, if it’s any consolation.”

“Batman can sod off!” Ouch. “And you wipe that grin off your face before I do it for you.”

“You can’t even reach.”

Kitty bristles. Edward is reminded of a kitten versus a big, friendly dog.

Hm. Not an analogy he ever thought he’d use on a pair of serial killers. Apparently today is going to be a New Things day.

“I will climb you. I’ve done it before, I’ll do it again.”

Jon tries to school his expression into…something else…but isn’t successful and ends up with a slightly smaller grin, eyes glittering behind his glasses.

It’s…unsettling. He doesn’t need to know that, but it is.
“Did you lead Batman here.” That’s the important thing. He has traps, of course he has traps, but preparation is always nice.

“No.” Kitty seethes. “He’s fine, we’ll be out of here when there’s sun, don’t you dare tell him.”

This last is directed at Jonathan, who cocks his head at her.

“Kitty, you can’t expect him to put us up without knowing what happened.” he says, far too innocently for him to be any such thing. “Isn’t that right, Edward?”

On one hand, he’s dying of curiosity. On the other hand, he could be murdered.

He’ll be fine. There is a laser in this kitchen-a simple button will activate it.

“That’s right.”


“Ah-ah. I will do the telling.”

“You weren’t even there!”

“You’ll leave half of it out!”

“Only the unimportant bits!”

“Kitty, you are a terrible storyteller. I. Will. Do it.”

“If we’re going to tell him, I will do it, ‘cos I was there.”

Jon shrugs and leans against the counter.

“If you leave anything out, I’ll take over.”

If looks could kill, Edward thinks, Gotham would breathe a little easier tonight.

“All right, I was brushing my teeth…”

* * *

Kitty spat a gob of toothpaste into the sink and grimaced. Whatever kind the old bird had been buying, it was horrific. Tasted like some combination of felt-tip marker (she’d been three, shut up) and fake mint and maybe a little bit of that nasty bubble gum elderly people everywhere seemed to be able to conjure.

It was a humid, miserable summer, almost bad enough to rival Georgia. Even Jonathan was grumbling, a little. Which was why she wet a washcloth and rubbed it over her face and neck while reaching blindly for the Lysterine.

Her fingers touched…not-plastic.

The bottle was on the floor a second before her brain clicked together and helpfully provided, roach legs!

She flailed, brushing her fingers frantically against her shirt, as the roach, startled by its fall, took flight.
Fuck. NO.

She dove out of the way as it flitted out of the bathroom and smacked the wall. Where was that Raid, why was that flying, where the hell was Jonathan? What were men for if not to deal with monsters, hm?

Although.

He’d get it, if she asked. He might not even chase her with the wadded-up paper towel, if she threatened tears. But he’d never let her hear the end of it, and she knew, just knew, that he had a bag of rubber ones somewhere that could be tucked behind shampoo bottles or tossed into laundry hampers.

She spotted the Raid. Decision made.

It couldn’t have gotten far, but the hallway was dark and these slippers weren’t great. Where was it, if she touched it again she really was going to cry and make Jonathan come get it anyway…

Well? Where the fuck was it?

She turned a corner and registered BIG BLACK SHADOW before registering anything else.

The Raid was up and spraying before she could blink.

* * *

“You sprayed the Batman with…roach killer?” That’s not so bad. A bit of a letdown, really.

“Uh-huh.”

“Aren’t you forgetting something?”

“No.”

“Something you…might have screamed at him?”

“Jonathan…”

The wide, schoolboy-has-learned-something-extracurricular-today grin has returned.

“Final answer?”

“Don’t you do it.”

Jonathan opens his mouth and Kitty lunges forward, hand flailing. He ducks, grabs her, and claps a hand over her mouth.

“I was downstairs,” he says, as though his girlfriend isn’t trying to murder him, “so I may have missed something, but my first clue that Batman had arrived was her screaming, ‘not today, roach overlord!’”

Oh.

Kitty finally gets loose and whirls. Edward half-expects steam to rise from her head.

“I will kill you.”
“You will not.”

“Watch me.”

“You’d regret it before I even stopped breathing, Kitty.” he says lazily. “Many, many hospital doctors dread to see us coming, and it’s not entirely my fault.”

She opens her mouth, pauses, and flips him off instead.

“I might.”

“You would.”

“We’ll discuss this. And you.” Edward has no illusions that she will regret his murder. As such, he is not sorry for inching his finger closer to the laser-button. “If you breathe one word of this, just one, I will shove that cane of yours so far up your arse that it’ll take a week for them to remove it.” She rises on tip-toe and jabs her finger at his chest. “One. Word.”

He thinks she’s going for scary, but he’s spent a lot of time around Oswald Cobblepot. He knows the common tactics for combating one’s vertical challenges, and he is not impressed.

All the same, Oswald is less impulsive these days. If he wants someone dead, he thinks about it. Weighs the pros and cons. Kitty? Not so much.

“Not a word.” he promises, already vowing to call Bats ‘Roach Overlord’ the next time they meet. “I promise.”

She wobbles and goes back down.

“You’d better.” She retreats to the counter, arms crossed, and scowls. “Stop grinning, it’s creepy.”

“I’ve had so little happiness in my life-”

“Rubbish-”

“-let me have this.”

“No.”

“Think I’ll have it anyway.”

“I am not above castration.”

“Somehow I doubt that.”

“General maiming, then.”

“Mm-hm.” She pokes his ribs. “That’s it. I shall die here, on Edward’s Lysol-smelling floor, from that lethal poke.”

“Clorox.” Edward corrects. “The floor smells like Clorox, Lysol doesn’t work as well.”

What? It doesn’t.

Kitty gives him a brief look of pity. Jonathan’s just opening his mouth, probably to make a snide comment (peon, as though he’d know the difference anyway) when a window breaks and Gotham’s
own mobile gargoyle slams into the pair of them.

“Fucking hell!”

“How did you even-”

Edward reaches for his button and takes a batarang to the hand. He clutches it, hissing through clenched teeth, and tries to run.

He doesn’t make it very far, but even when Batman’s cuffing his hands, he can’t help himself.

“Rough night, Roach Overlord?”

The only warning he gets is the narrowing of eyes.

THE END
A few people wondered if Kitty’s ‘roach overlord’ thing would stick, and it occurs to me that while everyone else will receive an extra ass-kicking, Jason Todd…might not. Not for that. And you know he’d do it, because he can get away with it and isn’t above a little guilt-tripping to keep it that way.

Sticking this here because it directly pertains to 'Overlord'.

Jason’s done a good job of staying under the radar lately. Now, that’s mostly because he managed to crack his wrist, but it’s fine. He’s fine. He’ll be back out in another day or two. (You don’t fuck with the wrist. He’ll ignore a lot of injuries, but wrists are important. They determine whether or not you plummet to your death.)

Right now, though, he’s hearing some interesting things.

He’d stepped out for a drink-really, that’s all, a drink and this particular bar’s homemade pretzels-and…overheard things.

“…yeah, guess Penguin did it too, got two broken fingers.”

Penguin? What? Cobblepot’s been quiet lately.

He inches a few seats closer to the men, dragging his pretzels with him.

“Yeah, wonder if Richardson’ll give him two more for laughin’.”

Um. Unless there’s been a huge falling-out, he’s pretty sure Richardson and Cobblepot don’t hate each other.

“I dunno, man, all I know, is I’m not sayin’ nothin’.”

“Pussy.”

“Fuck you. I like my fingers. Like my balls, for that matter.”

Jason has never been more lost. Did something happen? He doesn’t remember seeing anything on the news…or hearing anything major elsewhere.

He pulls out his phone and scrolls frantically through the internet, looking for some sort of help.

Nothing.

Well. He knows people. And he’s curious, now.

Time for a little snooping.

* * *
Dove Marquis is his favorite henchperson. That’s what she is, she can deny it all she wants. But she’s his favorite one, because she doesn’t try to shoot at him or run*. Just gives him a dirty look (a little like Alfred’s) and grumbles, “Boss is in Arkham, go away.”

“Aww, it’s like you think I only want one thing.”

“I got three hours ‘til opening, scram.”

“Actually, I have a question.”

“No.”

“Word on the street’s that your boss got two broken fingers last time.”

“Uh-huh.”

“What the hell happened?”

“None’ya, so go away.”

“Dove. C’mon. Please?” He pauses. “Warn ya next time the Bat’s on his way.”

She looks torn between rubbing her face and murdering him, and decides on neither.

“You keep quiet.” she says at last. “I didn’t tell you, and if you get beaten to a bloody pulp, it’s your own fault.”

Ohhh. This sounds good already.

He mimes a zipper (which probably looks horror-movie with his mask, oops) and takes a seat at the bar.

“Okay.”

“I don’t know everything, but Nygma said that last time they got caught, Richardson nailed the Bat with a canister of Raid and called him Roach Overlord.” What. “It’s been getting around. A bit. She’s not too happy, but Batman’s taken a bit of personal offense to it. Y’know.”

Roach. Overlord.

This is golden, Midas-touched-it golden. It’s all he can do not to clap like a kid at a party. Bless that little psycho, she’s just given him the best present of his life.

(Still a little psycho, though. Short jokes do not need to be met with attempted murder, Richardson, god.)

“So there you go. Now get out, I’m busy and you don’t sound old enough to order anything.”

Hey! One, his fake ID is impeccable, and two, he does so sound old enough. So there. He takes it back, Marquis is not his favorite henchperson anymore.

“I’m old enough!”

“Kiddo, don’t lie. Go get a juice box and go home. S’past your bedtime.”

“I don’t want anything here, anyway.”
Too late, he thinks he might have proved her point.

Oh well. Bruce’s birthday’s coming up. He has to place an order on Cafepress.

* * *

Bruce isn’t expecting Alfred to come downstairs with a white envelope with ‘Cafepress’ written on it in green.

“What’s that, Alfred?”

“It was in the mailbox, sir. Might I suggest…opening it?”

He runs it through three tests to make sure there’s no bombs (or anything else) before carefully cracking it open.

It’s a shirt. A plain t-shirt, smells a little like the printing press it came from. He frowns. Did Dick send him something? Usually Dick mentions these things, but…

He shakes it out. And now he knows who did this.

The shirt is black, with white letters proclaiming ‘ROACH OVERLORD’.

Alfred raises one eyebrow but says nothing. Bruce sighs, counts to ten, and plucks a slip of paper from the box. It’s one of those ‘include a message’ things.

*Happy birthday, old man! You won’t begrudge your poor, lost Robin a little fun, would you?-J.

“Sir?”

Bruce is torn between finding somebody acceptable to punch and going after Jason in earnest.

“Jason sent me a birthday gift.” he grinds out. Alfred does that smile—that’s-not-a-smile and pats his arm.

“How very nice.”

Yes. It is. Or it would be, if he didn’t know full well that Jay’s going to latch onto this until one of them dies. He can just see it-shirts, car decals, water bottles…between this and the random ‘wish you were here!’ postcards with Arkham on them, he’s set.

“Sir…”

“Alfred?”

“Am I…missing something? Master Jason’s sense of humor is a little…unusual, however…”

“It’s complicated.” He rubs his face. “That’s all.”

Alfred knows, he thinks miserably. Alfred knows all, and is taking pity and not mentioning anything. Well. At least Jason didn’t send him a crowbar. That’s…he’ll take it.

But he’s not wearing this damn shirt, and that’s final.

THE END
*Jason also has some more personal history with Dove—she found him in an alley when he was about ten and let him come hang out in one of Penguin’s not-yet-operational buildings while they got it set up (‘Everybody Wants to Rule the World’, *Cigarette Smoke and Snark*).
Take Me to Church

Chapter Notes

I’ve broken into a church before, back at home you know? An old boyfriend and I had…gone out…and, ah, it started raining. Y’know, as it does. Real downpour. So we just…let ourselves in to get out of the wet, and one thing led to another, and that’s why I’m going to Hell. 10/10, would do again. :p -Kitty

Dr. Crane has…issues…with religion. You can see why, I’m sure.

Gotham’s got churches. Of *course* Gotham’s got churches, it’s a major city. It’s got a place of worship for everyone. Granted, they tend to step in more as ‘place to lay out the injured from the most recent supervillain attack’, but still. They’re there.

Jonathan Crane despises them. Hypocritical things with hypocritical people. They’re full on Christmas and on Easter and that’s about it.

He remembers, as a child, having to sit still and not complain (mentally or otherwise) about the pews not being designed for boney people and wonder why, exactly, he was going to Hell despite being five and not having done anything Hell-worthy.

Apart from being born out of wedlock. There was that bit.

Later, as a teenager, he’d suffered through it on pain of birds, but he’d permitted himself the mental complaints. Permitted himself the fantasy of getting out of Arlen, leaving Granny crippled and defenseless in that rotting mansion with her precious crows and crops.

He hadn’t set foot in one since she died. No reason to.

Today, that will change.

They won’t be expecting him-up ‘til now he’s been random or specific in his plans. Halloween, of course, belongs to him. It is his duty-God given, if you will-to teach today’s little brats what fear really is. Occasionally he’ll pluck a date from pop culture, one that most people don’t get anyway-*Psycho*’s release date, Hannibal Lecter’s birthday. Springtime, however, is usually devoid of Scarecrow activity.

It’s hardly his fault he’s allergic to Gotham’s wildflowers.

All the same, it’s easy. Easy to slip in amongst the others, to take advantage of the socializing to force his stiff limbs (ridiculous, just memories, and not of this building) to carry him to a secluded seat at the back, by the door. Not so easy to ignore Kitty’s hand on his arm, an anchor to *now* and not *then*, but that’s all right.

“Been a bit, huh?”

He snorts, one eye on the crowd of old women that are likely to be the first to notice them.

“Maybe this wasn’t the best idea.”
“You could tell yourself it’s therapy.”

That draws a laugh out of him.

“Fair enough.” He glances at the cross behind the pulpit, rolls his eyes. “S’too early to be up.”

“Don’t farm boys have to be up before the sun?”

“That was years ago.”

“Still.” She shrugs, looks from him to the cross (and there’s the explanation for all his paranoid religious patients, right there), and suddenly tugs at his sleeve. “Oh my god, isn’t that one of yours?”

“Hm?”

“Pink dress, third row from the front on the right.”

Yes. Yes, it is one of his, an early one, weak batch. Batman had…interrupted…that experiment and the woman had the good sense to change her name. Well, well, this just keeps getting better, doesn’t it?

“Her luck is terrible.” he murmurs, unable and unwilling to keep the smirk from his face. “This fills me with joy, Kitty. I think it’s joy. It’s not spite, so…”

She pokes his arm, snickering, and he pulls his eyes from his lost-and-found subject. Behind him, the doors close and a gaggle of seniors make their way over. He knew it. It’s always the old ones that get nosy first.

They should know better.

“So nice to see new faces!”

Oh, really?

He stands up-Granny taught him some manners, after all-and extends his hand. And maybe…raises it. To face-height. Shifts his wrist back to activate the mechanism and takes a few steps back as the nearest biddy staggers into her compatriots, flailing with her cane.

Well. It appears that service is starting now.

The screams have drawn everyone’s attention and he eases out of the row, a little unsure as to what to feel about the eyes on him. They’re scared now, but god, churchgoers look alike, don’t they? He could be back in Arlen, feels like.

Pity for them.

“Happy Easter.” The smile’s real enough, if a little strained. “Look at you all, here to seek half a year’s worth of absolution. In Gotham, of all places.” He makes his way towards the front, towards that damned cross. He wonders if it will change for some of them, if Christ himself will grow fangs and a forked tongue as he writhes upon it.

“Today’s sermon, ladies and gentlemen, is about fear. Most of you, I should hope, have a healthy fear of God.” He feels some of the strain ease out of his smile as they finally realize what’s going on. His little escapee has gone white to the lips—he’ll have to watch that one. “But you’re praying now, aren’t you, for him to save you?” Nobody answers him. “He won’t.”
“What do you want.”

He snaps towards the old man in the front row. Surrounded by his family, looks like, clutching a cane. Probably a self-righteous…never mind. They all are, really.

“My wants and needs are simple.” he says, coming back down the steps. A flash of red-Kitty-darts past the corner of his eye. Everything’s just about set, then. “I want to show you the light.” He spreads his arms, tries for a benevolent smile and thinks he’s not quite successful. “This is for your own good. Isn’t that what they tell you?”

“Get out.”

Feisty old timer, isn’t he? He and Granny would have gotten along like a house on fire.

He stops a few paces away-no need to clean spit off his glasses, and he sees it coming-and sighs, pulls rough burlap from his coat pocket. He takes his time tucking his glasses into a safe place—he really does need to see about accomadating them—and pulls it on.

Scarecrow cracks his neck and rasps, “No.”

Then the fog rolls in, thick and sudden as it spirals upwards. There’s a rush for the door, people struggling to yank their clothes over their faces as they pound and shove. A child falls and is trampled.

Happy Easter, indeed, he thinks as he strolls towards them. Happy Easter, indeed.

THE END
Don’t ask. My life is now a dumpster fire, I needed a laugh. Sorry, Eddie, but that robot-thing from Knight…you tried so hard and still got your ass beat. And so I shall mock thee. Or, rather, let other people mock thee.

“What is that, Edward.” Jon’s voice is flat and utterly unamused.

Jon has no appreciation for fine robotics, is all.

“This, my poor, blind friend, is a robot.” Edward pats a metal knee. “And it will finally allow me to kill the Batman.”

Looks are exchanged and two monotone voices say, “Edward.”

Okay. That’s a little creepy, and they need to never do that again.

“Isn’t it beautiful?”

“No, Eddie. No.” Kitty sighs and rubs her temples. “This is…no.”

Humph. She has no appreciation for fine robotics, either. They deserve each other, then. Peasants.

“Why, Edward. Why would you think this would work.”

“It will work! It will work and we’ll see who’s laughing as I pick pieces of his cape from the gears!”

They snort and Kitty leans her head against Jonathan’s arm.

“No. It won’t work, because nothing works. He’ll short-circuit it or something and leave you trapped in it.”

Jon looks incredibly entertained by the mental image. Traitor. No matter. Edward will be victorious, and he will say I Told You So and it will be the best day of his life! The mighty Batman, brought down by a devastating combination of brains and brawn!

“Why did you call us here, Edward.”

“To gaze upon the majesty of the Destructor.”

That provokes laughter-actual, non-supervillain laughter that leaves them clutching at each other.

“Really? You…this just keeps getting better.”

It’s a shame the switch to turn on the electric floor is so far away. He should have known they wouldn’t appreciate his genius! He should have called Oswald…but Oswald’s been in such a poor mood lately.

Humph.
“Kitty-”
“I know, I know-”
“It-”
“Can’t believe-”

One, full sentences. This refusal to speak like normal people is annoying and unsettling. Two, rude. The name is fitting—it will be the destruction of Batman.

They finally get themselves under control enough to straighten up, but Kitty’s still grinning broadly and Jon’s eyes are glittering with amusement.

“Tell us all about how it goes.” Jon says smoothly. “Get it on video.”

“Oh, I will. You’ll see.”

“Mm-hm. We should be-”

“Things to do-”

Gooooood. Do they not realise how irritating that is? Or how cre-yes. Yes, they do, it’s on purpose. Nngh.

“Best of luck, Edward.”

“Don’t get stuck!”

He’ll regret it if he shoots them. He knows he’ll regret it, if only because he can’t shoot them both at once and whichever he doesn’t hit will not be happy. But ohhhhhhh it’s so tempting. So very tempting.

No matter. He will succeed where they—and everyone else—have failed and they’ll see who’s laughing then, hm? And he will get it on video, to rub in their faces as often as he possibly can.

THE END
AN: Soooooooooo apparently the new season of *Gotham* is gonna be Scarecrow’s time to shine. I’m not proud. I made a noise that may or may not have sounded like a dying barn owl and startled the dog.

*I am proud. I am ashamed on your behalf.*

Aw, c’mon. You were a little happy, right?

*We’ll see if this brat can deliver.*

*Gotham*-verse, sort of. (He was. He’s just unwilling to admit it.)

*We’ll see. Heaven help everyone involved if this goes south.*

* * *

Kitty texts her mother again, just to be sure she and Ada are okay, and slumps into the unforgiving hospital chair. She’s here all the time, you’d think the staff would get her a better one. Humph.

“Kitty?”

“Jonathan, hey.”

He’s…better. A little. Still drugged, more often than not, but they’ve eased him off enough so he’s a little loopy more than unconscious. And sometimes he’s just tired more than anything.

She’s petty. She’ll admit it. She wore her ‘I Told You So’ shirt as often as humanly possible for about two weeks. That might be why the staff hasn’t given her a better chair…oh, well. Pride before comfort, and when he’s awake she’s usually sitting on his bed, anyway.

“How’re you feeling?”

“Little foggy.” He blinks a few times and flails a hand in the general direction of the television. “Why’s there a riot?”

“I don’t know.” She checks her phone-Mum’s fine, she and Ada are locked in a McDonald’s bathroom. “Some sort of chemical weapon. Tetch’s virus, they’re not saying much.”

“Mm.”

He yawns and pokes the IV in his hand. She swats at his fingers.

“Let it alone.”

“If it’s going to itch this much, it should be doing something productive. Like giving me superpowers.”

“It’s productive, it’s keeping you alive and mostly sane.”

“Other people in this city have superpowers.” he grumbles, but he settles for gripping her wrist and fiddling with her bracelet, eyes fixed on the live footage of murderous girl scouts. “What are they doing?”
“I have no idea.”

He snorts, slides a finger under the bracelet.

“This is very disorganized.”

She chokes on air.

“Are you seriously *judging a biological attack*?”

“I am! Look at this! How much of this is placebo, or uninfected people joining in because why not, or—”

“You are horrible!” she hisses, because Jonathan you cannot be serious the city is literally on fire. He gives her a tired smile.

“Side effect of growing up with a mad scientist?”

“Did you just—”

“And of being experimented on?”

“You’re not funny.”

“You’re laughing.”

“It’s incredulous laughter, you monster!”

He grins at her, utterly unrepentant, and fine, maybe it is disorganized, but still. You don’t just sit here and judge people’s attempts to destroy Gotham. If nothing else, it has to be rude. Right?

Or maybe not. She wouldn’t know. But. You shouldn’t do it.

“You’d do it better, I suppose?”

“Mm-hm.”

“The fact that you think so scares me. Just so’s you know.”

“We both know you have a murder contingency plan.”

“It’s Gotham, you have to have one of those—”

“You should have a ‘spread mass pandemonium’ plan to go with it—”

They shut up as an old woman with a shotgun appears on camera. She’s quickly lost in the crowds, though, and Jonathan resumes toying with her bracelet.

“I would have done it better. You don’t unleash a virus on people, then you don’t have a control group because it’s contagious.”

“That’s usually the idea—”

“No. No, no.” He swallows and makes an irritated gesture. “You want the group of people with… whatever you’ve done, you want them, and then you want the normal group, and you watch them. For science.”
“If you say so, love.” She squeezes his wrist. “Go back to sleep, huh? I think you’re a little out of it.”

He hums and shoots a dark glare towards the screen.

“I still say it’s disorganized.”

“You would.” She picks up her phone again, texts Mum. “Want me to turn this off?”

“No, it’s fine. What if the zombie hoards come this way?”

“Don’t even joke.”

All the same, she eyes her backpack. The number of books she has to carry in that thing…they’re heavy. She could knock someone out with them, probably. She’ll have to hope so. Just in case.

THE END
Did I cackle while writing this? Yes. Did I pause and ponder what might be wrong with me? For a second or two.

Logically, they know bodies are heavy. Of course they are. The average human is one hundred and fifty to two hundred pounds, after all.

But knowing is not the same thing as knowing, intimately, how heavy a human body really is.

Now, considering how many people have died in their care, it’s quite frankly astounding that they’ve made it this far without having to dispose of their own victims. But that’s what the orderlies were-for.

You just can’t get good help these days…that’s the problem now. The still mass on the floor, with vomit still seeping from its mouth, was once the help. But the idiot went and nearly got them captured by Batman, and it was sheer dumb luck that let them ditch him.

So, really, it’s his own fault that he died screaming. Or, rather, gurgling after he threw up.

But now…now comes the issue of getting rid of him. He’s in the way. Sooner or later, he’ll start to decompose. He’ll attract vermin.


Kitty kicks the mountain of flesh. It barely even jiggles. Jonathan grimaces. He’s going to throw his back out and he’s not even forty…he’s regretting most of the life choices that led him here.

“Now what?”

“I didn’t plan for this.”

“On three?”

It’s as good a plan as any.

It doesn’t work—she gets the arms and he gets the legs and between them they…sort of…lift it. Not enough to be practical, but parts of it are off the ground.

They settle, in the end, for dragging it. This brings with it the unexpected dislocation of the shoulders, which adds an extra level of difficulty. But they get it, at least, to the head of the back staircase.

“Now what?”

They look at the steep stairs, leading down into the dark, and then at the corpse, slack-limbed and unfairly heavy. Then they look at each other, and the decision is made.
At this point, the sorry bastard’s suffered plenty of indignities. What’s one more?

Pushing is hard, but they manage to shove it enough so that it…rolls…down the stairs, thudding and smacking its hands and feet against the walls. It gets stuck a few times, but in the end, it’s lying in a crumpled heap at the foot of the stairs, bruised, bloodied, and broken.

“We could leave him there. Like he fell.”

“He’s blocking the emergency exit.”

“True.”

They go back upstairs for a snack, semi-hoping that some passing Samaritan will see the body and spare them having to move it further. But no one comes and it’s clear that if they want it out of the way, they’ll have to do it themselves.

They haul it away just enough to open the emergency exit. It leads into the alley, where the dumpsters are, and that’s fine. It’s Gotham, there’s a fifty percent chance of finding a body in the dumpster. They’ve found their share.

Getting it in there is, of course, another matter entirely.

“We should have dismembered him.”

“Too late now.”

They end up dragging it behind the dumpster, tossing a few trash bags over it, and calling it good. If it’s still here when they get new help, they’ll worry about it then.

THE END
My two major feelings about the premiere (could be spoilers):
1. Well, it took three seasons + one episode and a faceful of fear toxin, but Oswald got a Jim hug. Sorta.
2. THE FUCKERS WHO HAVE MANHANDLED AND TORMENTED MY PRECIOUS BABY CRANE DESERVE LITERAL HELL AND I WILL NOT BE SATISFIED UNTIL THAT HAPPENS.

Warden Reed awakens in a dark room, strapped to a gurney. What in the world...what is the meaning of this? What happened?

"You awake?" He is confused. "Wake up." Something heavy smashes against his knee and he yelps, tries to draw it to safety and can't. "That's better."

"What do you want?"

"You had a patient by the name of Jonathan Crane."

He regrets ever taking that one on. If he'd known he was going to bring this much trouble, he'd have insisted on sending him elsewhere.

"Really?"

The heavy object-a pipe, he thinks now-smacks the side of the gurney, near his head, and he flinches.

"I don't like your tone."

"What is wrong with you?"

"Nothing is wrong with me. There's plenty wrong with you, though..."

Click.

Reed's first, slightly hysterical, thought is I've been kidnapped by a little girl? His second thought is why is she holding a melon baller?

Wait.

He recognizes her. She used to try to visit Crane. Made his life very difficult. Refused to take 'he is unstable and unable to see visitors' for an answer.

"Hi." She smiles at him. He doesn't like that smile. "And how are we feeling?"

"What do you want?" Where is he? The lighting is poor-it's just a desk lamp, throws a beam around him and her and leaves the rest of the room in shadow.

"You, Mister Reed, have been difficult from day one." she informs him, holding up the melon baller
and looking from it to him. “But all right. This is a mental hospital.” ‘This’? He’s still in Arkham? Oh, god- “But then you went and sold him off to some highly questionable people. This is Gotham, Mister Reed. They could have been planning to dismember him or worse.” He doesn’t like the melon baller. He’s never really cared before, but he cares now, very much. “So, really, the question you should be asking is what is wrong with you? He could have been killed!”

“I didn’t want our partnership to start like it did, Reed.” WHAT THE HELL- “I mean, we’ve settled our differences, but I didn’t want to start like THAT.”

Another figure appears, this one…this one isn’t human. It’s familiar, though-he’s seen it on the floor of Crane’s cell often enough.

A scarecrow.

“Please-”

“That’s what he said, isn’t it? So. Many. Times.” God no- “But YOU had to be an asshole, and here we are today.”

Maybe if he closes his eyes, it will all go away, be a bad dream…

“No-no, don’t do that…keep his eyes open for me, would you?”

WHAT.

Scratchy fingers force an eyelid open and cold metal touches the outside of his eye socket.

He’s not proud. He blacks out when the pressure grows and comes to when a wad of cotton is being pressed into…into…

Oh god no no please no she didn’t they didn’t-

The scarecrow-monster is laughing, hands clutching the gurney. Kitty Richardson draws her finger off the cotton and nods.

“It really does look like a grape.”

He’s screaming, he realizes distantly. He doesn’t remember starting, but now he can’t stop. Burlap fingers force his other eyelid up and slightly warm metal touches the socket-

-and digs in.

He doesn’t get to pass out this time, which means he can feel the tearing and pain pain pain and his vision goes dark.

It doesn’t come back. He hears a mechanical whirring and then a glass is pressed to his lips.

“Drink up! You’ll need your strength.”

The scarecrow-monster finds this hilarious.

“Need a little help?”

“Maybe.”

The fingers grip his jaw and whatever’s in the glass
pours over his tongue and down his throat. He gags, tries to spit it out, and the fingers force his mouth closed and stroke his throat. He wants to vomit but he can’t he can’t he can’t-

“My turn.” the monster hisses, and he feels it bending over him. “Are you sorry, Reed?”

He nods, or thinks he does, and the thing scoffs.

“You will be.” There’s an odd clinking sound. “Little Jack Horner sat in a corner, drinking a milkshake of eyes! He put in his thumb, and pulled out some scum, and said, ‘oh dear god, WHY?”

“Not bad.”

“I know.”

HISSSSS!

Bitterness floods his mouth and nose and he coughs, tasting bloody vanilla at the tip of his tongue, and heaves against the restraints. It’s touching him IT’S TOUCHING HIM with those rough fingers pressing against the cotton no no please no PLEASE-

“Scream for me.” it whispers in his ear, spider legs tickling his skin. “Come on. Scream.”

Reed obliges.

THE END
Lucky Guess

Kitty’s not expecting Jim Gordon to call her.

She only answers the strange number because she’s expecting another call, and even then she only stays on the line because Mum would know, somehow, if she just hung up and her Disappointment would be felt all the way from London.

But she’s not happy.

“What do you want?”

What? She’s lived in Gotham since she was two, that’s bound to have some sort of effect on her manners, Mum or no.

Gordon, to his credit, remains unphazed.

“Have you seen Jonathan Crane lately?”

One, how many Jonathans does he think she knows? Two, if she had, she wouldn’t be telling him. The last time they were anywhere near each other, Jonathan hadn’t…

“That idiot in charge of Arkham won’t let me see him.” she snaps. “So no, Detective, I haven’t.”

Not for lack of trying. Arkham was the worst place they could have sent him, he’d been doing…a little better…at the hospital, he’d recognized her.

“Why?” she continues. “Has something happened?”

Oh, god, there wasn’t some sort of patient riot or anything, was there? She hasn’t seen anything, but this is Gotham, things get covered up so as not to cause mass panic, and-

“No,” Gordon says carefully, “I just wondered.”

She hears the unspoken connection to a case and counts to five. That does nothing to stop her voice from shaking.

“If anything’s happened to him, it’s your fault.” she says, because it’s all his fault, if he didn’t have to play the damn hero- “So you can fuck off.”

She hangs up, Mum’s Disappointment be damned, and sinks onto her couch. Today was a good day, and now it isn’t, and that’s one more thing to hold Jim Gordon responsible for.

Before this, before everything, she’d always considered herself to be a believer in Karma. Don’t get involved, things will sort themselves out in the end. But Gordon has gone along his happy life while her best friend has lost his and-

Not for the first time, she wants him dead. But not in an easy accident or something-something painful, public, reputation-destroying. He did this.

The fact that he’d asked, though…

If anyone would have found a way out of Arkham, it would be Jonathan. He was the one who found that little boarded-up passageway between the auditorium and the old science building, the one that
had burned to a husk.

He would have gone home, probably, to familiar surroundings. She doubts he’s there, because this is Arkham, but…

But she’d never forgive herself for not checking, either.

And Gordon may be an impulsive bastard, but he’s no fool. He’ll look there eventually.

* * *

The Crane house looks the same as she remembers it. The only thing missing is the scarecrow, but the elements have probably gotten to that.

It’s overgrown and it doesn’t look like anyone’s been here—nature’s already starting to swallow the front porch.

She doubts he’s here. He was never particularly fond of the place, not after what happened to his mom, but it’s familiar. Far enough out of town, too, to avoid attention.

The spare’s where it always was, inside the fake wasp’s nest a little ways above the door (and yeah, she has to climb on the rocker to reach, which is highly unfair).

The place looks empty enough, but that doesn’t mean much of anything.

“Jonathan?” Please be here…

She hasn’t been in here since Before, and even then she wasn’t over that much. Gerald Crane was… not okay. But she’s still pretty sure all the science equipment on the kitchen table is new.

There’s a noise and she turns around, hand reaching for something to use as a weapon, and stills.

He’s not…he isn’t…

He hasn’t changed much. Little thinner than he used to be, and the robe hanging off him looks like an inmate’s uniform, but he’s on his feet and lucid enough, at least, to be seeing her.

“Jonathan?” He doesn’t answer. “Oh my god-”

Okay, so maybe surprise-hugging him isn’t the best idea, but he doesn’t panic and he’s warm and here and Jesus-

“Hi, Kitty.”

She squeezes him and he hugs her back in that ridiculous ‘what is a hug’ way he’s always done.

He’s okay. He’s okay, he got out of there one way or another and she’ll have to ask, but she really could not care less right at this second.

“God, it’s good to see you, I tried to come visit but that bastard wouldn’t let me, and then Gordon called asking if I’d seen you and I told him to fuck off but then I got to thinking maybe-and-and it was just a lucky guess but I couldn’t just not check and-” She cuts herself off. “What happened?”

He sighs, breath ruffling her hair, and she feels him half-turn to look at something.

“It’s a long story, Kitty.” he says. “Come on. I’ll explain, I swear, just…not in here.”
Fair enough.

THE END
Flu Season

Kitty rolls over for the thousand-and-first tissue of the afternoon and silently curses the Riddler. He did this to them. HE DID THIS. TO THEM. ON PURPOSE.

Plague bearer.

When she feels better—or dies and comes back as a vengeful poltergeist, whichever’s first—she is going to find him and she is going to hurt him. Sneeze near her, will he? He’ll be lucky to sneeze again when she’s through with him.

The shower shuts off and a minute later, the bathroom door opens and steam fills the room. Jonathan appears in the middle of it, practically a wraith, and shambles over to the bed with a hoarse, “I’ll kill him.”

One day. One day.

But not right now—moving makes her dizzy and besides, Jonathan’s now doubly-warm after his shower and she’s not willing to sacrifice that.

She squeezes against his side and wheezes, “Can we frame him for something terrible? Set everyone else on him instead?”

“Hrm.” His hand comes up and he knots his fingers in her hair. “Maybe.”

It’ll do.

They stay there for a while, until the steam’s all gone, and she’s starting to drift off when he nudges her and rasps, “Medicine.”

Oh.

Right.

They’ve taken to leaving the medicine in the kitchen, because that ensures they eat with it like you’re supposed to. Unfortunately, getting up is a lot harder than it used to be.

But the medicine is calling, and they manage to struggle up and shuffle out there in a fair impression of a pair of zombies. Food—there might be some leftover chicken soup in the fridge, if it really is Wednesday and not Friday, and then pills, and then the sweet, sweet release of sl-

“HIIII!”

The fire alarm is going off. Why is the fire alarm going—oh.

Oh, no.

It’s not the fire alarm, it’s worse. Fire alarms can be shut off. Harley Quinn…not so much. At least the clown isn’t here…

Jonathan starts to cough, glasses sliding halfway down his nose, and Kitty sneezes. Harley vaults over a chair to get to them.

the best medicine but ya know-”

“Harleen. No.”

It’s probably the loopiness of the fever, but Kitty figures she can spare a thought for, *he must be sick, his accent’s never that pronounced.* And, a second later, *shame we’re both sick.*

Harley steamrolls over him with an unreasonably cheery, “I always figured there was somethin’ to a big ol’ hug, y’know, the kind your gramma gave when you got in the house-”

“No.”

“-so jus’ hold still and you’ll be better in no time-”

“Harley,” she wheezes, and *finally* the girl shuts up. “If you’re going to hug someone, hug Eddie. He deserves it.”

“Eh, later. Go siddown, I’ll make ya somethin’ real nice.”

Harley…look. They’re not great cooks. Kitty will admit this. But. Harley…Harley makes it look really delicious and then you bite in and realize she put mustard in as a secret ingredient. People have probably died from her cooking. (Shame Joker isn’t among them…)

All the same, they’re really in no shape to protest, and she shoves them onto a couch that’s been neglected for about two weeks.

“Don’t. Move.”

Once humming is coming from the kitchen, Jonathan sighs and drops his head onto hers.

“Is her voice naturally that shrill?”

“I don’t know.”

“Kill me.”

“You’re not leaving me alone with her.”

He huffs, breath warm against her hair, and murmurs, “She’ll probably kill us both anyway.”

Probably, Kitty thinks despondently. And it wasn’t…that bad…of a day. The mooks were staying out of the way, Batman hadn’t come crashing through the window…

Why. Why must something always go wrong.

She yawns and burrows into his robe a little bit. May as well die comfy.

And, hopefully, with the knowledge that Harley really will go and hug that green fucker. She probably will.

And that, Kitty thinks, is the most fitting punishment of all.

THE END
And that’s why, when you’ve got an unused part of Arkham, you destroy it rather than block it off. Too many uses. Ways out, torture chambers, weird kinky dungeons…

Jonathan’s woozy, a little, but steadily becoming less woozy. The medicine they give him to ‘control’ Scarecrow has some nasty side effects, but he’s been quietly skipping them for the last couple of days. As such, Scarecrow is…present and accounted for.

He’s almost missed him. It was getting quiet in there.

It’s cold down here, though, which means Scarecrow will not shut up about it. And it’s cold enough that he’s not even going with his usual ‘huddle together for warmth’ nagging, he’s just complaining.

It’s fucking cold. They starved you in there. You lost like, eight pounds. LOOK AT YOU.

Almost out.

McDonald’s, McDonald’s, McDonald’s!

…no.

You’re a disgrace.

Well, that’s enough of having missed him, he now misses the medicine.

“IT’s freezing.” Kitty plasters against his side and there’s suddenly an ice-cold hand pressed against his face. “See?”

“Kitty-!” He flails away and she laughs at him. “Why? What did I do to you? I thought you loved me.”

“How do you manipulate anyone into doing anything.” Drugs and terror, mostly. All the same, he eyes her oversized (ahh, the perils of being miniscule) shirt, weighs the pros and cons, and decides that yes, it’s worth it. “Really, inquiring mi-ah!”

He strikes, digging cold fingers down the back of her shirt and against that spot at the small of her back that makes her shiver when it’s so much as brushed against.

“That certainly helps.”

She jabs his ribs and he’s just reclaiming his arm when there are…footsteps. And voices. Footsteps and voices that are not theirs.

…

Are there urban explorers down here?
DIBS.

Wait.

I WANT NEW FRIENDS.

You murder eighty percent of your ‘new friends’.

Like you don’t.

The voices grow louder. Jonathan is sensing…frat boys.

There are few creatures he despises more than frat boys. They’re up there with the God-fearing fools and the high-voiced, hormone-driven girls (because women have more self-respect) that attempt, from time to time, to…flirt at him.

He needs to kill one of those soon. This last visit had one five-page letter that was both error-riddled and horrifyingly graphic. Kitty had not been pleased. Harley had taken it and nothing had come of that. At least, nothing that he knows about.

The louder the voices get, the more convinced he is that they do belong to the dreaded frat boys. On the bright side, they have lanterns. They’ll be taking those. Probably any money they’ve got on them, too, and quite possibly any outer layers.

This is the one major perk of plotting an escape—you can ready yourself to rob by quietly borrowing a gun. Kitty’s got it. She’s not a great shot but she’s also not coming off of a month-long drug regimen and is therefore the better choice.

There are two frat boys. They round the bend and stop, face scrunching up in shock.

BLAM!

They’re not dead WHAT WHAT WHAT WAS THAT WHAT WAS THAT!

Something small and hard and fast just flew past his arm, slicing open his sleeve. There’s a small ping! from behind him and then one of the boys goes down, head half-open.

She actually hits the other one—or perhaps he dies of fright, Jonathan can’t be sure. He’s too busy attempting to breathe.

OUR LIFE FLASHED BEFORE MY EYES.

“Kitty?”

“You look terrible.” She pulls on his shirt until he bends down on autopilot, presses her lips to his forehead. “I don’t think you’re ill…”

“Maybe put the.” He swallows and tries again. “The gun down, Kitty.”

“What? I got them. It’s fine.”

JESUS TAKE THE WHEEL.

She props it against the wall, though, crouches down to pick up the blood-spattered lantern.

“Huh. I’m not risking brain matter, but they might have money…you’re sure you’re feeling all right,
love? You look about to faint.”

“Just, ah…just a wave. The pills, you know. Give me a minute.”

Aww. You don’t want to hurt her feelings.

No, she’ll say it was intentional, attempt it again, and possibly hit me this time.

…that makes more sense.

THE END
The thing with mind control is that there are levels. Sometimes, you’re fully aware of what you’re doing. Other times, you might know where you are, but not why. And sometimes, you’re fully asleep. Maybe snatches of reality trickle in, like a sleepwalking episode, but not much.

Coming out of that third level, the deep level, is unpleasant. Like awakening from an unexpected, unwanted nap.

The last thing Jonathan Crane remembers is suffering a moment of absolute stupidity and agreeing to a meeting with his...colleagues. He has no idea why it seemed like a good idea...yes he does. Joker. Or. Jack Napier, that’s right, he finally got the proper combination of medication to handle that mess. Absurd, if he’d still been Arkham’s director at the time they wouldn’t have this problem...incompetent fools…

Never mind. He’d wanted to see for himself, a little. And Kitty had been curious, too, and everyone else had been going, so off they went.

And that little sneak had done something to them all! Typical. Once upon a time, when it had been a small handful of professionals, this sort of thing never happened. But oh, that damned clown...no sense of etiquette, none, he was probably raised by squirrels…

He breathes deeply. A moment later, he’s roused again by a whimper from a man in front of him. He doesn’t know the man.

He gasses him anyway, to try and feel better, before stalking off down the burning, abandoned street. He’ll find that clown, make no mistake, and make him pay . You do not make a fool out of Jonathan Crane and get away with it, oh no.

Batman won’t save you this time, Joker , he thinks viciously. And neither will little Miss Quinn; either of them.

But first, Kitty.

He doesn’t have to look for long, as it turns out. He’s scarcely set foot on the next street when a car honks and she calls out, “Going my way, stranger?”

It would just figure that she found what has to be the only red convertible in this neighborhood.

He hops in all the same. She looks unharmed, at least. Small favors- oh!
Not that he’s complaining, you understand, but he was not expecting that level of kiss.

“I missed you,” she murmurs, lips moving to his jawline. “In case it wasn’t obvious.”

“What day is it?”

“Don’t care, missed you anyway.”

Fair enough.

Police sirens start up a few blocks away and she pulls back and refastens her seat belt. Jonathan has never felt overly charitable towards police, but this really isn’t helping.

“Think they’ll believe it wasn’t our fault?”

“I don’t think they’ll care.” She hits the gas. He pushes the seat back as far as it will go and closes his eyes. “I ran into Ivy.”

“And.”

“She remembers more. Apparently the new Quinn took over at some point. Her and Jervis.”

Is that so. Up until now, Jonathan had been willing to give Jervis the benefit of the doubt. He’s a small man, and not deceptively wiry—just small and almost frail. Joker could have overpowered him easily. But willing involvement, threatened or not...

Hmmm.

“You’re not hurt, are you?”

“Not a scratch. You?”

“I don’t think so. But if you wanted to conduct a further examination, nurse, I wouldn’t mind.”

“Whatever you think is best, Doctor Crane.” They slip into one of Gotham’s many traffic jams. Another few blocks and they should be at a safe house, theoretically one that the GCPD hasn’t found. With all this chaos, it shouldn’t be hard to disappear. They’ve done it before, with far less mayhem to hide behind. “Seriously, though. You all right, love?”

“I’m fine. Furious, but fine.”

“Everyone’s furious, I think. If Joker isn’t murdered by nightfall, I’ll be surprised.”

He’ll be disappointed. Then again, everyone’s probably going to ground, so the clown may live to see another sunrise.

Shame, that.

Well, the police have not swarmed the apartment building, and there doesn’t appear to be any sign of Batman or his little helpers. Good. They can shower (how long has it been since they’ve showered?), and order food, and find out what the hell is going on in this town.

“That little brat will pay for this,” Kitty’s seething as they shuffle up the back stairway. “I expect this nonsense from Joker. But that little chit needs to learn her damn place! You don’t see this from Oswald’s group, do you? Maybe Eddie’s got the right idea about those robots, after all.”
Jonathan will sooner die than tell the man so. Edward is insufferable on a good day already.

“Oswald doesn’t date the help,” he points out. “Which is why none of them suffer these sorts of delusions. They’re expendable and they know it.”

“They should know it.” The apartment is empty. Good. “Sorry little...never mind. Shower or food first?”

He’s starving, but now that he can take a moment to just be, he can feel the grit on his skin and he doesn’t like it at all.

“Shower,” he says, peeling his coat off and mentally dubbing it a Lost Cause. “I have no idea what day it is, and at this point, I don’t want to know.”

But first, water. If he passes out from dehydration, he will not be happy. Not that he’s particularly happy now, but...

The tap water is tepid and unappealing, but he drinks three glasses of it anyway. Kitty’s right, about the girl. Joker has no manners. Tetch is a spineless weakling. No, ninety percent of this debacle can and will be blamed on the interloper. At least the first one had brains.

“I suspect,” he says, glaring at his belt until he gets it loose, “that we’ll all have to get together and draw straws for who gets to go first.”

“Likely.” Kitty tosses her boots aside and just like that, she’s lost four inches. Ha. “I hope we’re last.”

“And why is that?”

“Murder rights.” She grins up at him. “C’mon. Our weak water pressure is calling.”

THE END
“--called me Happy Feet! To my face! As he rammed into me at full speed!” Oswald is snarling, fingers flexing dangerously around the stem of his wine glass. “Just because I wasn’t in full control doesn’t mean I missed that.”

Leave it to Oswald to be awake for insults. Jonathan would almost feel pity for Harvey Bullock if he hadn’t brought it on himself.

And, well, Bullock is annoying.

“I’ll have his head--” Oswald tosses back his wine like a shot and pours himself a new glass. “--preserved in formaldehyde and displayed in my house if it’s the last thing I do!”

It shouldn’t be as funny as it is, but Jonathan has to take a hasty swallow of his pumpkin ale to avoid infuriating the little man even more. Thankfully, his barely-contained snicker goes unnoticed.

“Oh, come now, Oswald,” Edward says, voice dripping with disdain. “Batman won’t let you within five feet of him. Unless you want to choke on a handful of pills?”

“Batman can’t be everywhere at once, Edward,” Oswald snips. “You’ll be a fine distraction, with that big mouth of yours.”

“Excuse me--”

Kitty sighs and leans back against him, bottle hanging from her fingers.

“Why do they always do this.”

“I don’t know.” He tries to slide a finger into one of her jean pockets and can’t. “These aren’t pockets.”

“Curse of women’s clothing. Why do you think I steal from you?”

He gives up on the pocket (pocket...humph, to what, a Barbie doll?) and settles for a belt loop. Oswald and Edward are actively bickering now and he’s not the only one laughing; Mary Dahl is hiding her face in Waylon Jones’ massive forearm, ringlets shaking with giggles. To be fair, it’s quite the sight. Oswald’s in a wheelchair, legs thrust out and encased in plaster from ankle to hip. Edward has casts, too; his left arm and leg are useless to him, and he’s reduced to gesturing with his (neon green) crutch.

Is it so wrong to hope this turns into a physical brawl? They’re evenly matched, really. Oswald’s chair is electric.

“Who do you think would win?” he asks Kitty, taking another swallow of his ale. She hums.
“Oswald. He’s used to fighting injured and, well, we’ve seen Eddie run.”

They have seen Edward run. Bless his heart, he is not...athletically inclined.

(He runs like a drunken giraffe.)

“I could probably incite them. A needle here, a jab there…”

“Don’t.”

“As though you wouldn’t be laughing.”

“Still.”

“I could, though. It’d be easy...appeal to Oswald’s pride and Edward’s ego…”

“Jonathan, no. ” She twists around to press a kiss to the corner of his mouth. “Just because you can does not mean that you should.”


“You have no shame.”

“None.”

“--that so, Happy Feet.”

“WAH!”

Oh dear. Edward has a pushed few too many buttons, apparently, because Oswald is suddenly rolling towards him, knife in hand. Edward hops away, knocking over chairs as a tragically effective barrier. Kitty snorts and doubles over, forcing Jonathan to readjust his arm around her waist to keep her from falling off his lap.

“This is the best thing I’ve ever seen in my life.”

“Now who has no shame?”

“Cheeky.”

Any (further) potential injuries are forestalled by the arrival of the one person who has been conspicuously missing since Joker boarded the Sanity Train to Betrayal Town: Matthew Hagen*. Clayface.

As monstrous as poor Waylon has become, Matthew certainly gives him a run for his money. Ten feet tall, with every step he takes making a terrible squelch, it’s understandable that the room goes silent at his arrival.

Well, until Ivy sweeps over to him, predatory smile firmly in place, and purrs, “Matty, darling, you’re late.”

It would figure that the plant would be fond of the clay…

“Where is Joker,” Matthew growls. Well. That’s not something you see every day. Most people are a little more cautious in brushing Ivy off. Strange times.
“Arkham,” Oswald snaps. “But not for long.”

Matthew turns as if to leave and Waylon stands up, tail thrashing behind him and tripping a waitress. Mary dangles off his arm for a second before he notices and sets her on his shoulder.

“You don’t have sole rights to the clown, Hagen,” Waylon warns. “We all got fucked over.”

“You don’t even remember it--”

“That’s not the point--”

“Gentlemen,” Oswald says loudly, as though he wasn’t just about to murder Edward, “not in here. We all have grievances to settle, so why don’t we all sit down and discuss the particulars.”

Hypocrisy or none, everyone settles down and there’s a few minutes of silence while they all enjoy their drinks and get refills. Once the electricity in the air has waned, Matthew leans back in his chair, face breaking into a squiggly grin. Jonathan doesn’t like it.

“Nobody seems to be havin’ any ill effects,” Matthew drawls. Edward snorts.

“Fortunately for Tetch, my brain is unharmed--”

“Not from that.” Everyone’s silent. For once, nobody seems to have any idea what he’s talking about. If this turns out to be Batman… “Didya ever figure out how Joker got to you?”

“Hatter’s chips. The little sneak.”

“Sort of.” Matthew takes a drink (only water for him, alcohol makes him dry and flaky...literally) and grins some more. “But not on you.”

“Clearly on us. Quinn likely--”

“Nope.” Now that his bottle is empty, Matthew holds it up and drips a piece of himself into it. “Just on me.”

It takes a moment for that to make sense, but when it does, oh, boy, does it make sense. A conduit. That they-

*God-

He gags, tasting something sour at the back of his mouth. He’s not the only one, either; Harvey Dent is eating Tic-Tacs like his life depends on it and Edward has apparently forgotten his feud with Oswald in favor of asking frantically, “Are my eyes yellow? Tell me quickly, you useless--”

“Never mind you! Andrew! Get Applegate on the phone, *now* --”

“Ya made us drink *clay* , ya goddamn buffoon, what do I keep ya around fer--”

“Sorry, sir--”

“--fed me a *man* , I’ll kill him for that--”

Kitty hands him a Listerine tab from her purse and he takes it gratefully. So what if it was a year ago, that is disgusting, that is not *sanitary* .

This is Batman’s fault, he decides. He should have taken care of Joker years ago. And once this
whole mess is straightened out, Batman and his little helpers will be the next to go.

But first, Joker. And Harley, and Tetch. But to be honest, he’s mostly interested in the interloper, the one who got in way over her head. If she wants to sit with the adults, she needs to learn her place.

Everyone is shouting and demanding that Harvey share his Tic-Tacs (he’s slapped Scarface to the floor already, resulting in Wesker panicking), and he has a headache.

“Enough.” It’s a skill he has, honed first as a student teacher and then as a doctor, that he doesn’t have to raise his voice to make himself heard. “This isn’t getting anything done.”

Predictably, Edward has something to say.

“And I suppose your vote is to flood Arkham with fear gas.”

Bold of him to assume there aren’t booby traps left over from his time there. But he keeps that to himself. Save things for a rainy day and all.

“Not today,” he says mildly, feigning interest in his nails. “We all want a chance to have it out with the one responsible. Petty squabbling isn’t going to help, so we may as well draw straws or some equally mundane thing and see who goes first.”

He’s expecting resistance. But for once, Oswald just sends for paper straws and a pair of scissors.

They get third crack at the clown. Third is acceptable. Plenty of time to plan, with minimal likelihood of him dying beforehand; Edward gets to go first, followed by Harvey. The gathering breaks up shortly after that, with minimal grumbling, and they board the late train home.

“Seeing as nobody mentioned Neo Joker,” Kitty murmurs, arm looped through his in lieu of trying (and likely failing) to reach the loops on the ceiling, “d’you think she’s fair game?”

“First come, first served.”

“Mm.” The train takes a rough turn and they both glance up to check for bat-shaped hitchhikers. None appear. “Good.”

“Tired?”

“I want my toothbrush.” Her and him both. “And then, yeah. I’m ready for bed.”

“May visions of decapitations dance in our heads,” he deadpans. She pokes him in the arm. “Ow.”

“Really?”

“No.”

Tomorrow, they’ll start their search. Gotham isn’t as big as people tend to think. It’s impossible to hide in it. Oh, yes, they’ll track her down, by hook or by crook, and then they’ll see, they’ll just see how loud their little interloper can scream.

THE END

*I’m not sure which Clayface is meant to be the one in this comic, but seeing as it takes a lot from
B:TAS, I’m going with that one.

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