March of the Penguin

by ScaryScarecrows

Summary

Oswald Cobblepot's rise to power will take time, effort, and no small amount of luck.

Notes

So while Jonathan Crane celebrates that somebody else gets to suffer for a change (if he only knew…), what the hell happened to Oswald's hostage from episode two? Is he dead? Is he missing his eyes? Did he just leave him in the trailer to hope someone found him? Seeing as the poor bastard did laugh at his friend's 'penguin' comment…
Hostage Situation

The boy took one panicked look at the knife and started hop-crawling as far into the closet as possible. Oh, what a child. A naughty little child, apparently. He couldn't imagine frightening his mother with a ruse like this.

Speaking of Mother, he really had to get home soon. She'd be worried.

"Shh, shh. This will only hurt for a minute."

There was a panicked whimper from behind the duct tape, followed by what sounded like an attempt to speak. No. His time to talk was over, since he had failed to convince his own mother of his situation.

"This is your own fault, you know." he said, working his way down

Oh, that BITCH will pay for this!

and gripping his new friend's chin in one hand. "If you'd been better behaved, I wouldn't have to do this."

He was absolutely useless as ransom. Besides, there was money not so far away, in his landlord's house. Surely the man wouldn't mind helping a poor cripple

Oh, she'll pay DEARLY.

who was down on his luck. If he did…well, he'd worry about that later. But for now, he couldn't risk anybody, not even this cretin, describing him. His landlord was risk enough…perhaps he'd grant him an early retirement.

Now, where was that spot…ah. Right there.

He drove the knife-pocket knife, not great, but it was better than nothing-through the soft flesh under the jaw and backwards until he felt it nick bone. Blood spurted onto his hand and clothes-so soon?-and the body he was clutching began to jerk. He removed the knife, resulting in more blood and…bits.

Shame. He'd almost liked this sweater.

He struggled up-he hated having to use the couch for support, but at least there were no witnesses to this-and dragged the still-twitching corpse further into the closet. There. Nice and out of the way. He didn't need to be tripping over that, not now.

Shame, though. There went his retainer.

Although…

Yes. The landlord was a liability, one he could ill-afford. He'd have to be got out of the way.

He dropped back onto his makeshift bed with a weary sigh. Later. He'd deal with the landlord later.

THE END
Dove Marquis had never had a day like this. It probably wasn't the worst day ever-no, that would be
day she moved to this godforsaken town-but it was in her top five.

She'd been minding her own business, debating on whether to grab a sandwich or a slice of pizza,
when a really nice car had driven up alongside her, the door had opened, and some guy in a nice suit
that barely covered an unnatural amount of muscles seized her arm and yanked her in.

She was lucky the bastard didn't dislocate her shoulder.

"I'm off the clock, asshole! Let me go right now or I'll-

"Shut up."

Oh. He had a gun. Okay. Right. That changed things a little.

She remembered the street kid crisis-that had been creepy-and wondered if there was going to be a
hooker crisis now. Oh, god. What about Janine? Would she be okay? She was just a kid (stupid kid,
ran away from home), what would she think when she got back to their apartment and Dove wasn't
there?

Oh, hell no! If she was going to end up dismembered, she'd be damned sure to bite off something-
ear, finger, dick-and make sure they caught the bastard before this got out of control.

The car stopped. Maybe she could run for it. Before she could really entertain the idea, the scary man
with the gun and too much muscle gripped her upper arm and tugged her out of the car.

"Be good."

"Fuck you."

That earned her a sharp twist that nearly knocked her off her feet. Ow. Spots.

I'm sorry, mama.

"Here ya are, boss."

"You didn't manhandle her, did you?" She couldn't see the speaker. He was in a chair that was
turned away from her, but his voice made her skin crawl.

"Um…"

There was a low sigh.

"I told you to be gentle with our guest."

The chair turned. She didn't know what she'd been expecting, but this certainly wasn't it.

Quite frankly, the guy looked weird. Beaky nose, hair that looked wet but clearly wasn't, formal
wear, fangs—exactly the kind of guy that probably couldn't get lucky and turned into Jack the Ripper
as a result.

But at least maybe she could claw those piercing eyes out of his skull.
"Release her please, Mario."

Mario. She would file that name away in case she got out of this.

The bruising grip on her arm slackened and she jerked away from him. The man in the chair stood up, gripping an umbrella, and waddled over to them. Ouch. Somebody had taken a dislike to him—feet were not supposed to point that way. Somehow the waddle did nothing to make her feel safer.

"I don't think you'll be needed now, Mario."

"Okay, boss."

Okay. So big-and-ugly was going away. Maybe she could take this…this penguin man and make a break for it.

A door closed behind her and she shivered. It was freezing in here. Where were they, anyway, a warehouse?

Yup, some kind of warehouse by the docks—she could hear the commotion and smell the fish. Ugh. She’d always hated fish.

"Apologies for my associate." Could he just not speak? Was that possible? "I gave him instructions to invite you into the car, but…won't you sit down?"

Maybe she wasn't going to end up dismembered. Was he important? Maybe he was important and couldn't be seen asking for her services.

"Who the hell are you?"

He gave her a hideously false grin and settled back into his leather chair.

"My name is Oswald Cobblepot." Ouch. She could only imagine what teachers did when they came to his name on the roll call list. "I have an offer to make you."

Called it!

"Fifty for an hour." she grumbled. "But it's cold in here, would it kill you to check into a hotel?"

"Not that kind of offer, madam."

Madam! She was not that old! Fuck it, services denied.

"Not interested."

"Oh, you will be." He leaned forward. "Can I get you anything? Tea, hot chocolate, a snack?"

Laced with roofies, no doubt.

"No."

"Suit yourself." She had never wanted out of anywhere as much as she wanted out of here. "I want to hire you on a permanent basis."

Huh.

"I don't understand."
"I need an errand runner, if you will, one that won't be so easily noticed. Or traced. You can gather information for me as well."

"That's not really in my job description…"

"I'm giving you a new job now. If you accept, of course."

"Are you some kind of mob guy?"

"In a manner of speaking."

"So you want a spy."

"I will need you to spend a lot of time in the theatre district."

"Why?"

"I'll explain if you accept the offer."

"You're paying me for this, right?"

He nodded.

"Of course. There is a bit of risk if you get caught, and I will not be coming to help you if that should happen."

Okay. That was fair. No one had ever helped her before, there was no reason for them to start now.

"How much?"

A small wad of bills landed in her lap.

"Will that be suitable for an advance?"

Oh, yeah.

"Yes."

"Good. You are to tell no one. As far as any old acquaintances are concerned, you disappeared."

Farewell, Janine. May we meet again.

"That's fine."

Cobblepot stood up again and looked at her. She tried to maintain eye contact and failed miserably.

"We can't have you working for me looking like that."

"Sorry for being broke."

He gave her another strange smile. If her hair wasn't sticking up like an Anime character's, she'd be surprised.

"Mario will take you where you need to be. Make it subtle, but nice."

Soo…no crop tops? Thank god. They were cold and with the wrong jeans they gave her muffin top.
"Okay. How do I get in touch with you?"

"I'll take care of that."

O-kay, then. Weirdo.

All the same, easy money. She'd take it.

"Okay, then, um, Mr. Cobblepot. What do you want me to start with?"

"I'll let you know, Miss Marquis."

It was creepy that he knew her name, but she didn't really want to know how he knew it.

THE END
Chapter Notes

Just in case y'all didn't know, these have been written spanning from sometime around...S1E4 and up. Some things have been disproven, people have died, et. cetera. If something looks off, it was probably written a few seasons ago.

She hates it when she comes in and finds him sitting in her apartment.

She hates it even more when she comes in and finds him digging through her stuff. It isn't as though she's got anything to hide, but…come on.

"Mr. Cobblepot?"

"Gauze."

"What."

And then she notices that one hand is half-ass-wrapped in a handkerchief, which is now red and slightly drippy. Eww…come on. That's just not fair. Can't his mother deal with this?

"Gauze. You have some, surely."

"Yeah…"

"Go and get it."

Would it kill him to ask nicely?

"Your hand is bleeding."

"I noticed, Miss Marquis. Gauze. Now."

Christ, she's just trying to make conversation. Is that so wrong?

"Here."

She watches him struggle with it for a few minutes, certain that he'd deserved whatever happened and wishing she'd have been there to see it. Oh, well.

"Let me see." Ouch. What a lovely deep hole that is. "What was this?"

"A pin."

"A pin."

"Fish didn't appreciate my gesture of goodwill."

She could have told him that, but then he'd have bitched her out for being insolent. Or possibly worse.
"You should have told me."

"Why would I know?"

"You're a woman. What would you have done?"

Aimed either a lot lower or gone for the throat, but she could just be biased.

"There. It's not her neatest job, but she wasn't really trying. Hopefully this is that cheap, scratchy gauze. "All done."

He snatches his hand back as though she might chop it off. She's tempted, but he probably wouldn't make it easy on her if she did.

It sort of looks like a flipper now. That is not her fault, but hopefully he doesn't notice. If he does, she's going for the bad leg first.

Assuming he doesn't just shoot her…but he's so fond of knives.

Psycho.

"My thanks." He doesn't sound like he means it. "Now my mother won't worry."

Yeah, about that. Couldn't she have done it? Surely she wouldn't have minded. Unless he doesn't really have a mother and is just nuts. That seems plausible. Creepy, but this is Gotham.

"Sure." Hang on. "Is that perfume?"

He grins, that creepy clown-grin that he gets when he's really excited about something. Usually that something is a brutal murder, but as long as it's not hers, whatever.

"Falcone's little Liza is a mole." he reports. "For Fish."

Has anyone ever told him that this obsession with Fish is unhealthy?

"Ah."

"So you are going to be a mole for me."

WHAT.

"S-sir…"

"I need you to get a job. Waitress, dancer, I'm not picky. But get the late shift."

NO. She is not getting paid enough for this! Can't she quit? Or retire and move to Florida?

She's tempted to go and pour herself a nice, stiff drink, but that would involve turning her back to him.

Why me?

"M-Mr. Cobblepot, I…"

"Don't have a choice. I need you inside that building. If you're careful, nothing will happen to you."

Yeah, but sometimes careful isn't enough. Can't she do something else? Anything else! She'll seduce
that big scary one-Butch or whatever his name is.

"I don't think…"

He opens his knife and she vaults out of the chair. All he does is take out a handkerchief and begin to polish it, but she gets the idea.

"It really is vital, Miss Marquis, that you do this for me."

Great. This is just great.

"Yes, Sir."

"Good girl." He puts the knife and handkerchief away, stands up, and pats her cheek. His hand is clammy and it's an effort not to pull away. "I don't care how you do it, just get it done."

Guess it's time to dig out those fishnets again.

And maybe write a will.

THE END
Heh. Rubber ducky.

He presses on its head until it goes under and lets it pop back up amongst the bubbles. Its eyes have rubbed off and the orange beak has streaks of yellow showing through, but who cares? He always makes sure to hide it when bath time is over-he doesn't know why, he just does.

He wonders how Dove is coming along. Part of him wouldn't mind if she got found out and fired-or worse-but the sensible part of him hopes she's successful. Then the Plan may proceed.

Ah, the Plan…the one thing that kept him hitchhiking on that cold, grey road. It hadn't really been the Plan then-just badly thought out revenge against the bitch that had dared do this to him. But it had kept him from toppling over and giving up, at least until those kind souls had given him a ride.

He bats the ducky around in the bubbles for another few minutes before letting it drift towards the side of the tub. The bubbles are starting to disappear and the water is getting cold. Shame. The heat always does wonders for his leg.

He needs to pay Liza a little visit. Hopefully she'll be home this time-it isn't as though he minds breaking in, but it's difficult and half-standing/half-kneeling to pick the lock about kills this dratted leg. How dare people not leave their spare key somewhere predictable, like under the mat!

He pats the ducky on the head and pulls the plug. Tomorrow he'll pay little Miss Liza a social call.

Maybe he'll bring her cannoli…

THE END
Ashes, Ashes

Ow.

Fucking assholes…only in Gotham can you be mugged in broad daylight. She should, she supposes, consider herself lucky that she wasn't raped.

Goody.

She stumbles into her apartment—she could have sworn she locked the door—and is about to seek out a nice bottle of vodka when she catches sight of something that does not belong in this picture.

Namely, her employer.

"A little mischief seems to have befallen you, Miss Marquis."

The floor is swaying. She doesn't want to waltz.

"Once you've cleaned yourself up, perhaps we could…"

His voice trails off as she totters over towards him. She's okay, she's okay. Three more steps and she can sit down and report. The vodka can wait until she's alone and won't be judged for chugging it.

"Miss Marquis?"

"M'gonna hurl."

She does not hurl, thankfully, but she does pitch forwards.

Other, nicer, people would have caught her.

Jim Gordon wouldn't have let me fall.

She doesn't work for any of them. Right before her vision goes, she swears she sees the bastard step aside so that he won't encumber her descent.

Something tells her that Cobblepot failed the 'trust fall' exercise in sixth grade.

She comes to still on the floor, still dressed in her bloody clothing—oh, it's going to be a nightmare to get off now—with a blanket tossed over her shoulders.

"Boss, you shouldn't have."

He doesn't answer and she lifts her head. He isn't here, but she spots a note propped against a water bottle and a little travel tube of Aspirin.

Kindly be cleaned up and coherent when I return.

Oh, she's touched. Truly.

She drags herself off the floor—cheap landlord, would it have killed him to install carpet?—and reminds herself that she hates everyone, ever. Except Ghandi, because only monsters hate Ghandi.

She ignores the Aspirin and the water—could be poisoned—and crawls to the bathroom. She was right-
her clothes do not want to come off and she ends up soaking in a lukewarm bath to loosen them. The water only serves to remind her where every single injury is. Oh, oww. This'll teach her to dress in anything better than 'homeless druggie chic'.

The front door opens up and she makes a panicked lunge for the bathroom lock. She hits it just as the voice calls out, "Miss Marquis?"

"I'm not decent!" She'd love to tell him to get out, but she did that before and got smacked with an umbrella. Who uses umbrellas as weapons, anyway?

"It's been nearly twelve hours."

Shit! She was out for that long? She could have a concussion! What are the signs for that again? Mismatched pupils…um…um…

Her pupils look normal. Good enough.

"I just woke up."

The doorknob rattles and she scrambles for a towel. Jeeze, would a little patience kill him? She's been mugged, for heaven's sake!

At least, she's pretty sure she was mugged. Maybe somebody found out who she works for and tried to send a message. Bah! Some message.

"Hang on!"

Oww. Too much noise. Too much light. Surely she had clothing in here somewhere…ah! Sweats. Screw it, he'd just have to deal.

"Sorry."

"You look a little the worse for wear."

Translation: nobody in their right mind would be seen in public with you.

_right back atcha, Penguin._

"I was mugged."

"Fascinating."

She wishes he'd get out of the way. She'd like to sit down before she faceplants again.

"Um…"

"You haven't forgotten anything, have you? You have a rather sizeable lump on the back of your head."

How does he know this? Does she really want to know how he knows this?

No.

"No, Sir." The floor starts to move again and she straightens up. How dare it move? She won't have it! "I remember everything."
"Good."

He steps aside and she wonders if he was planning to drown her if she forgot. Or pour bleach down her throat or something equally horrible.

She collapses on the sofa and wonders if her face is as puffy as it feels. She pokes it, hears a soft *squish*, and decides that yes, it is.

Great.

"Feeling better?"

"Yes, Sir."

He folds his hands and she tries to rally a little.

"Falcone came to see her yesterday."

"Is that so?"

"Yes." What happened, exactly…? "I don't know exactly what happened, but he took one of her waiters with him when he left."

"Which one?"

She doesn't know their names! She's never been in-on his orders, she might add, so that's not her fault.

"Um…he was blonde, about five-eight, blue eyes…kind of pretty, actually."

"Angelo." Fitting name. "Very well. Was there anything else?"

"Not really…but a couple of cops showed up."

"Who."

"Harvey Bullock and someone I don't know." She doesn't like Bullock. He's arrested her twice-when she wasn't even doing anything, she might add!

"A young man?"


For once, he looks mildly puzzled. Good.

"Thank you, Miss Marquis. That's all, I think."

That wasn't so bad.

"Perhaps next time you'll stay out of the alleyways. Good afternoon."

Stay out of the-! She'd been yanked in!

No matter. He's gone. She can have that drink now.

THE END
"Who is this for, again?"

"Just ask for Edward Nygma."

Huh. What was with this town and weird-ass names?

"Why."

"Never you mind."

"Did he piss you off?" She inspected the basket. It did not seem to be ticking, and it had a fair amount of…cranberry muffins. Okay, then. "Are you trying to send a message or something?"

"Go. Deliver. It."

She waited until his back was turned to gently shake the basket. Was it a smuggling thingy? Maybe the muffins were poisoned!

"You don't want me to be a kiss-o-gram, do you?"

"Excuse me?"

She took that as a no. Good. She'd never wanted to be a kiss-o-gram. Although…maybe she should send one to him. He'd never have to know where it came from.

No, he'd know, and she'd be killed.

"Get going!"

He jabbed her in the ribs with that damn umbrella and she stepped back, rubbing the spot.

"Okay, okay! Sorry."

She was almost to the door when he gave her another jab, this time in the lower back.

She needed to get a better job.

"I need to give this to Edward Nygma…"

"I'll take care of this, Andreas."

Aw, crap.

Jim Gordon crossed his arms and glared at the basket as if it would explode. This thing was actually kind of heavy…would it kill him to let her put it down?

"What is this."

"A gift basket."

"Who is it for."
"Some guy named Edward Nygma."

"Did Cobblepot send you."

"Yes…"

"No."

Some Christmas spirit. Jerk. A cute jerk, maybe, but…nah, she couldn't see herself with a Scrooge.

She hefted the thing up and he stepped back in a hurry. She set it on a nearby desk, crushing several already-crumpled papers underneath. Oops.

"I'm pretty sure it's just a present."

"Why."

"Why should I know? I get jabbed with that umbrella for asking questions."

He switched gears and prodded one of the muffins.

"If you need to be in witness protection services…"

D'aww. Maybe she could coax out some of that dormant Christmas spirit, with enough movies and Christmas lights, and maybe a real tree instead of that crappy plastic one she had now.

"I just need to deliver this to Mr. Nygma. Personally, I might add, so if somebody could go get him or whatever, that'd be great."

"Why Ed."

What part of 'jabbed with umbrella for asking questions' did he not understand? God! She shrugged and looked at her nails.

"I don't know. The boss sent me with the gift basket, that's all I know."

He finally turned away and asked somebody to go get this Ed from…wherever he might be. She took a look around. The main GCPD building was old, like everything else in this town, and it was crumbling. Oh, it was clean enough, if a bit cluttered, but she could see old stains on the walls of the drunk tank.

After standing there in an awkward silence for about five minutes, a rather flustered, bespectacled man appeared.

"You wanted to see me, Detective?"

Gordon jerked his thumb in her direction.

"This young woman has a present for you."

Judging by the blush, the poor dear didn't have this happen very often—if ever. She was tempted to be a kiss-o-gram just to see if she could make him go from 'tomato' to 'fell in a volcano', but decided against it.

But that would probably be a combination of funny and adorable…one day, perhaps.
"My employ…I'm not going to bite him, you know. You can go back to work."

Gordon gave her one last glower—oh, he just shouldn't do that, it might stick and ruin that handsome face—before retreating to his desk. He was still watching them, though, apparently prepared to tackle her if something should happen to the guy in front of her.

"Ma'am?"

Oh, he had manners! That was a nice surprise.

"My employer sent you this." She taps the basket.

"Employer?"

"Oswald Cobblepot."

"I don't know him."

Well. That made this slightly creepy.

"You probably will, hon." she told him. "And just between us…I'd be wary of those muffins."

"Um, thank you. I think." He looked rather frightened, and on impulse she leaned over the desk and gave him a quick, firm, peck on the lips. That got him to turn volcano-coloured.

Why did all the sweet ones have to be working for the damn coppers?

"Sure."

THE END
"I have summoned you all here today because, regrettably, we have a snitch in our midst."

He leans on his umbrella, surveying the motley lot on the dock in front of him. It's cold and wet out here and Dove wishes he'd get on with it already. Besides, it reeks of fish.

"Miss Marquis?"

She's sorry about this, truly she is, but it's either rat the poor soul out or be screwed.

She jabs her finger towards the man on the far right. The look he gives her is beyond scathing, and a second later he cries out, "No! No, no! It's her, she told us how she was gonna poison you-"

'Be quiet, Mister Mash.' Cobblepot hisses. "Miss Marquis knows better than that. Don't you, little Dove?"

She hates it when he calls her that. It always bodes ill.

"Y-yes, sir."

He drapes one arm around her shoulders and she cringes. She can't help it. His hand grips her upper arm and he begins to walk her towards the edge of the dock.

"She knows that if she were to play the Brutus to my Caesar, she would end up as Ophelia."

She'll never be able to enjoy Shakespeare again.

He abruptly turns her away from the edge and begins waddling down the line, towards the unfortunate Mash. She breathes a little easier. Now, if only he'd take his arm off her…

"I can't afford to have a snitch." he continues. "It will jeopardise everything and everyone will pay the price."

She's beginning to cramp, although whether it's from terror or from being forced to walk like this is unknown.

Help.

"So, Mister Mash…was it truly you? Did you actually go to Major Crimes about this last affair?"

Mash neither confirms nor denies. He just points at Dove and spits out, "She said she was gonna poison your coffee, boss."

She tries to muster up a stony glare, but the arm on her shoulders is immensely distracting.
Cobblepot laughs, removes his arm, and pats Mash on the shoulder. Mash begins laughing too, but his eyes are still a little wider than usual.

He's still laughing when the knife slices across his throat.

"Dispose of him, please, gentlemen. Miss Marquis, I have an appointment with Don Maroni."

"Yes, sir."

She's not sure if she should be flattered that he believed her so easily or terrified that he'll do the same to her on somebody else's say-so. No matter.

He opens the car door for her—his mother may be a nut, but she raised him well enough. Apart from the insanity, of course. She starts the car and waits for him to get somewhat situated before hitting the gas.

"Don't speed, please."

Seriously? He's going to be fussy about traffic laws? God.

"Yes, sir." she grumbles, easing back down to a reasonable speed. It's still five miles over the speed limit, but he doesn't seem to notice.

"M-Mr. Cobblepot?"

"What."

"D-did you really think it was Mash?"

"I knew it was Mash."

He made her get him drunk and flirt with him for nothing? She called bull on that…but privately.

"Ah."

He reclines the seat, rests his umbrella next to the door, and closes his eyes. She likes him better when he's laid out like that. She has a better chance of seeing him go for a knife.

"Fourth is undergoing construction."

"Take Sixth. Try not to hit any shopping carts this time."

She

She's only hit one, and that was because some homeless guy left it in the middle of the road. God.

She wants to turn on the radio, but he doesn't like her taste in music and she doesn't want to upset his good mood. She settles for drumming on the steering wheel while they're at a stop light, at least until he tells her to cease immediately.

"Here we are, boss. Want me to open the door?"

He gives her a dark look and she snaps her mouth shut.

"This shouldn't take very long. Just park somewhere and stay in the car."

She waits until he's out of the car and walking away before flipping him the bird and going to park
the car. If she hurries, she might be able to run into a nearby coffee shop to get Mash's blood off her neck.

THE END
"Miss Marquis."

Jesus-! One of these days he'd do that and she'd have a heart attack.

She took a few seconds to get her breathing back to normal before setting down her purse and turning to face him again.

He looked awful. He had a black eye and a bruised chin, and the way he was sitting suggested further bruising. She was rather annoyed that somebody else had given him the black eye. He didn't have his umbrella, either— it was probably broken. Strange as it was to see him without it, she couldn't say that she was sorry.

"Hello, Mr. Cobblepot."

"I must ask you—understand this is very important, I wouldn't bother if it weren't. . . ."

"Okay."

"Do you know what a bonsai tree is?"

What kind of question was that? Maybe he had a concussion along with everything else.

"Sir?"

"Answer the question."

"Yes, I know what it is."

"Good."

"Sir, are you feeling okay?"

"Fine. This is nothing, just a minor setback. I had to ask."

"Right."

"I wonder if I could trouble you for some ice."

She was out, and she was tempted to tell him so, but he looked pathetic. And pissed. The last time he'd looked pathetic and pissed, some guy had found a knife in his abdomen.

"Would a pack of frozen peas do?"

THE END
Nap

She's minding her own business, just waiting for the guy to show up-how dare he be late, it's cold and this is awkward and she's been sitting here for four hours already!-when there's a sudden weight on her left shoulder.

She inspects the black hair that has now invaded her vision and wonders if she should put him back or just leave him alone. She really wants to put him back, but she doesn't want to wake him up, either.

She settles for going stock-still and staring straight ahead in an effort to pretend that he's not here.

Oh, look, a puppy. And...um...flowers. Yes. Pretty.

GOD DAMMIT, WHY DID THIS HAPPEN TO ME?

After another half hour-their guy's probably been knifed in an alley-her shoulder's starting to hurt and the rest of her body is stiff from trying not to move. He's got to move, this is ridiculous. She'd love to just shove him off, but he might take offense. No, this has to be handled with care. Like playing Operation.

She bites her lip and eases her hands around his shoulders. Okay, easy does it, slowly, slowly…

He twitches a little bit and she snatches her hands back. Is he waking up? Is he even asleep, or is this some kind of weird test?

He seems to be asleep. Good. Okay. She'll try again.

She's about to prop him up when he moves again and mumbles something about umbrellas. Fine. She gives up. He can stay there.

But hopefully he'll get up soon.

After what feels like fifteen minutes but is probably more like two, he sits up and straightens himself out without so much as a, 'sorry for any inconvenience, Miss Marquis.'

"He's late."

"Probably got knifed in an alley." Can they go now? "Maybe we should reschedule."

"There won't be any rescheduling."

That doesn't sound good.

"Sir?"

"Come along. If he won't come to us, we will go to him."

"How."

"I know his address." She doesn't want to know how he knows that. "This shouldn't take long now."

This is terrible, but she hopes it does take long. It would serve the jerk right for everything she's been through this evening.
THE END
Takes place in the far future. Batman is a thing now. Crane is mostly Nolanverse, (meaning it is Jonathan Crane, not Gerald Crane) with a splash of his other incarnations, as well as my own...personal touch...for flavour.

She hadn't wanted to go down there. She'd begged him to send somebody else, or at least not to send her alone. Eventually they'd come to an agreement-she'd shut up and go, and he wouldn't send her with a note stating that he was tired of her. Perfectly reasonable.

So now here she was, at the top of the basement steps, clutching a thick envelope that she knew hoped contained an invitation to the Iceberg to discuss business arrangements.

It was pitch black down there and she wondered if maybe he wasn't home. Maybe he'd gotten arrested. Or maybe he was out.

God, she hoped he was out.

"Doctor Crane?" She began inching her way down the stairs, hoping he didn't have them rigged. The Riddler rigged his staircases and the last time she'd paid him a visit she'd gotten a-literal-shock. "Oswald Cobblepot sent me…"

Someone was breathing down there, panicked little hic-hic-hic gasps that reminded her of her first grade bestie, who had died of an asthma attack.

"Doctor Crane?"

Surely her eyes should be adjusting to the light by now.

She reached the foot of the stairs and the door slammed shut.

"Good afternoon, child."

She squeaked and turned, frantically trying to pinpoint the source of the voice. A low, raspy chuckle came from the darkness and she heard something moving, slipping through the shadows towards her.

"D-Doctor Crane?"

Click!

A weak light bulb came on. She still didn't see him, but she could see the source of the gasping-a man was tied to a chair, a gag stuffed in his mouth. He seemed to be unconscious.

The rest of the room was filled with test tubes and plastic containers-at least one of them had a tarantula in it-and there was a badly-damaged skull, with bits gouged out of it, on a peeling bookshelf. She shuddered and looked away.
"Cobblepot warned me you'd be by," the voice whispered. "Step into the light."

She shuffled forward.

"Ah, there you are." He sounded pleased. "Quite a pair of lungs on you, I gather. I wonder when he'll tire of you…"

The light glinted off of something, and it took her a moment to realise it was his glasses. Once that hit her, she could make out the rest of him, standing just outside the circle of light.

"You're frightened."

There was no point in denying it. Depending on who you asked, he could either read minds or smell fear.

"Yes."

"Tell me…what do you think of my laboratory?"

"It's…um…"

The man in the chair suddenly jerked it over. The sudden noise made her shriek, provoking horrible cawing laughter from the man in front of her. Just as suddenly as it had begun, it stopped and his shadowy form straightened up, adjusting his glasses with long, thin fingers.

*Perfect for wrapping around somebody's throat…*

"I see." He stepped forward and held out his hand. "I believe you have something for me?"

"Y-yes."

"Bring it here."

And get in grabbing range?

They stood there, a few feet apart, before she reached out-and dropped the letter before sprinting towards the stairs. The light went out just as she reached the halfway mark and she stopped.

"I see no reason why I should let you go," he hissed. She was pretty sure he was still down there, but… "This is Gotham. You could just as easily meet a mugger on the way back."

She gripped the rickety railing and began making her way up, wishing the stairs didn't creak.

"You've got six more steps before you reach the door, and that's presuming it isn't locked."

If it was locked, she was hurling herself down and hoping for a broken neck. Broken necks were preferable to…*that*.

She said nothing. Five steps…four steps…three steps…

"I wonder…what keeps you awake at night, child? What makes you sit up in bed, fumbling for the light switch to chase away the monsters?"

Doorknob! She gripped it, twisted it, and pushed.
For one horrible minute the door stuck but then it flung open, flooding the top of the stairs with light. She stumbled out into the hall, her legs shaking and his crow-like cackles echoing in her ears.

She couldn’t get out of there fast enough.

THE END
She'd been watching TV-some electric nut had caused damage at the GCPD, what was this city coming to?-when her phone rang.

"Hello?"

"Miss Marquis? This is Jim Gordon."

Wait…how did he get her number?

"Hi?"

"Your number was in Cobblepot's phone."

How did HE get her number? What the hell?

"Huh?"

"You need to come and get him."

"From?"

"The GCPD."

Wait, what? Oh, no…

"He's not dead, is he?"

"No. Just come and pick him up."

Good. She wouldn't have been sorry, but she did like getting a paycheck every week.

She flipped off the TV, wondered what in the world he'd been doing down there in the first place, and decided she didn't really care. If he wasn't calling her, though, he was probably unconscious. Maybe she should bring a pillow. If he made too much noise, she could always smother him with it.

Sure enough, he was out cold, his face bloody and his hair sticking up in odd directions. Somebody had dragged him out of the way, but that was all. He looked a mess. She should take pictures!

"Hi, Detective."

"Hello."

"What happened?"
"He was electrocuted. Twice."

God, what a resilient little...well, never mind.

"Okay."

"Do you have a car?"

"Yeah."

"Come on, then."

He picked Cobblepot up far more gently than she deemed necessary. If it had been up to her, she'd have grabbed an ankle and started pulling. *Maybe* she'd try not to bang him into too many desks on the way out.

"You've got a big goose egg on your head."

"Yes."

"So? Is it true? You took down the psycho?"

"Yes."

"You have your job back, then?"

"For now."

"I'm glad." And she was. He may have been an idiot—would it kill him to take a bribe and shut up?—but his heart was in the right place. "Stick him in the front. If he's in the back he might rise up with a knife."

It took a bit of manoeuvring to get him buckled in—she wouldn't have bothered, but it was the *law* to wear seatbelts. Whatever.

"Thanks, Detective."

"Maybe take him to a clinic."

"Why?"

"He has a big mouth." he said cryptically. "Good night."

Oh, god, what had he done? If he'd screwed her over—somehow—she was taking him down with her. Maybe she'd break the other leg and go from there.

She'd been sitting there, jumping at small noises, for about an hour. They'd taken his knives away when she checked him in, as well as his phone, which looked rather the worse for wear. She supposed it had taken a shock. She was surprised they'd managed to get anything out of it, frankly.

"Oww."

"Hi, boss."

"M-Miss Marquis." He sounded raspy. "Where are we?"
"Crappy clinic downtown. You got shocked."

"Don Falcone…"

"Huh?"

"He'll have been expecting me. Help me up."

"I don't think you're allowed."

He tried to sit up, was moderately successful…but had the bad timing to be seen by a nurse.

"YOUNG MAN! LAY YOUR ARSE BACK DOWN BEFORE YOU HURT YOURSELF!"

Dove covered her mouth to try and muffle her laughter. Cobblepot blinked and went back down without a word.

"Thank you." the nurse said primly. "Now stay there, sweetie, while I fetch the doctor."

"I tried to tell you, boss."

"Kindly shut up, Miss Marquis."

She shut up, but she would treasure this moment forever.

The scary nurse returned with a doctor in tow a few minutes later.

"Thanks, Nurse."

"Sure. Now, you do as you're told, is that quite clear?"

Cobblepot nodded.

"Good."

The doctor shook his head.

"Nurse Richardson* tells me you were trying to get up."

"I have an urgent appointment, I'm terribly late…"

"We'll just see about that."

Dove took the opportunity to step out for a cup of coffee.

One way or another—hopefully a non-murderous way—he got out of there and collapsed into the passenger's seat.

"Don Falcone's house."

"Are you sure? Maybe you should go home, take a nap…"

"No. No, I have to be there. Drive. You have permission to speed a little, if you must."

His voice was shaking with either excitement or nerves and for once she didn't even try to turn on the radio.
"Thank you, Miss Marquis. For, um…yes. Well."

"Sure, boss."

And that was the end of the conversation.

THE END

* Yes, *that* Nurse (Mary) Richardson. Nobody is safe.
It wasn't that she didn't like heights. She didn't mind them. She had many a fond memory of sitting on the apartment roof with Jimmy Parker in eighth grade. But she didn't like heights when her only companion was a homicidal maniac.

"Mr. Cobblepot?"

"Mm."

"Why are we here?"

She knew she was breaking the unspoken 'no questions under any circumstances' rule, but it couldn't be helped. She was reasonably certain he wouldn't kill her. Unless that was why they were here in the first place…

"A little business meeting."

She took the hint and shut up, shivering and wondering why he had a shotgun. He never carried a shotgun. He had one in the club, of course, but that was standard for Gotham.

The rain pattered down on the umbrella-she didn't have one and had ended up far too close to him for comfort. What were they doing up here? It was late and wet and besides, it was Friday. Friday was always a busy night, even for them.

"Penguin!"

She cringed. Anyone who used the 'P' word usually ended up dead. And she knew that voice, knew it only too well.

Fish was back in town.

"Hello, Miss Mooney." He did not sound happy. Well, he never sounded happy, but he didn't usually sound quite so bitchy. "How are you tonight?"

"A little the worse for wear." She sounded the same as ever, but she didn't look it. She looked unhealthily thin, for starters. "Not as bad off as you, little Oswald."

She stepped into the light and Dove bit her tongue to keep from saying anything.

Her right eye was blue. It had not been blue, but now it was. Where the hell had she been? Had she been on that island, the health resort? There were rumours about that place, had been after some of her prettier friends disappeared three years ago.

Good god.

"You look well, Miss Mooney." If she shot him, Dove was taking the opportunity to book it, get out
of town and never come back. "Doesn't she, Miss Marquis?"

Dammit! She'd been hoping to linger in the shadows, forgotten.

"Y-yes, Sir."

"Miss Marquis?" Fish sounded a little surprised. "Dove Marquis? You always had such a lovely voice."

Cobblepot chuckled and she prayed that a sinkhole would appear and swallow them all. Or at least them—if she dodged it that would be great.

"Didn't she? Such a good memory, too…and such light fingers."

What the hell was this? Some sort of, 'if she kills me, I'm taking you with me'? Come on!

"Mm." That did not bode well. Maybe it was a good thing he'd brought the shotgun. "Little Oswald. You've certainly moved up in the world since I saw you last."

"Yes." The rain stopped and he folded the umbrella, giving a quick shake before wrapping it up properly. "Yes, I have. But you, Fish…you've fallen down a few pegs." He grinned, that horrible grin that always preceded a death. "Who's this?"

And that was when she noticed the man with her. He was not steady on his feet, and quite frankly, he looked more like an office clerk than anybody dangerous. Then again, she thought, look at Cobblepot. He could hardly walk and he still had a ridiculously high body count.

Great, the guy was lunatic.

She tightened her grip on the shotgun, feeling like a little girl clutching a teddy bear.

"This is Kelley. Kelley, this is my previous umbrella boy, Oswald Cobblepot."

Kelley had a gun. Kelley didn't look too comfortable with that gun, but he still had it. Twitchy fingers were worse than steady fingers-accidents tended to happen.

"Watch out, Kelley. She'll throw you away when you become useless." Cobblepot straightened up, hands folding atop the umbrella. "Look at me." He took a few steps forward. "Who knows what could happen to you?"

The gun came up a little, but it was shaking. Dove kept hers where it was. No need for this to escalate.

"Why did you call me up here, Penguin?"

"I have a proposition for you."

It had already escalated. He could have-should have-summoned her to the club. Or at least a club. Anywhere but a rooftop.

She switched the safety off.

"Oh? And what might that be?"

"Leave Gotham. Never come back."
Fish laughed and took a few steps forward. In those heels, she was nearly as tall as Cobblepot.

"Isn't that what they told you?" She laid one manicured nail on his nose. "Say I'm not interested in that option. What then?"

"Then I have to kill you." He was still grinning. He knew something, he'd set something up…

Was there anywhere to duck for cover? He hadn't arranged for Zsasz, had he? Zsasz had been around a bit, flirting at her and chatting with Cobblepot, but she had tried to hide behind the bar when he showed up.

_God, please don't let Zsasz show up. Please and thank you._

She thought about that and amended it.

_Or any other assassins. Thanks._

Fish patted his cheek and shook her head.

"No deal, Oswald."

She turned around, started walking back towards her companion.

"Get rid of him."

Cobblepot flipped the umbrella and caught her wrist in the handle. Dove got out of the way.

"I offered you a way out, Fish." he hissed. "You really should have taken it." There was a crack and her wrist slipped free, now very much at a wrong angle. "But you didn't, and now look."

Her face was drawn and when she spoke it was through clenched teeth.

"Kelley."

Looking back, she should've bolted for the fire escape. But instead she raised the gun and fired.

She'd intended to spook him. Just a warning shot, that was all. But she hit him in the knee and he went down, the gun clattering to the ground beside him.

Oh dear. Oh dear, oh dear.

Oh dear god, she'd shot somebody.

Fish went for the fallen gun, but with her broken wrist she couldn't pick it up before Cobblepot had swept the umbrella behind her knees, knocking her to the ground. She stayed there, laughing at him.

"I'll come back." she said. "I'll always come back. Don't you know that?"

"Not this time." He adjusted his grip on the umbrella. "Good bye, Fish."

Dove didn't have time to look away before he drove the tip into her eyeball.

The laughter immediately gave way to screaming and she tried to pull away, hand reaching for the gun. Cobblepot drew it back out and went for the other eye.

She squeezed her eyes shut, but there was no drowning out the screaming. When that went silent, she cracked an eye open to see why.
And promptly regretted it.

Cobblepot drew the now-bloody umbrella tip out from under her chin. Fish was no longer moving.

He wiped the tip on a handkerchief and opened the umbrella. Rain water dripped off the top, tinged with red.

"M-Mr. Cobblepot?"

"We should be back at the club." was all he said. "It's Friday. Friday's a busy night."

Kelley was still screaming and Cobblepot gave her the umbrella to hold while he took the shotgun.

"I'm so sorry." he said. "Nothing they can do for you. Best to just put you out of your misery."

"No, god, please-!"

BANG!

THE END
Dove's little piano piece is Think of Anger's cover of 'Shout'-which gives this its title. That version appeared in the 1-17 promo. Written a good long while before the ACTUAL demise, but I called it! I friggin' called it!

She wasn't expecting him to be in today. For all his faults—and homicidal mania was definitely a fault—he'd loved his mom. His mom had made him human.

But here he was—had he been here all day? She hadn't seen him, but they'd been busy-sitting at the bar, looking tired and broken.

She brought him tea. She doubted he'd drink it, doubted he'd even notice, but she couldn't just ignore him. Gotham was broken. It had lost everything, taken everything from her. She would not let it take her humanity.

"Sit down."

"Sir?"

"You look tired."

She sat down as far away from him as she dared. Just because she felt sorry for him didn't mean she had a death wish.

"Were we busy today?"

"Yes." She should have been cleaning up—a few patrons were a little rowdy earlier. "They like the new cocktail. Maybe we should make it permanent."

"Yes."

She doubted he was listening, but she made a mental note to add the Gertrude to the main menu.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Cobblepot." she said. "About your mom."

"I killed her."

WHAT.

Never mind, she was not sorry, she was quitting, and she was moving to Canada. No-France. France was farther.

"I tried to keep things from her." he continued, running a finger around the rim of his mug. "The shock…she couldn't take it."

Okay, so he hadn't knifed her in the bath. That helped.

"S-sir…"
"I never meant for her to find out." he said softly. "Not like that. Not ever."

"It's not your fault." She was pretty sure it was, but still. "It's not like you threw her down a flight of stairs or something."

He finally looked at her, his eyes red and his face swollen.

"I may as well have."

Maybe she should have brought him something stronger, like a nice Irish Coffee. Too late now, but he had drunk part of the tea. If he asked for anything else, it was getting spiked for his own good.

"Maybe I should have. It might have been quicker." He downed the rest of the tea, got up, and hobbled back behind the bar. Oh, good, he was getting drunk by himself. Hopefully he'd pass out. She could call him a cab…or just drag him to the back room. "Do you know the last thing she said to me?"

She was beginning to suspect that he'd already had a few, actually…

"No, sir."

"She said that she was disappointed in me." He poured himself a shot of something, downed it, poured another, and got down another glass. "Look at me! I rose from the ashes." He gestured wildly around him before sliding the other glass across the counter to her. "I outsmarted them all."

She didn't really want the shot. It was never a good idea to become uninhibited around Oswald Cobblepot. Best case scenario? You died. More likely? You spilled everything for him to use against you later.

He hadn't noticed that she wasn't drinking it, too interested in his own.

"I outsmarted them all." he said again. "Fish, Maroni, Falcone…by myself. I didn't need her help. I did it in spite of her! And she's disappointed in me?" He downed the shot. "Bah!"

Maybe there was still time to bow out gracefully…

"You did, sir. You did at that."

"Let her be." He'd forgone the shot glass in favour of another bottle, this time vodka. Maybe she should call a cab. Or, more accurately, call for backup to call the cab, since she couldn't manhandle him into it. "I don't care anymore."

How worth it was it to try to take the bottle away from him?

"M-Mr. Cobblepot…" She swallowed, steeled her resolve. "Maybe you should go home, take a nap…I can finish up here, really."

He hadn't even heard her—he was halfway across the room, heading for the piano. She rather hoped he'd fall, before he could break something, but he made it up without trouble.

"She taught me to play the piano." She was gonna need that shot. "Well, she made me learn to play the piano."

What was there to say?

"Did she?"
"I didn't want to, at first. But she insisted. And I learned to like it."

Had he liked murder at first, or had that been an acquired taste?

"A robin used to perch on the window during my lessons. But it died." He poked a few keys, the resulting tune scraping against her eardrums. "It died and I didn't want to play anymore."

"Did she make you?"
"Yes." He turned to her. "You play."
"A little."
"Why?"
"I wanted to. My aunt was a professional. She taught me."
"Play now."

Play what, the Funeral March?
"S-sir, it's been a while…"
"Nonsense."

If it would keep him happy and not stabby, she may as well.

She sat down, wishing he wouldn't _loom_, and did a quick mental assessment. Nothing too happy, nothing too long. Something short and melancholy, and that was it.

_Shout, shout, let it all out_…

She managed to get through it without mistakes, and when she looked up she found him still there, twisting a handkerchief in his fingers. And in that moment, in the fashionably dim lighting, she didn't see a monster. She saw a broken young man.

He remained where he was, just a little too close for comfort, fingers stroking the piano lid.

"I think I'll miss her." he said softly. "I don't think I can stop."

"I think that's normal." She stood up, straightened herself out a bit. These shoes were murder but she didn't want to take them off, not before she got the floor cleaned up. "If there's anything I can do…I can manage here, if you need a few days…"

"No." He turned and began making his way down the steps. "No, thank you, Miss Marquis."

And just like that, the moment was gone. Oswald Cobblepot was dead and the Penguin had risen from the remains.

THE END
Promotion

Chapter Notes

Season one finale reaction piece.

She'd waited a decent amount of time before risking the rooftop. He wasn't back, and Butch had
gone up there...

She'd been halfway out the door when it hit her that if he came down, and she was gone, there
would be hell to pay. She'd considered leaving anyway, catching the first train out of here (Georgia,
she'd always wanted to go to Georgia), but he'd find her.

And, if she was going to be honest, she was curious. If he was successful-and he'd been so very sure
he would be-things might change. He wouldn't, but maybe…

An image of Janine, all of fourteen years old, flashed behind her eyes. She was probably dead, with
Dove gone.

Sons of bitches. If Cobblepot got what he wanted, she was taking advantage of that and tracking
down whoever had gotten her onto the streets in the first place.

She went up to the roof.

The first thing she saw was Butch, an unconscious mountain by an air conditioning unit. There was
no sign of Fish and she tightened her grip on the pipe she'd brought, half-expecting her to come
flying out from behind her somewhere.

Then she saw Cobblepot, standing precariously on the small wall. He was cackling and she stepped
back. He'd finally snapped, utterly and completely snapped and you know what, she'd heard Georgia
was nice this time of year.

But not for Janine.

"S-s-sir?" She glanced at Butch again-definitely out. A cracked board lay beside him. "M-Mr.
Cobblepot?"

He didn't seem to hear her and she inched forward, trying not to startle him. If he fell off that was
fine, but he'd had a gun when she saw him last and guns had a nasty habit of going off.

"Sir?"

He spread his arms and for a minute she thought he was going to jump.

"I am King of Gotham!"

So where was Fish?

"That's good, Sir." Calm voice, like you did for injured animals and frightened birds. "M-maybe you
should come down before you fall."
He finally appeared to hear her and made his way onto relatively solid ground.

"Fish is in the sea!" He had what she had come to think of as his murder grin on. "Sleeping with the other fishes!"

Wasn't that what they'd said about him? That certainly hadn't been the case, had it? Unless she washed up on shore, Dove did not consider them home free.

"Congratulations."

"That's all you have to say?" He wobbled. "Look at it! Look at it, Miss Marquis! It's mine at last!"

What, did he think she carried confetti around to shower him with? Maybe she should start.

She was saved by having to answer when he suddenly pitched forward. She was not quick enough to get out of the way and ended up being dragged down with him.

OHGODOHGOD HE WAS GOING TO KILL HER

No. He was bleeding. He was bleeding quite badly, actually, and now that the adrenaline had worn off…

"Boss?"

Butch groaned and Cobblepot jabbed a finger in what he apparently thought was the right direction.

"Shut him up."

"But Boss…"

"Now, Miss Marquis."

Fine. If he wanted to sit here and bleed to death, he was welcome to do so.

She struggled back up and teetered over to the cracked board. It was what there was, and she was pretty sure he'd have brain damage from all the abuse lately, but…

"I'm so, so sorry."

THWACK!

Other people would have kept smacking just to be sure. She figured if he was conscious, he'd gotten the message to shut up. If not, well, mission accomplished.

"Sorry."

She made her way back to Cobblepot and shoved him over. Yeah. That was not good. That would require hospitalization, at the least.

"Does this mean somebody else gets to pull the bodies out of the club, Boss?"

He didn't answer her question.

"Help me up."

"But-!" Oh, what was the use? "Hang on."
She went back to Butch and pulled his jacket off—she certainly wasn’t sacrificing hers, and his was bigger anyway—to make a crappy bandage.

"I don't think it's going to stay."

If he was going to bitch about it, she could leave him here.

"Maybe kidnap a nice medic next time." She hauled him up. "Okay... there's an awful lot of stairs... and what about him?"

He flapped a hand in dismissal and she shut up.

"Hospital?"

"Club."

Oh, come on! Was he suicidal?

"Yes, sir."

The shuffle towards the staircase was silent for a few minutes, then,

"Yes, Miss Marquis. Somebody else will be in charge of trash disposal."

Yes.

THE END

*Ten to one the Joker has someone to do exactly this.
Initiation

Chapter Notes

Sorry, Dove.

Not really, I just feel obligated to apologise. Takes place early on in their…business arrangement. Oswald's motivation for bringing her with him, by the way, is simple: inspire fear in your minions, and they'll step in time. And now he can hold this over her.

Three updates per day now, because I'd like to get this uploaded already.

Her new boss is a little weird, but this is Gotham. Just the other day there was a news story about nuns being chained across the road. Weird is what they do here.

He's…quirky. He creeps her out, but he hasn't really done anything to make her worry for her safety. Apart from having her snatched off the street, but she saw Mario the other day and he gave her a tearful apology for manhandling her. It was awkward.

So far she hasn't really done much apart from drive him places—that bum leg of his keeps him out of the driver's seat. He's not chatty. It's always, 'turn here, Miss Marquis' and 'wait in the car, I'll return momentarily'. Every so often he'll have her take a sealed envelope somewhere, but that's rare.

But he still creeps her out. He's quiet. You wouldn't think so, but more than once she's turned around to find that he's come into the room and made himself comfortable without her noticing him.

She's pretty sure he's got mob ties—usually she takes him to Maroni's favourite restaurant, and twice now she's overheard him talking to someone about one of Falcone's lieutenants, Fish Mooney. She doesn't ask. Questions have never been encouraged.

But it's better than working the streets, and he's never been anything but civil to her. She'll take it.

She's instructed, one day, to drive clear across town, to the docks. It's cold and the docks are empty today, apart from a crazy homeless guy that's talking to thin air.

"Mr. Cobblepot?"

"They'll be here soon." He stretches out, closes his eyes. "Shut the car off and wait here."

Soon enough another car arrives, this one with just one man in it. He honks at them and waves and she hears Cobblepot mutter, "Barbarian."

Bit old-fashioned, this one. Whatever. Just another quirk, that's all.

"Come along."

He gets out of the car and hobbles over to their new friend. She trails behind him, uneasy. The docks shouldn't be so empty, even in this fog. It's growing thicker by the minute and it seeps into her bones, makes the elbow she dislocated in grade school ache like a bitch.
"Joe!"

"Penguin!" Well, that's not very polite. He looks like one, and he walks like one, but still. Whatever. Maybe they're friends or something.

"I don't like to be called that."

Joe laughs, claps him on the shoulder.

"It's a term of affection. How are ya, Pengers, old boy?"

"Fine." She's never heard him sound this...pathetic. It's a little unsettling. "What do you think of my proposal?"

"I don't know, man. I mean, I like ya. I do. But fifty-fifty...eh. Sixty-forty, huh? I can make that happen, maybe put in a good word for ya with the boss. What d'ya say?" He says nothing for a minute. "Hey. Penguin."

It happens fast, too fast for her to expect it. One minute he was standing still, the next he was moving forward, slicing out with a pocket knife. There's a scream, but that's cut off and a spatter of blood hits the planks by her feet.

"I told you I don't like to be called that."

There's a horrible choking sound and she sees Joe on his back, bloody hands wrapped tightly around his throat. Cobblepot wipes the knife and turns to her.

"Oh my god, oh my god..."

"Couldn't be helped. Come here, we'll deposit him in the ocean."

He's still breathing! He needs a doctor and oh good god that was so fast, so fast...

"Miss Marquis!" She scurries back, knowing he'll kill her once he's through here, no need to leave a witness. "Come here."

"You'll kill me."

"You've given me no reason to." The unspoken yet hangs between them. "Think of it as your initiation."

He'll kill her if she refuses, he'll track her down. She knows he can do it, he knows more about this city's occupants than anyone she's ever met.

She takes a step forward.

"Good. Come on."

He puts the knife away and between them they haul the jerking, still-gasping man to the edge of the docks.

He hits the water with a hearty splash! and sinks in a cloud of blood. He does not come back up.

It's only when Cobblepot hands her a handkerchief that she realises she's started crying.

"Clean up. If you get us into an accident because you were being emotional..."
She's working for a monster!

She takes a shuddery breath and tries to return it. She doesn't want anything of his, not ever.

"Keep it."

She'll be throwing it out the minute he isn't looking.

The drive back is silent, save for the rain tapping on the hood of the car. For her part, she keeps hearing that choked-off scream and that horrid gasping noise.

"Thank you for your help today, Miss Marquis." Kill her now. "If you wish to leave me employ, you're welcome to do so."

Yeah, and be hunted down and killed. Or blackmailed. No, thank you.

"Thank you, sir."

He gets out of the car and opens his umbrella.

"If you wish to stay on, report here at nine o' clock tomorrow morning."

He leaves before she can answer.

THE END
Dove is the most not-murderous person ever. Unlike Cobblepot…who must have the highest on-screen body count of anybody on this show. You know that shot of everyone, when they've all got baseball bats and umbrellas and guns? Dove would be off to the side, clutching a plush penguin and looking all kinds of freaked out/adorable. (Kitty would be holding a pair of bloody pliers, and Jonathan would probably have a syringe or his mask.)

Oh, god. Oh, god, oh god.

She's taken a life.

She's killed.

*I'm sooo sorry!*

She looks at the mouse's remains in the trap and regrets putting it there in the first place. She should've just left the door open and chased it out.

She'll have to throw it out, but…but…that's just so heartless.

She can't bring herself to do it.

She's still sitting there, trying to think of what to do, when the door opens.

"Miss Marquis."

Crap. Cobblepot. He won't be sympathetic. Help, help!

"H-hi, Mr. Cobblepot." Poor little thing…

"What is so fascinating about that patch of carpet?" She's still trying to come up with an answer when he looms over her. "Ah. Caught at last. Good. Get rid of it."

She starts sniffling and he takes several scrambling steps back. She killed it! It's only tiny…and cute…and it probably came in because it was cold…

The sniffles become tears and there's an exasperated sigh from behind her.

"It's a mouse."

What if the trap didn't work and it lingered there for hours before dying, huh? What then? Oh, god, she just knows that's what happened!

"Miss Marquis…"

Oh, fuck him! It's his fault! He said 'get rid of the mice' and gave her traps to put down! This is entirely his fault, that bastard!
She'll at least put it in a box…

A sudden jab to the kidneys gets her up. In an ideal world, she'd break that damn umbrella and stuff the pieces down his throat.

Asshole.

She finds an empty cracker box and eases the trap into it. There. That's a little better, at least.

"Oh, for heaven's sake…"

She shuffles outside and lays the box in the dumpster as gently as possible. When she comes back in, Cobblepot is still standing there, his face in his hand.

"You're a little dramatic."

She's! He's the one that has to cackle all the time! And it's not like the mouse was hurting anybody, not like that dick that got himself knifed last week. He, at least, had it coming.

She says nothing. He shakes his head and walks away, muttering to himself. She gives his back the finger (she's pretty sure he doesn't have an eye in the back of his head) and goes to find someone else to check the other traps.

THE END
Firefly

Chapter Notes

Dove's a Gothamite born and bred, but this is just fucking weird. Mild spoilers for season 2 in general, written upon seeing the promo for 'Firefly' but before the episode aired.

They'd all been trying to stay out of his way. She couldn't exactly blame him for flipping out, but she didn't want to end up stabbed over this.

(Seriously, though...these people had crossed the line.)

She was considering swapping the vodka for water-surely he'd had enough now-when something large and metal swooped by the window.

The hell?

Was that a jetpack?

Dove tugged the drapes open, ignoring the little hissing noise from behind her, and felt her jaw drop.

"Close the drapes."

"Uh, boss?"

"Close the drapes, Miss Marquis."

"You really should come look at this."

"What."

"There's a...um...there's a flying person with flamethrowers."

"What?" She heard him struggle up and limp to the window. "If this is a joke, I swear..."

"It's not, it's not! Look!"

He was just leaning against the glass, saying, 'I see nothing,' when the crazy person came up, flamethrowers akimbo, and set a car down the street on fire.

"I see."

Yeah.

"Boss?"

"Close the drapes."

"What do we do?"
"We stay inside."

She pulled the drapes shut, all the while thinking that maybe, just maybe, leaving town wasn't such a bad plan after all.

THE END
Dove stepped into the grimy little bar. It was small, dimly lit, and it had a smell that reminded her of her more...natural-living...clients.

Mostly the really hairy one with man-boobs. That one had always required copious amounts of vodka afterwards to make it better.

Her shoes seemed to stick to the cement and she wished she could get away with wearing sneakers. But noo, Cobblepot demanded that she dress nicely, never mind how impractical it was.

Oh, well. At least she wasn't scrubbing the blood off the floor. They had a new boy for that. She had no idea what his name was, but she was allowed to boss him around. That was nice.

"Hello?"

"Not open."

"Door's unlocked."

"Not open." the man grunted again. He was a short, stocky man with thick glasses and a comb-over. He was also incredibly stubborn.

"I'm here on behalf of Oswald Cobblepot." she said stiffly. "Monthly pick-up."

"Come back tomorrow."

"I need it today."

"Get out, girly. Unless ya wanna..." He waggled his eyebrows at her.

"You can't afford me." Bitch. "Please, I have a schedule to keep, if you'd be so kind as to pay me now..."

"I told ya, come back tomorrow."

He'd done this last time. Cobblepot had not been pleased and within a week he'd made arrangements for this sort of thing.

"Mister Tibbs!"*

Mister Tibbs-Bobby to his friends-was a giant of a man with a penchant for crushing skulls in his bare hands. He was an absolute puppy the rest of the time, and he spent every spare second texting his boyfriend and looking up pictures of kittens in knitted clothing.

But not on the job.

"What's up, Miss M?"

"He's poor."

"Hey-!"

"Hm." He cracked his knuckles, muscles rippling under the white shirt. "Go get a coffee or
something, this ain't no place for a lady."

"Want something?"

"Small caramel macchiato."

Mm...that sounded good. Make that two.

She stepped out for fifteen minutes—there was a line—and when she came back, the round man was
nursing a bruised face and putting money into an envelope. She did a quick count, more out of habit
than any real idea that he would try anything clever, and put it in her purse.

"Same time next month?"

"You fucking-" Mister Tibbs scowled and he shut his mouth. "Yeah. Whatever."

"No trouble this time?"

"No, sir." She handed over a pile of white envelopes. "Not a one. Matthew Malone was a little
reluctant, but he changed his mind."

"Good." He did a quick flip-through. "I need you to take this to Jim Gordon. Deliver it directly into
his hands, no one else's."

She half-expected the envelope to have pink hearts or something on it, but it was black, like all of his
personal correspondence. Damn.

"Yes, sir."

"Good."

And with that, she was dismissed.

THE END

*Mister Tibbs wants to be a recurring character now. Mister Tibbs gets what he wants.
Ugh. Gotham is grimy. He loves this city, really he does, but god, it's filthy. The corruption, the lies...and the actual dirt, of course, is everywhere.

He's really, really looking forward to a shower.

Jim opens the door and breathes in the smell of candles and clean.

"Hi, Jim."

He has his gun out before he sees who it is.

"Miss Marquis."

"Are you always that quick on the draw?" she asks teasingly. He scowls and holsters it again.

"How did you get in?"

"Your landlord is a straight man who appreciates the Ladies*."

Ah, Gotham. He feels so safe at night, really.

"Why are you here?"

"Mr. Cobblepot sent me with this."

She holds out a crisp black envelope and he takes it, reasoning that if it were poison, she wouldn't touch it with bare hands. Or even with those lacy gloves of hers.

"Thanks."

"I'm also to deliver something else."

"What."

He has no time to escape before she leans up, grips his chin, and plants one on him.

"Hello, James."

Then she's gone and he's left with the envelope and the lingering taste of cherry.

THE END

*A low-cut top gets you places in this town.
Cobblepot hasn't left his study for days. At least, they haven't seen him for days. He went in there after returning from Nygma's apartment and hasn't come out again.

Dove's been elected 'poor sap to go in and make sure he's not dead', which is very unfair. Gabe should go. Gabe cares. But noo, she can cook without setting the smoke alarm off, so she has to bring food as a peace offering.

Fuck this. Fuck everything.

"Boss?" She shifts the tray a bit and knocks on the door. "You okay in there?"

There's no answer. Crap, what if he's dead? What then?

"Boss?"

"Go away, Miss Marquis."

Well. At least he's not dead. That's something.

"I brought food."

He says nothing and she takes that as an invitation to enter.

The room is dark-drapes are closed, lamps are off, and the fire is dying. What little light there is casts weird shadows on the walls. Cobblepot is sitting at his desk, surrounded by used tissues and wine bottles and papers.

"Boss?"

"I told you to go away."

"Everyone's worried." Well, somewhat worried, anyway. Nosey.

He scoffs and picks up one of the bottles.

"Get out."

"Boss, maybe you should go up to bed now."

He laughs, mirthless and brief, and struggles up with the aid of his umbrella.

"I'm going to ask you one more time," He limps over. "Get. Out."

"I'm just going to set this down, in case you want it later..."

He brings the umbrella up and hang on, it looks a little odd-OHSHIT IS THAT A GUN?

She's quick to set the tray down on the side table and back quickly towards the door. Not quickly enough, as it happens-he levels the umbrella at her and there's a click.

"Okay, okay. I'm going."

She barely has time to get into the hall before he fires at her. The bullet goes through the crack in the
door and shatters a picture a few inches to her left.

Right. Next time, Gabe is going in there. Let him deal with the psycho.

That's the plan, but she's overruled because 'he waited a few minutes to shoot at you'. Fuck them, then. With a rusty chainsaw.

It's evening now and she really, really doesn't want to go in there again, but Mister Tibbs has promised to wait in the hall in case something goes wrong.

Great.

"Boss?" She knocks on the door. "You, ah, feeling any better?"

He doesn't answer at all this time and she tries the door. It opens-hey, he could have locked it and didn't-and she pokes her head in.

He's moved, at least, from the desk to the chair by the fireplace. A bottle hangs precariously from his fingers and the umbrella leans against the arm. The food she brought earlier is gone.

"Boss?" He says nothing. "Mr. Cobblepot?"

Is he passed out? Crap.

She inches into the room. He doesn't even seem to see her and she's not sure if that's a good thing or a bad thing.

"Sir?"

He moves and the bottle nearly falls to the floor, but he adjusts his grip on the neck.

"She's gone."

What is he-oh. Ohh.

"I'm so sorry, Mr. Cobblepot."

"He killed her." His voice is soft, so soft and broken and she almost wishes he'd shoot at her again. That's normal. She can handle that.

"He's been arrested." Surely he knows that. "Detective Gordon took him into custody last week."

"Convenient." He takes a swig from the bottle. "How very convenient."

"Yes." She shuffles a little closer. "Sir, um...it's been a few days, everyone's worried...maybe you should come out now?"

He ignores her entirely, more interested in staring at the dying embers.

"He'll go free." he says sadly. "But maybe that's for the best. He'll come looking, he'll wander right to me."

"They found the mayor."

"To hell with the mayor!" He flings the bottle into the fireplace and it shatters, the embers hissing. "To hell with all of them!"
She swallows hard and risks taking a few steps forward. He slumps back into his chair, chuckling thickly.

"He'll come. He'll come looking for me, oh, yes."

"Boss..."

"I'll let him. I'll let him right in, sit him down in that chair there." He jabs a finger at the chair in question. "And then he'll be sorry."

The chuckles devolve into weak, shuddering sobs and he leans over, his head nearly pressed against his knees. Okay. They can probably manhandle him out of here now, get him up to bed and away from the booze.

"Boss, if there's anything you need from us...anything at all..." He doesn't answer. She puts her hand out halfway, hesitates, and lets it rest on his shoulder. "I'm so sorry."

Silence regins for a few minutes before she withdraws her hand.

"C'mon, Mr. Cobblepot. It's time for bed."

He does not move and she goes to the door, waves for Mister Tibbs to come in.

"Boss? You want help upstairs?"

"No, Robert."

They hover anyway as he gets up, using the chair to balance, and he finally flaps a hand at them.

"I am fine, just stiff."

They let him be and stay a little ways behind him until he limps into his room and shuts the door. Dove breathes a small sigh of relief. Disaster averted.

"What now, Miss M?"

"Now we hope he doesn't try to save face by killing us all."

THE END
"Where is he!"

Gordon coughs, blood stark against his teeth and lips. If he dies before giving Oswald the location, he will find a way to resurrect him, if only to make him suffer for daring to die at such a bad time.

"S'wald..."

Oswald shakes him.

"Answer me!"

"S-son of Gotham..."

What? What nonsense...oh.

Oh, Galavan, you fool.

He drops Gordon back to the pavement and struggles up.

"Gabe! We are going to Wayne Manor."

"Boss?"

"What?"

Miss Marquis shrinks back but whispers, "What about Detective Gordon?"

"What about him." They don't have time for this!

Gordon coughs again, a wet noise, and Oswald sighs.

I know I'll regret this later.

"Call his partner, he can deal with the situation."

There. One of them has manners, at least.

And he will be lording this over Gordon's head the next time they meet.

THE END
Percival

Chapter Notes

Percy's totally canon—he appears in an episode of B:TAS. Apparently he's been trained to peck out eyes. (Seeing as Oswald managed to train pigeons to both dance and attack, I don't think he's bluffing here.)

Dove walks into work and promptly drops her phone. The screen cracks, but she can't even care.

Sitting on a perch (when did they get a perch?) is a...a vulture. They're much bigger in real life and she's having flashbacks to The Lion King.

"Uh, boss?" He's nowhere to be seen. The vulture hisses and she takes several steps back. "Mr. Cobblepot? Sir?"

"Hey, Miss M—what the fuck is that?"

Ah. Mister Tibbs. Thank god, she had backup. He could wrangle the bird and she could hop the midnight train to Georgia. Or something.

"A vulture."

"What's it doin' here?"

"Ah! I see you've met Percival."

Percival? Really? Really?

Although, with a mouthful like Oswald Chesterfield Cobblepot for a name, she guesses the bird got off lightly.

'Percival' stretches his wings and extends his neck. Cobblepot meets him halfway and the bird rubs his head against his fingers. Dove represses a shudder.

"He is my new acquisition." No shit. She's tempted to ask why he didn't get a penguin, but she doesn't want to die. "The perch is here so that he might become a little more socialized when there aren't guests. I'm sure you won't mind working around him."

She's sure this is breaking all kinds of health and safety regulations, but then again, so's murdering a guy on the counter.

"Uh, no."

"Good." Cobblepot trails his hand down the thing's back. "Percival, come here." He makes a few clicking noises and in a sudden flurry of feathers, the bird makes the jump to his arm. He's apparently heavy-Cobblepot threatens to overbalance for a second and Mister Tibbs steps forward to grab him. He is not needed, and his expression screams 'thank you Lord Jesus'.

Dove eyes the feathers on the floor and wonders if this is going to be a thing. She hopes not.
"Good boy, good boy. Let's go and find you a treat." Ugh. That can only be nasty. "Get to work, we don't have all day."

Once she's *sure* he's out of earshot, she leans over to Mister Tibbs and hisses, "The fuck is that about?"

He shrugs and goes to get the mop.

"Maybe it's a grief thing. Some people get dogs, he gets a vulture."

Why. Why? Why couldn't he get a nice dog, a guard dog or something? She could work with that. Or a bar cat, that might be nice. But noo, he has to get a fucking vulture.

She's not feeding it, and that's final.

THE END
Oswald Cobblepot, Zombie Hunter

He was just dusting off his umbrella when it occurred to him that he was going to need a ride. Driving was an impossibility,

_Is Hell hot, Fish? I hope so!

and riding in a cab like a peasant was absolutely out of the question. Hm.

He made his way into the other room and collected his phone. It was low on battery-piece of trash-but it had enough to make a call.

"Boss?"

"Where are you."

"Holy shit, you're not dead! Um...the club. Just cleaning up before we open...where have you been, Gabe looked all over the city for you when we heard you got out-"

"Never mind." Idiot. He should have gotten a mute one. Lesson learned... "I need you to pick me up. I have something important to attend to in town."

"Uh, boss?"

"What, Miss Marquis."

"Where are you?"

She takes too long for his liking. Minions should all have some sort of teleportation powers, it is required. Perhaps Strange...no, no. Strange must die. But later. He has bigger fish to fry.

She does, however make it eventually and he meets her outside to head off any inane expressions of wonder at the interior.

"Where to, boss?"

At least she hasn't grown a **mouth** in his absence.

"A florist's, first. The little one on Simmons Street."

She doesn't ask why, though he can practically hear her thinking it. It's very annoying.

"Have you been watching the news, Miss Marquis?"

"With the, uh...Galavan? Or someone that looks like him?"

"It's him." He knows it is, it must be. If there was a twin, he would have found him for leverage when Mother... "And I am going to kill him again." It's almost like a dream come true. Or it would be, if he didn't have to go outside.

"Is that...possible?"

"Anything's possible, Miss Marquis." he says lightly. "If one has a big enough bazooka." They arrive
at the florist's and he reclines his seat. "Go and get something appropriate for a funeral. But purple, no black."

If she thinks the request is strange, she doesn't show it and for a few brief moments he is left to his own devices. He flips through the CD case he finds under the seat and cringes at the selection, fiddles with the radio and gets static, and finally ends up slumped miserably in the seat, poking a bauble on the rearview mirror that reads, *There is no Netflix in prison.*

Dove finally comes back with flowers. They'll do. It's more the principle of the thing than anything, anyway.

"Are these okay?"

"They're fine. We need to go to Gotham General."

"Sir?"

"When zombie hunting, one must recruit old friends." He situates his sunglasses on his face and closes his eyes. "And there's a friend that I've been really missing..."

THE END
"Why you act frightened, I am enlightened..."

Dove glanced at her checklist for the last time. Everything was good except for the vodka. They needed vodka. Eh, it was a hot summer, everyone wanted a vodka slushie.

"I...staayyy...awaayy-

There was a cough behind her and she squeaked, dropped her notebook, and fucked up the last note of the song. Dammit.

"Sir?"

"I need NyQuil."

It was Cobblepot—it had to be, there was no one else in the building—but it sounded like Gollum. When she turned around, it was an effort not to fling the saltshaker at him and make the sign of the cross. He was a shade that could only be described as Death, with the exception of his nose—that was bright red, save for the bits of green near the tip.

Yergh.

"Are you dying?"

He sneezed and fumbled for a handkerchief, sniffing desperately. Dove wondered if it would be bad form to run screaming for the door and call the health department to report a plague.

"Ungh."

Where the fuck was Gabe? It was his job to care!

Oh. Right. Gabe was off sick. THIS WAS ALL HIS FAULT.

"NyQuil, got it."

"No green." he hissed. "Red. And chicken soup. The boxed kind, extra noodle."

What did she look like, his mother?

"Okay, boss."

"And Sprite."

Could she get away with 7-Up and say they were out of Sprite?

"Okay, boss."
"Hurry up."

Humph. She was taking her sweet time and blaming traffic. He'd never know.

Unfortunately, they really were out of red NyQuil. She got him the damn Sprite out of pity—NyQuil was straight nasty.

She came back in as quietly as possible in the hopes that he was sleeping, and found him slumped at the bar, clutching a glass of water.

"NyQuil."

"They were out of red. Sorry."

He made a noise that sounded like the lovechild of fingernails on a chalkboard and an out-of-tune electric guitar.

"What?"

"I'm sorry, I even made them check the back—"

Yeah. The Gollum resemblance was striking, especially with that gargling breathing. Ugh.

"What store was this."

"Why?"

"What. Store."

"Some corner drugstore..."

"Will you know it if you see it?"

"Yes..."

"I need to visit them another day. Write that down."

Well. That didn't sound good.

She fished out a bottle of Sprite and gave it to him. He cracked it open—and it exploded in his face like a tiny, fizzy, clear volcano.

Oh, shit.

"Boss, I did not know it was gonna do that, I swear—"

He set down the bottle and mopped his hair with a napkin in silence. Granted, the crest had been a little limp to begin with, but now it was just...well...

It had sort of plastered itself to his face. It was not a good look.

He's gonna kill me.

She nudged a new pile of napkins over to him and wondered if it was worth it to make a break for the door.
"Soup." he said simply. "I am going back to bed."

In all honesty, he looked pathetic enough that she couldn't even resent it.

Well, much-she was supposed to be making sure they didn't need to order anything, not playing Nurse. And no fucking way was she wearing the costume, either.*

Half an hour later (damn gas stove, took for-fucking-ever to boil water!), she had made a packet of soup and poured a bottle of Sprite into a glass. There. She'd take this up, he'd have his NyQuil, and she could get back to work-after desantizing everything in sight.

He'd made some sort of blanket-nest and was hiding in it with a box of tissues and a book, and he didn't so much as poke his head out when she knocked.

"Food."

"Set it down over here."

She brought it over, hoping he didn't have a knife in his nest, and all but dropped it on him.

"Anything else, boss?"

"No. Thank you."

"Feel better?"

He ignored her in favour of grumbling about the green NyQuil. Whatever. She had shit to clean and Airborne to take.

She was watching the little green tablet fizz in the glass when she remembered the other thing she'd picked up at the store. She shouldn't. She really shouldn't.

She fished it out, cut the tags off, and made her way back upstairs.

He was asleep, a good chunk of the NyQuil bottle now empty, and she Ninja-d across the room to drop off the little plush penguin with a shirt saying, *Get Well Soon!*

If he hated it, she was totally framing Gabe. It would serve him right for coming to work sick.

THE END

*Dove has, somewhere in her apartment, a handful of costumes leftover from her old job-nurse, schoolgirl, and the like. She doesn't really want to wear them, but they were pricy and she doesn't want to bin them. (Leg Avenue runs you a bit-I can only get my costumes from them because that's what comes in XS.)*
Finger

Chapter Notes

Takes place when Riddler is on the phone to Penguin wondering about 'what did you put down there?'

OBSERVATIONS THUS FAR

1) Alfred is James Fucking Bond and you will not convince me otherwise.

2) You know what? Screw this show. What I really want is a sitcom of Penguin and Riddler where they murder their way through life and bicker about who's buying milk.

3) Little Bat needs to be grounded for his own protection. No cave, no seedy alleys. SCHOOL. HOME. THAT'S IT. Unless you make a normal, non-criminal friend. Then you can have them over like normal kids.

The body is cold and stiff. So, for that matter, is Oswald. His new

Roommate?

Friend?

Ed.

killed him. With some careful coaching from a master, of course. But Oswald has been bedridden for too long and he's having trouble moving.

Damn this leg!

No matter. He promised to have Leonard ready to dispose of by the time his new

Roommate?

Friend?

Ed.

is home.

He drags the corpse to the kitchen sink, gets the head mostly inside, rifles through the drawers until he finds an appropriate knife, and gets to work.

It's slow going, hindered by his inibility to stand for long periods and the need to sharpen the knife on a regular basis. It refuses to cut through bone and he ends up using a paper weight to shatter the bones in the neck enough to just...pull the head free.

He lets himself pretend that this is Galavan, if only for a few moments.

He takes a break after getting the right arm off to make a sandwich. Mustard, mustard...there was
spicy mustard here yesterday, where the hell did that

_Idiot!_

Roommate?

Friend.

put it?

Scowling, he dials the number and waits for him to pick up.

"What's going on?"

Is that worry he hears on the other end?

"Where is the spicy mustard?"

Hang on...

"You're calling me for that?" He sounds annoyed. Temper, temper. "Look, I-

Ah! There is is, hiding behind the milk.

"Found it! Good-bye, friend."

He hangs up before Ed can say anything and prepares his sandwich on the small bit of counter that is sanitary.

Mm. Pastrami. It's not tuna,

_Alas._

but it will do.

He finishes his sandwich, takes two ibuprofen with a glass of milk, and sets to work taking the arm apart. By the time he's done, it should be in eight pieces or so, to be scattered across Gotham. Lessens the risk. Sure, it's a bit messy, but normally it's not _quite_ so time-consuming—the price one pays when one has insufficient tools.

He's just gotten a finger off when it slips through blood-slicked fingers and goes straight down the drain.

Oh. Um. Well. He'll just...fish that out, and...

_Damn!_

It's too far down to reach it—he can just brush the nail, though—and an attempt to wash it the rest of the way down leads to a small flood.

He calls Ed again.

"The sink is flooded."

"What? What did you put down there?"

"Nothing, a finger fell in, I can't reach it."
"Oh, dear...um..." He sounds flustered. That's not a good sound, it attracts attention. They'll have to work on that. "Just...just leave it, I'll...yeah. It'll be fine. Heheh, just leave it. Don't turn the water on."

He hangs up and Oswald scowls. How very unhelpful.

Oh, well. He may as well resume the dismemberment. His *Friend.*

can deal with this when he gets home.

THE END
Dove popped her head around the corner. The street was empty and all was still.

Including, as it happened, her employer. Was he dead? Who knew. Who cared.

But if he wasn't, and he woke up and she was gone, she was so screwed.

She went over there and gave him a little poke before scurrying back. He didn't move, but she didn't want to get close again. What to do, what to do...

His umbrella was lying in the road next to him. She grabbed it and gave him a hard jab with it. It was actually rather satisfying.

_Poke, poke, poke._

Ehehe! Revenge!

_Pokey-pokey!

She was just going in for another poke when he groaned. She squeaked and flung the umbrella away.

"Boss? Are you dead?"

"Nng." He raised his head. "Miss Marquis."

"Uh-huh."

"Was that who I think it was?"

"Was who who you thought who was, Sir?"

He blinked a few times.

"Fish."

"Oh. Um. Maybe?"

"Mm." He dropped his head back and closed his eyes. "I thought so."

"Are you...um...just...gonna lay in the road?"

"Yes."

Right.

"I'll go get the car."
He was still there when she came back. He didn't appear to have moved, actually. She collected his umbrella and shotgun, did a quick sweep for anything interesting, and wondered if she should risk dragging him into the car.

"Sir?"

He struggled up, using the overturned van as leverage, and made his way to the car.

"Home."

"Yes, Sir."

Oswald was dozing off, envisioning more permanent ways of getting rid of Fish,

*Dismemberment might be nice...*

when Dove slammed on the brakes and the car skidded to a stop.

"What are you doing?"

"There's a dinosaur in the road!"

"There is not, don't be ridiculous-"

"But it's right there-"

**RRROOAAAARRR!**

Oh.

There was, indeed, a dinosaur in the road. Or something of that nature—it was large and scaly and greenish-brown, and it had teeth. But it looked like a man. Sort of.

*Strange!*

"Miss Marquis," No answer. "Put the car in reverse."

She wasn't doing anything except staring at it and he nudged her with the umbrella.

This proved to be a poor choice—she yelped and hit the gas. The car lurched forward and then there was a dinosaur on the hood.

"Shit!"

"What was that?"

"I didn't sign up for this!"

"That wasn't reverse!"

"I'm sorry!"

"Put the car in reverse!"

The thing flailed a bit and she yanked the wheel. It fell off and she turned the car around and started speeding down the wrong side of the street. Oswald checked his seatbelt and gripped the Panic
Handle.

But he did not tell her to slow down.

THE END
The Kabuki Twins are canon—they appear in The Batman (aired on the WB) and they're freaky. What the hell are they under there? Oswald, why?

Dove glances in the rearview mirror again and shudders. Two white masks stare back at her, eerily reminiscent of that one Courage the Cowardly Dog episode, the one she hates*. Where the hell did Cobblepot find these...these things? And what are they under there, clockwork people? The way Gotham's gotten lately, she wouldn't be surprised.

As one, they twitch, razor-fingers rubbing together, and she almost wishes it was Zsasz in the back. Zsasz is creepy and weird and likes to sing Disney songs off-key, but at least he's human. These? She's seen them scale a wall with those creepy razor-fingers. People don't do that.

She's tempted to try and make conversation. Maybe this is just their gimmick, and under there they're perfectly normal and they can all go out for drinks after work.

But Cobblepot is asleep and y'know, she really doesn't want to make nice.

He twitches and burrows into his coat a little more and she reaches to turn the A/C down. In the back, two sets of razor-fingers rub together and she yanks her hand back.

"Just turning down the air conditioning." she soothes. "But I can leave it."

She gets no response—y'know, she's never heard them actually speak—and she inches her fingers towards the knob again. Nothing happens and she turns it to off.

She hates roadtrips. She hates this one especially, because Cobblepot wants to talk to Jonathan Crane, the creepy guy who feeds on screams. He's a little bit outside of Gotham for some reason. She's pretty sure he's hiding from Batman, because only a complete dumbass poisons sixty kindergarteners and doesn't hide from Batman.

Brr.

There's a noise in the back, like the Troodon from that one Jurassic Park game, and she peeks into the rearview mirror. The things have moved so they're clustered on her side of the car, and she's pretty sure they're staring at her. If they have eyes under there.

"Hi." They don't do anything. "My name's Dove."

Still no answer, and she leaves them alone.

Cobblepot twitches again, fingers flexing around the handle of his umbrella. She inches as far away from him as humanly possible and glances in the back. The things have settled back into a normal position, razor-fingers laid demurely in their laps.

At least Crane's human. Psychotic and freaky, but human. She never thought she'd be so grateful for
"Kindly go the speed limit, Miss Marquis."

JESUS FUCKING-

Oopsies.

She eases off the gas (it was five miles over, jeeze) and wonders how much longer they'll take.

Not long, it turns out-the address is a seemingly abandoned farmhouse, set back from the main road. She wonders if this was intentional-don't they call him the Scarecrow? She doesn't dare-if she has to speak to him, it's 'Dr. Crane' and nothing else.

The freaky things in the back pay no mind to the bumpy road, but Cobblepot bitches the whole way, grumbling about 'damn Crane' and 'probably intentional' and 'always has to make things difficult'. She wonders if he'll dare say anything to the man himself.

Up close, the farmhouse looks like it's been abandoned since the beginning of time. The porch is falling in, the paint is long flaked away, and a lone shutter flaps angrily in the wind. The whole thing screams, 'GET OUT WHILE YOU STILL CAN'.

She wants to run back to the car and abandon Cobblepot and the creepy things. Crane can keep them. She's sure he won't mind.

"Ring the doorbell."

It has a doorbell?

Oh, so it does. It's not a booby-trap, is it?

She squeezes her eyes shut and pushes it, tearing her finger back with lightning speed. Nothing bad happens. Also, nobody answers the door.

"Again."

Aw, man!

She pushes it again. This time the door opens with a long-suffering creaaaaak.

"Cobblepot." Crane sounds pissed already. "What are you doing here."

"We have business to discuss, remember?"

"That was…damn. Get in before you attract someone's attention."

They enter. The hallway is dark and cramped and she's not sure which is worse-being crammed close to Crane, Cobblepot, or the…the things.

They rub their fingers together and she decides they're the worst choice. She can outrun Cobblepot. Crane…at least Crane's human. That, and by the way he's moving, he's injured. Good. That's what happens when you attack little kids.

"What happened to you?"

"Batman happened." he says shortly. "So let's make this brief, I am exhausted and in pain."
"The best laid plans-"

"Don't even start."

They shuffle into a living room that looks like it hasn't been changed since the eighteen hundreds. Crane sinks into an oversized armchair with a low groan and turns on the lamp.

He looks like hell—he's bruised and cut to shit, and she can see the rough outline of a bandage under his shirt. She can't muster up much sympathy.

"Who's here…Oswald. Thought you weren't coming until tomorrow."

"No, it was today." He offers an insincere smile. "Hello, Kitty."

Kitty Richardson doesn't look much better than Crane—she's cut and bruised and moving with a bit of a limp. Good. She settles into Crane's armchair and murmurs, "I'd offer tea, but we really haven't settled in much yet."

"They're fine." Crane grumbles. "And who are they? I did not issue an invitation for a house party."

"You've met my driver, Miss Marquis." Don't call attention to me! "These are the Kabuki twins. They are my new bodyguards."

"I see." Crane sounds less interested than she expected. She's dying to know what's under there. Well, not really, but still. "Fine. You wanted to discuss something, Cobblepot. What was it."

Cobblepot ignores him, preferring instead to look around the room. There's not much to look at, really—a few dusty pictures, ugly, ancient furniture, and a handful of bloodstains leading into the hall.

"How did you get the previous owner to part with it?"

"Care to find out for yourself?"

"Jonathan…"

"What?"

"You know what."

Dove is suddenly very grateful for Richardson's presence.


The…Kabuki twins…move, razors rubbing together with a soft scraping noise. Crane chuckles.

"Did you do that, or did they come that way?"

"Never mind them. I wish to make a purchase from you."

"I don't sell my product, Cobblepot. You know that."

"No, not that. I want nothing to do with that formula of yours. You'll spike it." Crane grins at that, a skeletal smile that makes the cuts on his face stretch into malformed lines that look like stitches. "There is a chemical, a rather delicate chemical, that can incite birds into a vicious frenzy without causing lasting harm. I want you to make it for me."**
"Is that so." Crane's voice is flat. "Where did you hear of this chemical, Oswald?"

"A little bird told me."

"What bird, Oswald."

Dove shudders. The Kabuki twins make the Troodon-noise again and brandish the razors.

"Hello, Scarecrow."


"No. I don't want you murdering him. Will you make it, or not?"

Crane-is it Crane now?-doesn't answer, preferring instead to fix those unsettlingly blue eyes on the Kabuki twins.

"Are they afraid, I wonder?"

"I wouldn't test it."

"Oh, that's tempting." Dove shudders. "Come back next week."

"Next week would be perfect."

And then, much faster than he'd been moving earlier, Crane rises from the chair and crosses the room in two long steps. The Kabuki twins move as though to take him out and Cobblepot raises a hand.

"You know my price." he hisses. "Cost of the chemicals, and a good pair of lungs."

"Of course."

"I'll know who to blame if the Bat shows up, Cobblepot. He'd better not."

"Would I do that to a friend?"

Crane cackles and suddenly staggers back, coughing and curling an arm around his ribs. Richardson struggles up from the chair.

"Unless you have further business to discuss…"

"No, no, we'll leave you to your rest." Cobblepot rises. "Come along. I'll see you next week, then."

"Just get out, before I change my mind."

"Feel better! We'll show ourselves out."

The last she sees of them, they've retreated to the armchair. Brr. She's not looking forward to coming back when they're feeling better.

For that matter, she thinks, trudging to the car to open the doors for razor-fingers, she's not looking forward to the drive back to Gotham, either.

THE END

*Dove means The Mask, which is creepy and also an unsettlingly realistic depiction of gangland
violence and domestic abuse. Hits a bit close to home for her sometimes.

**Oswald has sources. And one of those sources told him some interesting things about Crane's past-a few things about crows in particular.**
"Boss, there's psychos in there."

"Yes."

"They eat people."

"Some of them do."

"Is this really the best idea?"

"Are you questioning my decision-making abilities, Miss Marquis?"

"No, but-"

"I do not pay you to think, I pay you to drive. And that's it."

She closed her mouth-better-and he collected his cell phone from the cup holder.

This hadn't been as much of a pain as he'd expected-bribing an orderly had been very easy, and security had only worsened since his time here. Arranging for a mass-breakout had been deceptively simple. He hadn't wanted to, at first, but his housecat had said that Ed…failed…at breaking out on his own. So a distraction was called for.

It was either this, or explosives, and this would prevent the fire department showing up and getting in the way.

*Speed...dial...four.*

"Mr. C?"

The orderly he'd bribed turned out to be an impudent brat and Oswald had every intention of murdering him when this was over. There were other orderlies if he needed one again.

"Robert. Is everything on schedule?"

"Sure thing. Five minutes, power failure."

"Excellent. *Show some respect, you little whelp!* "Just checking in."

"No prob. Hey, I was thinking-"

Why were his minions all suddenly 'thinking'? Why? This was unacceptable.

He hung up, internally bemoaning the lack of satisfaction one got from pressing 'end call' rather than slamming the phone onto its cradle, and slumped back in the seat with a scowl.
"Why are we causing a mass breakout?"

"Silence."

"But-"

"Silence."

She shut up and he glanced at the clock. Four minutes. Ugh, waiting was tedious.

Three minutes…

Two…

One…

On cue, the lights in the building went black. Perfect.

All hell broke loose a minute later. He could hear the screams from here.

"Five minutes, then we leave regardless."

"Regardless of what?"

He ignored her, preferring instead to change the background on his phone to a new picture of dear Percival®.

Four and half minutes later, the back door flew open and Ed flung himself into the backseat, hair disheveled and his glasses nowhere to be seen. Oswald handed him a spare pair from the glove compartment.

"You look rather the worse for wear."

"Lost my glasses climbing out a window."

"Um, Boss?"

"Drive."

"Cops are here."

What? How did they… orderly. That little brat was going to pay dearly for this!

"Then go."

He'd meant to just drive away. And they did. But one of the cars followed, sirens blaring, and it became necessary to drive a little faster.

"Get rid of them."

He'd meant for her to take a sharp turn and double back or something. What happened was something else altogether.

"Buckle up in the back."

And with that, she switched gears and hit the gas, flying through a red light and narrowly avoiding a jaywalker.
"Move, fucker!"

"Miss Marquis-"

"I got this-stay in your goddamn lane, asshole!"

"That's enough-

SCREEEEEECH!

Oswald had time to grab onto the panic handle before being flung into the door when she hit a turn hard enough to fly over a curb. In the back, Ed appeared to be considering religion.

Perhaps Ed had a point.

A few more harrowing turns and one near-accident later, the car shuddered to a stop in a drugstore parking lot.

"Lost them."

"Never do that again."

"They're gone, though!" There was a sudden buzzing and a, "And we'll never be royals/royaals!!" before she lunged for her purse. "Yeah, sorry, there were police…yeah, he's fine. Uh-huh…shut up, I didn't hit anything!" She handed him the phone. "Your battery's dead. It's Gabe."

"Boss?"

Ahh. The soothing tones of competence made him less inclined to murder his idiot minion and make Ed drive.

"Everything is fine. I will be late-I need to pay someone a visit."

"Yeah, I saw it on the news."

Oh, really.

"I see."

"You okay?"

"Physically."

"What do you want me to do?"

"Proceed as usual. If anybody comes, I have been out of the city on business."

"Sure thing, boss."

He hung up and glanced in the rearview mirror. Ed no longer appeared to be considering religion, though he did look rather inclined to be ill.

"Are you unharmed?"

"Uh-huh."
"Good. I can drop you somewhere, or you may come with me to deal with a...business associate."
"I'll come with you. My apartment was seized for evidence."

Oh. Shame, he'd rather liked it. Perhaps he could buy it, use it for an emergency hideout.

"Miss Marquis."

"Sir?"

"I want you to go to thirty-five twenty-six Massengale Lane. And go the speed limit."

"Yes, Sir."

"Thank you."

Hopefully his orderly had a well-stocked fridge. He needed a drink after that sort of trauma.

THE END

*His vulture, remember? Oswald probably has a shit-ton of pictures: 'Percival's first eyeball snack' 'new perch' 'friends 3', et cetera.

**Dove's ringtone for Oswald is L7's 'Shitlist'. He has no idea, which is really for the best.
Look at Gabe in ‘Smile Like You Mean It’. He knows somethin’s up. Penguin has competent minions, that’s why. OH-if you like these, Dove and Ozzie (And Eddie!) appear in Phobias, in ‘Silence’, paying a visit to Jonathan Crane.

Scary loves her a good gothic house. Published two books about one already.

Dove hates this house. It’s big and old and she’s getting flashbacks to every scary movie she saw as a little girl. Doesn’t help that a shit-ton of people have died in it. And she’s willing to swear, on a stack of bibles, that the painting at the foot of the stairs is one of those Scooby-Doo ones that watches you when you’re not looking.

**BONG! BONG! BONG!**

Yeah, and the big-ass clock downstairs is noisy as hell. That’s not conducive to sleeping, which means she has to pile on the makeup because the mayor’s paperwork girl can’t look anything less than flawless.

She rolls over on the too-soft bed and shudders when her leg hits a cold spot. God, it’s three in the morning and she hasn’t even dozed…

She needs a glass of water, that’s why. She’s needed it for hours now, but she’s too scared to go downstairs. Which is silly, because one, there’s no such things as ghosts and two, it’s the mayor’s house. And Gotham’s crime boss’s house. This is probably one of the most well-protected houses in the city.

Okay. She’ll go, she’ll go, she’ll go. She can do this.

She turns on the lamp, shuffles her feet into her slippers and pulls her robe around her shoulders. Straight downstairs, get a water, and then to bed.

Because her life is either a Gothic novel or a soap opera, the first really nasty thunderstorm of the fall is here, lightning illuminating the hall at random intervals. Cobblepot lined this hall with plush carpeting, because they all sleep up here, and now she wishes he hadn’t. She’d never hear someone coming up behind her oh god there’s someone there now she can feel it-

She whirls, flashlight beam swinging wildly, and sees nothing but an old suit of armor. Right. Heh.

The stairs are no better. They creak, yes, but they also curve heavily. One could look up and see someone above them. Not to mention that at some point in this house’s history, one of the servant girls was hurled to her death from here. Olga says you can hear a reenactment of the murder some nights, but Dove’s like ninety percent certain Olga’s just fucking with them.

Okay, eighty-five percent certain.

She scurries down the stairs a little faster than is probably safe and flips off the Scooby-Doo picture, just in case. Ah! Kitchen.
She knows what went down in here, what exactly has been cooked in that oven, but as horrid as that is, it’s Gotham. Weird shit happens in Gotham. Which is why no band in their right mind ever comes here on tour.

She’s filling a glass when a flash of lightning hits and for a second—just a second—she sees someone. Her first thought is that it’s Cobblepot. He doesn’t sleep much anymore, not since Ed went away. But Cobblepot’s got a hunch to him now, even without his cane, and whoever was there didn’t.

One of her co-workers?

She turns her light over and sees nothing. Probably not, then. In this house, you greet. It’s a safety thing.

*The one night I get brave is the one night we get a burglar!*

The rain suddenly seems very loud, more than loud enough to drown out footsteps.

Silently thanking Cobblepot’s paranoia, she reaches under the butcher’s block and slides the gun out of its holster. She is *not* going to be murdered for coming down for a glass of water!

After checking the gun for bullets and finishing her water, she inches over to the doorway and pokes her head out. Cobblepot must be down here, anyway—the light’s on in his study. Maybe it was one of her co-workers and they just didn’t see her. It happens.

Yeah, that’s all it was. She’ll just go check.

She tiptoes towards the light and pokes her head in. No one. Well, Cobblepot—he’s conked out on the sofa, cell phone clutched in his hand. She’ll just leave him there. It’s safer than startling him and getting stabbed by accident. Or on purpose. Who knows.

She turns around and comes face-to-face with—HOLY SHIT.

That’s van Dahl, that’s Cobblepot’s long-murdered dad, shit-shit-shit—

Okay, so she doesn’t mean to shoot him in the face. But it doesn’t hurt him. Doesn’t go through him like smoke, either—it goes through him like clay and for a second his face flickers before reforming.

“Oh my god—”

He hisses at her and staggers forward before…melting. Literally, just drips down through the floorboards.

“What is going on?” Cobblepot sounds tired and pissed. That’s bad. “Miss Marquis, what are you doing down here?”

“Th-there was a man, or a…a thing, anyway, it was there, I shot it—” It’s best not to mention that it looked like his father. Shooting his dad is not getting her brownie points. “And it…it went through the floorboards.”

Cobblepot raises an eyebrow and hobbles towards her.

“Are you sleepwalking.”

“No! Look.” She points the flashlight at the bullet, embedded as it is in the floorboards with…
Huh. That actually does look like clay stuck to the tip. What the fuck is in the house?

“What is that.”

“He went through the floorboards, he just-”

“So he’s in the wine cellar.”

“Maybe?”

“Then let’s go down there.”

“I don’t want to.”

“I didn’t ask.”

The shot’s brought Gabe downstairs, shotgun in hand.

“Boss! Boss, you okay?”

“We may or may not have an intruder.” Cobblepot says drolly. “Miss Marquis swears someone went through the floorboards. We’re going down to see.”

“He did-”

“Come along.”

Oh, it’s all very well for him to be brave. He didn’t see it.

Fuck him…fuck this…I JUST WANTED WATER.

They shuffle towards the door that leads to the wine cellar. It’s probably gone now. If it can go through floorboards, it can get out through a vent or something. And back in through a vent or something, it’s probably going to come after her for shooting it shit-

Gabe opens the door. It creaks and Cobblepot mutters something about oiling the damn hinges.

It’s dark down there. And cold. And it smells like cold stones. She wonders how far she can run before Gabe catches her and brings her back to Cobblepot.

“Boss?”

“Down we go.”

The stairs creak something awful, but that’s the only sound. She can barely hear the rain down here. Gabe flicks the light switch and the room is bathed in soft light. Dove hates it down here-a little too Cask of Amontillado for her liking. And she’s not at all sure that new-ish looking wall doesn’t have a skeleton behind it.

“There’s no one here.” Cobblepot says smugly. “I suspect you were sleepwalking-”

Then the power goes out.

There’s a panicked rush (Cobblepot will insist it’s not panic, but she calls bullshit) to get out of the cellar, but the lights don’t stay out for long.

“See-”
“Did you not notice the thunderstorm, Miss Marquis?” Cobblepot snaps. “There was a surge. Now kindly try not to shoot my floor again-”

SLAM!

They all jump and Gabe books it to the front door. Dove glances at the open cellar door and nudges it shut. No need for someone to trip and fall down the stairs, after all.

Gabe returns soon enough, shaking his head and looking decidedly unnerved.

“No one, boss, but the door was unlocked.”

Hah! She said so! She said there was someone here!

“Wake everyone up. I want a thorough search of the house and grounds. Miss Marquis, come with me.”

Gabe runs upstairs and she follows Cobblepot back to his study. He settles back onto the couch and checks his phone. Judging by his expression, no one’s called.

“Tell me what happened. Leave nothing out.”

She didn’t get a good look at the thing’s face, she decides. It was dark. That’s her story and she’s sticking to it.

“I came down for a glass of water…”

THE END
Vigil

Chapter Notes

Wow. Literally, all I have to say regarding the winter finale is this: fuck you assholes. Seriously. That was bullshit. Denial mode: activate. (Unless I don’t need to, but we have to wait ‘til April to see about that. FUCK THIS AND THEM GODDAMMIT.)

Spoilers ahoy, but their accuracy is debatable.

Dove hates her job. She’s also pretty sure she doesn’t get paid enough for this.

Not like it’s hard, to come sit in a hospital room and do nothing, but it’s emotionally taxing. And she’s been here for like, ten hours and she feels gross.

Gabe was the one who called her-she’d been out satisfying a late-night chocolate craving (oh, periods)-with a curt, “Don’t come home, meet me at the safe house.”

Then, when she’d finally gotten there, his brilliant plan had been, ‘find the boss, and fuck and murder our way through damage control’.

So far they’ve found the boss, but there’s been no fucking and no murdering.

And technically, they hadn’t found the boss, the police had. It hadn’t been pretty, either, and there’d been speculation as to whether or not he’d finally die. But Cobblepot is nothing if not a stubborn bastard, and he’d clung on, probably dreaming up revenge fantasies.

They won’t know until he comes to, and he’s taking his sweet time about that. Hence her presence. Gabe and Mister Tibbs are parked outside the door, scowling at the doctors and shooting the shit with whatever cop got assigned to play Candy Crush in the hall, and she’s stuck in here because ‘you’re better at that shit and you won’t bust the chair’.

Okay, she’ll buy that last part.

If she’s gonna be honest (and why not, to herself), it’s weird, seeing him like this. Cobblepot is one of those people that isn’t…he’s not weak. He’s not. Oh, he can-and frequently is-knocked around, but he pops back up. Like a punching-doll. So seeing him not popping up, just lying there with a breathing tube and an IV and all, it’s…it’s unsettling.

She needs a new tampon. God dammit.

She steps out and when Gabe opens his mouth she flashes the little paper wrapper. His mouth snaps shut and he stares determinedly at the wall, refusing to make eye contact.

Christ, this sucks. Couldn’t he have waited to get shot until she didn’t have to deal with cramps on top of everything else?

She gets herself a hot chocolate on the way back and nearly trips over a kid on the way.

“Shit-uh, shoot! Sorry!”
The kid rolls her eyes and stalks off, muttering about ‘fockin’ tall people’. Geeze, sor-ry.

Kids today…

She shuffles back, wondering what the hell she’s supposed to do if Cobblepot does kick the bucket. She’s kinda screwed job-wise now, and she doesn’t really want to go back to her streetcorner office…

Fucker better not die.

Maybe she could ask Nygma for a job. If he’s not dead. He’s sort of…up and vanished. And even before, he’d jumped on the Crazy Train. She’s worked for enough lunatics for one lifetime, thanks.

Leave town, she decides. That’s the best plan, is leave town.

It’s a shit plan. Cobblepot can’t die, that’s all. She forbids it. She is not going to go to the trouble of leaving town because he had the rudeness to die at a bad time.

Pleased with this new, better, plan, she takes a sip and scorches her tongue. Which is why she’s swearing a blue streak when she rounds the corner and bumps into Jim Gordon.

“Son of a flea-ridden-oh. Hi.”

“Hi.” He looks…upset. Or maybe just awkward. “You just get here?”

“I had to step out.” Her coworkers deserve to be shamed. Gordon? She’s not that mean. “You?”

“No, I was visiting someone.”

“I’m sorry.”

“Yeah.” Awkwardness reigns. “He’s not awake. At least, he wasn’t when I left. And I don’t know anything.”

“I didn’t come for questions. Just thought I’d drop in.”

THERE IS HOPE.

“I’m sure he’d appreciate that.”

“Can I go in?”

“Sure. Come on.”

Cobblepot’s still out and she sighs. It’s weird and she doesn’t like it and he shouldn’t be here. Last time he got shot he was still…awake. Happy, even. Freak.

“What’s the prognosis?”

“They think he’ll be fine. He’s stubborn.”

“Do you have any idea who did this?”

“No.” That’s not a complete lie. She’s got ideas, but no concrete ideas. She’s thinking one of the lesser bosses. Could be any of them. Or some random civilian, but she’s betting criminal connection. Cobblepot’s more dangerous than he looks, randos would probably get shanked before getting close
enough to do anything. “Do you?"

“Too many.”

She flops back into the cold, plastic chair and thinks whoever designed it is a man. They’d have to be, because this is literally the most uncomfortable thing to sit in when one is bleeding.

Humph.

Gordon pulls up the other chair and hunches in it, hands clasped loosely between his knees.

“Want me to go?”

“Why.”

“Uh…” Somehow, asking if he’s going to go into a heartfelt declaration of love seems like a poor choice. “If you need a moment…”

“I don’t need a moment.”

Well, it was worth the ask.

“How’s the person you were visiting?”

Gordon shrugs, eyes flitting from Cobblepot to the floor and back again.

“Not so good. His girlfriend doesn’t hate me anymore, though.”

That sounds like way too much awkwardness for her to deal with right now, and she purses her lips and nods, hoping he’ll let it go.

“He’ll be okay.” She has no idea if he’s talking about his friend or Cobblepot. Maybe both. “He’ll be okay.”

“Yeah.”

They sit in awkward silence for a little longer before Gordon stands up and puts the chair back.

“We’ll find out who did this.” he says firmly. “I promise.”

She doesn’t doubt it, but she hopes he lets Gabe deal with it. Best to just nip this in the bud, before she can make it on the hit list. Or worse: the kidnap list.

So she’s selfish. So sue her.

“Good luck.”

“Thanks.”

He leaves and she wishes her phone had more battery life.


Nothing. Dammit.

“Gabe’s tap-dancing with your umbrella.”
Still nothing.

“Someone else came back from the dead. He doesn’t have a face anymore.” That’s the weirdest, most horrible thing. Those pictures are almost as bad as that one fungal toe she saw. Almost. “Well, it was stapled on, but it got punched off. Isn’t that weird?” She takes a sip of her hot chocolate. “This city’s a damn dumpster fire, boss. Maybe you should try for somewhere quieter. There’s some nice little towns down south that might be good…just corrupt enough to work out, but no weirdoes with stapled faces.”

Cobblepot remains out, probably just to spite her. Fine. He can just lay here in silence, then.

That’s the plan, and she sticks to it, but then she gets a text from Mister Tibbs and her phone uses the last of its battery life to blast out, “OH HOT DAMN, THIS IS MY JAM-” before playing the little death ditty and going black.

Seriously? He’s like five feet away. Well, there’s no gunshots or angry voices or whatever, so she’s not going out there. He wants something, he can come in here.

He must not want it that badly, because the door doesn’t open. Her luck is laughably bad, though, because her phone—of all the things!—is what wormed its way into Cobblepot’s head.

“…horr’ble noise.”

She hits the call button.

“Boss! You’re not dead!”

“Ow…”

Shit. Shit, wait, please—

“Boss? You didn’t…um…that thing I said about Jim Gordon? You didn’t hear that, right?”

He blinks at her, clearly drugged out of his mind.

“No?”

“Oh, good.”

“Why.”

“Why what?” Okay, so she feels a bit bad about lying to him now. But it’s either that, or die. “Just be quiet, boss, the doctor’s coming.”

She thinks he might do just that—or even go back to sleep—but then he clears his throat and rasps, “Gabe…dancing…umbrella?”

Oh, boy.

THE END
With Mama Penguin gone, somebody has to. I won’t be happy until SOMEBODY DOES, DAMMIT. And I don’t much care if Oswald wants it or not.

Oswald wakes with a headache.

It’s not entirely a surprise—he’d felt it starting to creep in last night, but he’d gone with the age-old ‘I won’t feel it, and I won’t respond to it’. Why, he doesn’t know. It isn’t effective.

He rubs at his nose and gets into his slippers and his robe before grabbing his cane and shuffling downstairs. Tea. He needs tea, preferably Chai. The spices will clear his head.

The kitchen door is in sight! Ten minutes and he can go sit down…

A meaty arm flies across the doorway, nearly clipping his nose in the process.

“No.”

Huh?

He blinks, sniffs, and registers the arm as Olga’s. Gold star to Oswald, he can recognize an arm. But why is the arm in his way?

“Ngh?”

“No.”

“I need to go in there.” He is not in the mood for this. He wants his tea and then he wants to sit down, dammit. Besides, she works for him, she has no business blocking him from his own kitchen. “So if you would be so kind-”

“No.” He’s never noticed before, but Olga is the approximate build of Thor. He won’t be getting in there without permission or murder, and he doesn’t feel like murder today. “You are leaking. You will not come in here and infect us all with your plague.”

He does not have a plague! He has a headache and a…bit of a stuffy nose. That’s all. And watery eyes, because it’s early and he hasn’t had tea or anything yet. And it’s cold. That’s all. No plague.

And he isn’t leaking, either.

The arm is replaced with Olga herself. She glares at him in a way that’s rather reminiscent of Mother and Oswald is struck with a pang of missing her.

It’s the headache, that’s all.

He sniffs and rifles through his robe pockets to come up with a handkerchief. Not leaking. Dripping, a little, if one is feeling ungenerous.
“No.” Olga says again, this time with an air of finality that says *I will hurt you if you take one step into this kitchen.* “Go to bed.”

Not without his tea. And he will get his own tea, on principle.

They stare at each other and Oswald opens his mouth to demand entry. He sneezes instead, one-two-three, and when he looks up, the door is shut. Trying the doorknob says it’s also locked.

How dare she! How dare she lock him out of his own kitchen, he wants his damn tea-!

He raps angrily on the door and gets no answer.

“Olga!” He most certainly *does not* sound stuffed up and cracky. Not one bit. “Olga, open this door!”

He’ll just pick the lock. The kitchen door isn’t very complex, even with his head fogged up like this he should be able to do it…ah!

The door doesn’t open. Why isn’t the door opening.

Is there a chair in front of the door?

“Olga!”

“Go back to bed!”

He will not! He wants his tea and then he’s going to go to his study.

He opens his mouth to say so and ends up sneezing, one-two-three, and *ohh* that hurt. That really hurt. He lifts a finger to make sure his eyes aren’t bulging out. They appear to be in place, even if they don’t feel like it.

Ugh. A flail with the handkerchief says whatever’s in his nose is thick and green. This is terrible.

The door opens—oh good—and Olga appears. He’s about to argue when she grips his arm—this is bad—and begins marching towards the stairs. No. No! He is the *Penguin*, he will not be manhandled by his own housekeeper!

He tries to pull away and nearly falls down. It’s only the cane that saves him.

“Bed. Now.”

“I-”

“*I*”

“**Now.**”

It crosses his mind that she could feasibly take his cane and beat him with it—he wouldn’t let that stand, but it would hurt—and quite frankly, tea is not worth that. He jerks his arm away—*oww*, too much movement—and musters up what little dignity he has left before stalking upstairs. *Humph.* He’ll just come back when the old battle-axe has found something else to do besides lock people out of their own kitchens.

He’s just gotten back under the covers—ohh, they are soft and warm, so warm—when the door flies open. What now? What is going on—is that tea?

“Drink.” she says gruffly. “Then stay here.”
“I have to work-”

Olga looms a little and he is not intimidated. He is not. He just doesn’t think it’s worth it to argue. His throat hurts and his head hurts and those won’t make his argument watertight.

“Thank you.”

The noise she makes is either a hum of approval or a warning growl. He’s not sure which, but his ears are clogged so that’s not his fault.

He’s a little apprehensive of the tea—what if it’s drugged?—but she shows no signs of leaving and he takes a sip. It’s good, anyway. Almost like Mother used to make it.

The sip was enough, apparently, to appease her, because she nods and stalks out with a final, “Don’t come down.”

Try and stop him!

* * *

The tea was drugged. Of course the tea was drugged, there’s no other explanation for why he finished it and fell asleep. He’s not that sick.

All right, he might be, but the tea was still drugged.

Which is why he doesn’t want the broth Miss Marquis brings him later. Olga made it, which means it’s laced with something.

“No.”

“She said.”

“I don’t care what she said. Bring me my phone.”

Well? Why is she not bringing him his phone? Why is she still standing there?

“Today, Miss Marquis.”

“Uh, boss?”

“What.”

She cringes but doesn’t shut up.

“Um…you’re…really good at being scary and crime-lordy and all…”

“Okay.”

“But at least you’ll just shoot me and dump me in the river, and Olga made that sound better than what she’d do if I brought you anything besides food and meds so m’sorry but I can’t bring your phone.”

It takes him a minute to untangle that, and when he does he’s a little impressed and a lot annoyed.

“Seriously?”

“Sorry.”
“My phone. Now. I am your employer, so—”

She shakes her head and nearly dumps the broth on him when she sets it on his lap.

“Hopeyoufeelbetteersoonbye!”

He stares after her, feeling utterly betrayed, and looks at the bowl in his lap. It looks harmless enough. What little of it he can smell smells…nice. But the tea was unassuming, too.

He has to wonder what exactly Olga said that was so terrifying. He should ask.

The broth is warm and he cups his hands around the bowl. A few noodles float to the top and you know, he hasn’t eaten today.

Fine. He’ll have a spoonful, because Olga might come up here.

One spoonful turns into the whole bowl. He was hungry. That’s all. It’s not like he’s scared of his own housekeeper. Or that the soup was delicious. It was tolerable.

Whatever it was, he’ll (grudgingly) admit that it cleared his head a bit. Enough, anyway, for him to get up and shuffle downstairs in search of his phone.

…but why is his phone not on his desk. It’s always on his desk, that’s the point of the desk.

Olga.

She did this, he knows she did it. His hand clenches around his cane and he tries to breathe deeply, only to inhale a throatful of ick and have to cough it out. And that, it seems, is the bell that brings Hell and Damnation down upon his head.

“What are you doing up.”

You know, he can see why Miss Marquis had crumbled. He’s made of sterner stuff, but the image—Olga, wearing a bloody apron and clutching a butcher knife—is unsettling. But he refuses to be bullied by his employees. Once that starts, it’s a slippery slope to the bottom of Gotham bay—if he’s so lucky.

“I need to make a phone call.” he says stiffly. “Where is my phone.”

“Taken care of.” She steps forward. “Go back to sleep.”

That sounds so horribly final. Perhaps he’ll look into getting Olga a new job as an enforcer.

“I have business to attend to.”

“It can wait. And will.”

He hobbles forward, but he’s been standing still for too long (long enough for his drugged soup to take effect!) and he goes down. He is saved from hitting the floor by Olga’s meaty arms and that butcher knife is a little too close to his stomach thanks.

“I told you it could wait!” He’s okay, he’ll be up in a minute…just dizzy. Very dizzy. Hoo. “Gabriel!”

Oh, good, someone with more guts. Gabe will assist him in finding his phone.

“Boss!”
“I told him business could wait.” He’s set down. “Carry him back to bed and lock the door.”

No. No, he will not be locked in his room like a naughty child, he is *THE PENGUIN*. And the Penguin will not be bullied by his staff.

He tries to make this clear, but all that comes out is a fit of sneezing.

“You sound like shit, boss.”

Oh, Gabriel. So eloquent. Truly, a wordsmith above all others.

He is picked up-stop that, he can walk just fine!-and lugged towards the stairs. The swaying makes him consider vomiting on Gabe, as petty vengeance.

“What happened to the boss?” Miss Marquis, the traitor. His whole house is filled with traitors. He needs new minions. “Shit, is he gonna die?”

He’s tempted to hiss at her, but he suspects doing so will only make him cough.

“Nah, he just pushed it coming downstairs.” Thank you, Gabriel. “He went down in the study.”

Are they aware that he is, in fact, conscious? Just because his eyes aren’t open doesn’t mean he’s dead to the world, and he will remember this later.

“Why have we stopped.” It could be a mild fever, but Oswald will willingly swear in court that the temperature drops a few degrees.

“We, uh, we didn’t.”

That could be a growl from the doorway. He’s not sure. He doesn’t want to find out, either.

They start moving again and there’s jolting that says *why did I not put in an elevator what if I have to get upstairs with a gunshot wound.*

Gabe puts him back in bed and somebody—they’re starting to blur together a little now-removes his robe and slippers and tucks him back under the covers.

The door isn’t even closed before he’s fallen back asleep.

THE END
Oh my god, Little Bat’s growing up! *sniffle* This is not unlikely, seeing as he seems to be allowed to do all sorts of shit he shouldn’t. (Or Alfred’s hoping he learns a painful lesson…seriously, kid, how have you not died of your own stupidity?)

Title from the Florence + the Machine song of the same name—I was listening to the demo.

Dove has no idea why there is a kid (and no matter how good his fake ID is, he is a kid and he’s going out on his ass if he pushes it) in the club.

Okay. So maybe one of her idiot coworkers left the door unlocked. They don’t have to worry about creepy guys strolling in here. But again. Kid. In a club. That’s not for kids.

“We’re not open, hon.” she calls, picking up a darker bottle to see how much is left. They’re good until next week, at least.

The kid doesn’t leave.

“I’m looking for Oswald Cobblepot.”

This is one of those moments that Dove thinks a record scratch would be appropriate. What the ever loving fuck, first of all, adults don’t just saunter in here looking for the boss and second of all he is a kid, kids don’t saunter in here at all!

“Oh-huh.”

“This is his establishment, correct?”

“Look, hon,” she says, finally turning around, “we both know you’re not old enough to be in here. No. So you’re going to turn around and go back outside and forget whatever you think you’ve heard about Mr. Cobblepot. Okay?”

The kid blinks owlishly at her from behind his scarf. Why is he here by himself. Where are his parents, for fuck’s sake, this is Gotham, you don’t leave your clearly suicidal child to wander around looking for crime bosses!

“You work for him.”

Why. Why is literally everyone she interacts with either creepily theatrical or creepily monotone? Why?

Never mind. Out. Out, out, out, she has shit to do.

“Oh-huh.” She comes out from behind the counter. “Look. You don’t want to talk to the boss, and he’s busy. And not here. So out. Go play Super Mario or whatever teenage boys do.” He does the owl-blink again before straightening up. Before he can say anything, she cuts him off. “Whatever
you think he can give you, it’s not worth the price.”

“My name is Bruce Wayne.” Shit. This just got so much more complicated. “And I want to talk to Oswald Cobblepot.”

She’s tempted, really, really tempted, to let him. But only for like, thirty seconds, because one, she’s not a heartless bitch and two, holy shit he looks so helpless. He has no business being down here. Scare tactics might work on this one.


“Water would be fine.”

Hopefully somebody’s looking for him. No way in hell is Bruce Wayne allowed to wander around Gotham unattended. Right? Surely not.

Maybe he is, who fucking knows. He’s certainly got a thousand-yard-stare, and it’s unsettling.

“Sparkling or tap?”

“Tap.”

Technically it’s Dasani or something, but whatever. No bubbles.

“Okay. I don’t know how you got down here, or why. If you’re trying to rebel, I suggest driving a car into a tree. It’s safer.”

“I can drive just fine.”

Of course he can. Jesus Christ.

I don’t get paid enough for this.

She resists the urge to bury her face in her hands.

“Good for you.” She cracks the seal on her water bottle. “Mr. Cobblepot isn’t here. Even if he were here, he doesn’t do business with minors.” Well, maybe. He probably would if they had money or influence. Or maybe not, he’s bad with anyone unable to legally drink. (Oh, the elementary school… hopefully that kid thought he was joking. Please.) “Whatever you want, it’s not worth it.”

“I want information.”

Well. That’s mild, at least. Y’know, considering what a lot of people come for. Cobblepot’s network has only grown—you want a hitman’s number, security downed for a robbery? If you can pay the price, it’s yours.

“On.”

He eyes her suspiciously. He is too young to have that look. She’s seen it on every single one of the Alley kids, and it’s not right.

“The Court of Owls.”

What even… you know what, no. She doesn’t even wanna know.
“It’s a ghost story.”

“No it’s not.” Does he practice the monotone or is it just a Thing for him? Seriously, every teenage boy she’s ever met is…not this. Trauma or no trauma, that’s not normal. “When will he be back?”

“He didn’t say.” That’s a lie, he’ll be back in a couple of hours (less, depending on what goes down), but he doesn’t need to know that. “I’m telling you one more time, okay? Don’t. Don’t get involved with him. He-”

“Blew up someone with a rocket launcher, I know. I was there.”

This is beyond her paygrade.

“You can’t stay here.” she says shortly. “When he gets back, he’s not gonna be happy that someone just waltzed in.”

“I will say I threatened a lawsuit unless I was permitted to wait.”

It’s only because this is Gotham, home of zombies and icemen and who knows what else, that her mouth doesn’t fall open at the sheer audacity.

“Don’t. Be a kid. Go home, don’t…don’t try to make nice with the boss or chase ghosts or whatever. Go be normal, go to school, get a date.” Get out of Gotham, she doesn’t say, it’ll swallow your soul. “Don’t be an idiot.”

He simply takes his coat and scarf off and drapes them over the back of the chair.

Fuck. Cobblepot better not murder Bruce Freaking Wayne, or they’re all screwed.

She brings him a bowl of pretzels, wishes he’d blink, and returns to her inventory. He doesn’t move-she can see him in the glass, sitting stock-still and occasionally taking a sip of his water.

Cobblepot’s back early, and cheerful-until he notices their visitor.

“Mr. Wayne.” Should she stay here? She doesn’t want to stay here, but there’s something inherently wrong about leaving the Penguin with a child. “What a surprise.”

“Mr. Cobblepot.” Wayne stands, offers his hand. “I am sorry for the intrusion, but I…would like to talk.”

Say no. Say no. Kick him out, make him go home and have a damn childhood.

Cobblepot is not a good man, not by any means, and he looks Wayne up and down, and smiles.

“Right this way. Miss Marquis, did anything else occur in my absence?”

“No, sir.”

“Good. Follow me, Mr. Wayne.”

“Thank you for the water, Miss Marquis.” the kid says, collecting his coat and scarf. She forces a tight smile, one that drops the minute they’re not looking.

Getting out of Gotham won’t help you, will it?

THE END
Oswald is miserable. Over the last month, he has been shot (oh, Edward Nygma, you’re going to wish you hadn’t done that), rescued by a crazy plant lady (nobody kisses their rosebushes…nobody sane, anyway), and hitchhiked back to Gotham with a tourist. A tourist! An idiot, come-up-from-Arizona tourist who bitched about it being cold and gray and wet and ‘shit, man, I can’t drive on wet streets, I’ll skid and die!’

Oswald hadn’t been so close to stabbing someone in a rage since…well.

No matter. He’d made it back, relatively in one piece, and headed for his club. It’s not open-too early in the day-but there’s still people inside. Good.

He lets himself in and is bombarded with, “HAVEN’T YOU PEOPLE EVER HEARD OF/CLOSING A GODDAMN DOOR” and chatter from the people at the bar. They don’t notice him, although with this racket, he doubts they’d hear much of anything. Idiots.

He shuffles closer, about to demand that they turn this down and at least look productive, hello, when he hears what they’re talking about.

Namely, him.

He has been given a most rare opportunity.

“…nah, I’m tellin’ ya, guy’s got Gotham Immunity. He’s like a slasher villain—you could decapitate him and he’d still get up, all pissed and stabby, and keep chasing you.”

He’s not sure he likes that comparison.

“No way, Dove. It’s been a month. A fucking month, he’s fish food. Nygma said, remember? He told that one cop.”

Nygma said, did he? Oswald shoves the broken pieces of his heart to the side and vows, for the three hundred and forty-fifth time, that Edward Nygma will burn in one of his own death traps.

“Did they find him? No? Then he’s not dead. Trust me, he’ll turn up.”

“You just don’t wanna be put out.”

Huh?

“One more week. We agreed.”

Agreed to what? What have they been doing in his absence?
Never mind. He’s had enough. He wants a bath and clean clothes and to know what, exactly, the papers are saying has happened to him.

“What is going on?”

He will forever be ashamed on behalf of his enforcers screaming like little girls.

“Boss! You’re not dead!”

“No.” He limps forward. “Turn this damn thing down, this is a respectable club, not a rave.”

Somebody peels away and heads for the volume control. Everybody else stays clustered on the stools, shooting looks at each other.

Miss Marquis is the one who throws out a (decidedly smug, why would that be?), “Good to have you back with us, Mr. Cobblepot.”

“I expect you all doing something productive when I come back down.” he grumbles. “And somebody get me the papers for this last month. No tabloids.”

He has to throw that in, because once-just once-there was either a joker or a complete fool who had kept buying the damn things and delivering them with the main papers. The culprit was dealt with, but clearly some people need firm directions.

He makes his way towards the stairs, stitches pulling already. He’s halfway up when Miss Marquis says, “Pay up, bitches.”

What?

He twists around and goes a few steps down-enough, anyway, to see the rest of them slap piles of bills on the counter.

Really. They really did that.

He’s tempted, so very tempted, to go back down there and take them to task, but…

No. Too much effort. His leg will not carry him upstairs again, not without a break, and his clothes still smell like the river and mulch from Ivy’s plants. Later. He’ll deal with them later.

Much later. He has bigger fish to fry-namely, a green one who’s been causing far too much trouble lately.

Really, though…he’s not sure which is worse, their betting on his survival, or so many of them betting against it.

Idiots, all of them.

THE END
Flying Menace

Glass (expensive, beautiful glass) crunches under Oswald’s feet as he drags himself up and down the utter disaster area that imbecile has made of his club.

The Batman is going to die, he vows, inspecting a scratch in one of the tables. He will die and Oswald will mount that cowl in his private office-no! No, he’ll mount it in the main room, as a warning: Ye Who Break Windows Beware.

“Does he aim for them?” he demands of his staff. “Does he have a point system? ‘Oh, ten points for plain, twenty points for signage, fifty points for terrified guests’? Is that how this works?”

Nobody answers. Oswald’s fingers tighten on his cane.

Six. Six windows, one month. Oh, not the same property, but still. Still! Six custom windows that Oswald has had to replace. He’s not alone-the whole damn city has become a mass of broken glass.

The first time it happened, he hadn’t been there. Miss Marquis had, and he hadn’t believed her when she’d blamed their new urban legend for the mess. Security cameras had backed her up-Oswald had watched in fascinated horror as a black…thing…was hurled through his beautiful front window and onto a table, shattering dishes and terrorizing the women dining there.

It had almost been…amusing. He could work with it, anyway-‘Gotham’s own Batman was hurled through his window on May 8th of…’

But now? Now it’s just annoying, and this is on top of several shipments being halted.

Oswald wants him gone. Not just gone, but made an example of, to deter any more would-be vigilantes.

His leg informs him that, cane or no cane, if he doesn’t sit down it will take him down and he makes his way to a bar stool to scowl. This is ridiculous. He has just about had it with costumed lunatics, and so help him, if he has to deal with one more tonight, just one…

A glass of wine appears at his elbow and he silently thanks his lucky stars (if he has any) for longtime employees. There’s something to be said for having the same people for years. Granted, they’re a liability as far as ‘knowing too much’ goes, but then you get perks like this.

“Boss?”

“What.”

“What do we do?”

“Clean up the mess, place a new order, potentially order stock in glass because this menace can’t keep away from my damn windows!”

Somebody mutters something about ‘Bat-insurance’, and that’s the very last straw.

Oswald gets back up, wills his leg to behave itself for five minutes, and makes his way towards the Smart Mouth. Everybody else parts like the red sea.

“Smythe, is it?”
“Yes, uh, sir?”

“Does this seem like a joke to you, Mr. Smythe?”

“No?”

“No? You’re quite sure? Final answer?”

“No! No. Uh, it’s not a joke, I mean-”

“That’s right, it’s not a joke. This is becoming a very large problem. It costs me money. When things cost me money, I have to downsize. And do you know what happens when I downsize?”

“Uh, layoffs?”

How did he hire this one. What happened. Was he hungover? Drugged? Does this man even work for him?

“Do you know how layoffs work in my organization?”

Silence this time. So either no, and he doesn’t want to admit it, or yes, and he doesn’t want to admit it.

Too bad. That time has passed.

He’s just going for his knife when Miss Marquis whispers, “Boss, the cops’ll be here any minute to take statements…”

Damn. He’d forgotten about them, how very irritating…

“Consider yourself lucky, Mr. Smythe.” he hisses. “Any more cracks like that, and you’ll be out of a job.”

“Sorry, boss.”

He will be. Oswald intends to get rid of him at the earliest opportunity.

He makes his way back to his bar stool and his wine glass and wonders how much effort it would take to poison the glass. Surely the flying menace sustains cuts, perhaps…yes, yes, he’ll look into that. That would teach him to avoid the damn windows.

“Miss Marquis.”

“Sir?”

“Make a note. Remind me to look into poisoned glass before I replace the window.”

She’s heard stranger requests (the incident with the robotic tyrannosaur springs to mind), and it shows-no expression change, just the *whip-flip-scratchy-scratchy* of a pad being drawn and a note being made.

Flashing lights flood the club and a few minutes later, the boys in blue troop in. They look tired. Oswald has no sympathy. If they’d do their jobs, and deal with idiots who dress up like bats and break people’s windows, they could sleep at night.

No matter. He’ll deal with the problem himself, and soon enough, his broken windows and hijacked
shipments will be a thing of the past.

He plasters on a smile and waves them over.

“Gentlemen! Can I get you some water?”

THE END
Jim thinks back to the first time he ever laid eyes on Oswald Cobblepot, crammed into the trunk of a car with a busted leg and a bloody nose and the whinging, pathetic voice begging for mercy.

He had no idea what he was getting into, at the time. He’d done the right thing. Hadn’t he?

Sometimes he wonders about that, then feels slimy and guilty for it, but Oswald brought fire and death to Gotham when he came back, and maybe that could have been avoided.

And now they’re saying he’s dead. Which, yeah, probably, because Nygma’s actually broken up about it, but…Jim has to wonder. A little. The man is a stubborn little shit, after all, and Jim has trouble believing that he’d let something so common as a gunshot wound take him down.

That’s not wishful thinking. It’s not. It’s the byproduct of seeing Oswald pop up time and time again, even after he should have been fish food or roadkill or whatever. Jim sometimes wonders if he’s an actual zombie. Maybe he only says he has a ruined knee, to hide the shambling zombie-gait.

Okay, that might be the booze throwing out conspiracy theories, but still. The past couple of years have made Jim a lot more open-minded than he used to be.

He’s sitting in his apartment, listening to an ambulance speed by and watching the rain pound against the windows, when he’s struck by the ridiculous urge to go to the club. He’s not sure it’s even there, anymore, but he wants to go…see. Just see.

No. No, it’s pouring rain, it’s late, he doesn’t want to go.

…

God dammit.

He drags himself up and hunts up shoes. This is ridiculous, he doesn’t want to go, he doesn’t need to go, Oswald is dead and the club’s probably closed up or in new hands or whatever, why is he going?

Who knows. But he’s dressed now, and halfway out the door.

God. Dammit.

* * *

The club is still there. Jim’s surprised, a little. What with the mayor business and all…who knows. It’s busy, even, and he’s tempted to just turn around and go home. He doesn’t know why he came here. He needs nothing. Oswald’s not here. If Nygma’s to be believed (and Jim’s never known him to lie), he’s at the bottom of the river.

Never mind that a drag didn’t turn him up.

Never mind that he didn’t wash up, either.

He’s not here.

But Jim goes in anyway, feeling decidedly out of place and hoping nobody notices him.

He’s not so lucky.
That woman Oswald hired, the blonde one that Jim saw once or twice on a streetcorner before she started appearing at her boss’s shoulder, spots him almost immediately. She waves, slips out from behind the bar, and saunters over to him.

“Gordon!” She grins and Jim’s half-expecting her to say, *boss’s upstairs, lemme go tell him you’re here.* But she doesn’t. “Haven’t see you around in a while.”

“Miss Marquis.” He forces a smile, knows it’s a failure. “How’s things?”

“Busy.” She gestures to the room at large. “You look…well.”

That’s a lie, but a nice one all the same.

“Thanks. You too.”

She does look well, though how much of that is ‘I’m at work, gotta look perfect’ is up for debate.

“Come on in, I’ll getcha a drink. Y’know, for old times?”

“No, I really don’t-”

“Just one? On the house?”

For a second he hears another voice, tinged with hope, saying, *Oh, go on, Jim, you’re not on duty. Just a drink with an old friend?*

Dammit. Even dead, the little bastard’s still got persuasion down to a science.

“Just one.” he says firmly, ignores the easy smile he gets in return.

“C’mon, you get the good seat.”

‘The good seat’ turns out to be one a little ways out of the main crowd, with a decent view of the room. It hasn’t changed since the last time he’d been in here, in the middle of the day-flattering lighting, fabric that looks, at least, like it costs more than his apartment, the grand piano seated up on stage. No one’s playing now, but he’s seen Dove play before. Oswald, too, but him only the once.

He’s a little surprised Nygma’s not here, either just because or to blow the place sky-high. Not that he’s complaining-they haven’t seen him for weeks. Oh, they’ve seen his handiwork, and poor Lucius is beginning to tire, but of the man himself, there’s nothing. Not even security footage.

Jim almost longs for the garden-variety serial killer, the kind that grabs people off the street because they look like an ex-girlfriend or whatever. Even a cannibal wouldn’t be that bad.

He’s sipping at his whiskey. S’good stuff-Oswald would have had a heart attack if his employees had ordered anything less. Or killed the one responsible. He might even rise from his grave (wherever that is) to do it.

Really, the image of a ghostly Penguin prowling around his club, bitching at his staff, is hilarious. And not entirely out of the realm of possibility.

“Enjoying yourself?”

Jim is not so proud to deny choking on his drink.

“You’re dead!” he hisses, attempting to dislodge bitter drops of alcohol from his throat as he twists
around to look at the man sitting next to him.

Oswald looks incredibly unamused. He also looks fairly unharmed—a little thinner than Jim had seen him last, but that’s all.

“Really, Jim, I expected better from you. I have been sitting here for five minutes already.”

Jim counts to ten—it’s his only defense. Strangling the stubborn little bastard will result in his either being stabbed or beaten to a bloody pulp by security. But it’s tempting, it’s really, really tempting.

“How.” he finally spits out. “You are supposed to be at the bottom of Gotham bay.”

“Sorry to disappoint.” comes the snide response, and Jim counts to ten again. “That option was disagreeable to me.”

And there it is. The magical explanation for everything Oswald-related.

“Really.”

“I had unfinished business.” Oswald’s smile is as sharp and brittle as broken glass, and Jim wonders what exactly happened between him and Nygma. Maybe he doesn’t want to know. “But never mind me. You look terrible.”

At least Dove was nice enough to lie. That was appreciated.

“Been busy.”

“The Riddler giving you trouble?”

“A bit.” If he punches him in the face, can he say he thought he’d had too much to drink and was hallucinating? Will that fly? “What are you doing here?”

“Business.” comes the flippant reply, and Jim really doesn’t want to know. “I figured, I’m dead, I may as well get some work done.”

“You are the mayor, you need to—”

“Boss?” Dove sidles up and dammit, she’s the one who ratted him out, isn’t she? “We got a blip.”

Oswald’s smile turns decidedly feral and he slides off the bar stool, cane in hand.

“Excellent. Well, it was nice to see you, old friend. Don’t be a stranger!”

“Wait. Wait a minute—”

But he’s vanished in the crowd and Jim’s left with a half-empty glass and no idea whether he was here at all.

THE END
Get Along

Oswald is quietly scheming at the kitchen table, debating between docks (oh, the turning of tables, he’s always been so fond of that) or a deathtrap (poetic justice, hard to resist) and wondering if there is a way to combine the two. Ivy is outside, fussing in the greenhouse, and the other two are…um…he’s not sure, exactly. But the house is still standing, so everything must be fine.

Right?

Wrong. The kitchen door flies open and Miss Marquis, slightly singed and clearly on the verge of tears, hurtles in.

“Boss,” she says, voice shaking, “I quit.”

He does not look up from his notepad.

“No.”

“But-!”

“No.”

Out of the corner of his eye, he sees her flail towards the door. If he listens closely, he can hear faint shouting. Well. That answers the question of ‘where is everyone’. Good to know.

“They’re going to burn the house down! Or incase it in ice, whichever comes first!”

He is working, GOD.

“Don’t be dramatic. They’re letting off a little steam.”

“Yeah! Steam! Literal steam!” Oh, dear. She’s not actually going to start crying, is she? Please no.

“If you were hopin’ they’d set aside their differences and make adorable elemental babies, they haven’t!”

He’s not even going to wander down that path of thought.

He takes a deep breath, counts to five, and gently sets his pencil down. He is not going to commit murder. He is not. He is going to be calm and rational.

Wait. She is, indeed, singed. When did that happen?

“What happened to you?” Her expression of disbelief would be comical if the shouting outside weren’t growing louder. “Never mind…they’d better not harm the rosebushes, Ivy will never forgive them.”

He should direct them towards a plant, actually, just to see what might happen. It could be funny. But he needs them…alas.

The individuals in question are in the front yard, and he really has no idea what the problem is now-they’re not even shouting in full sentences. He’s considering letting them be-the house is still standing, and if they get this out of their system now, it won’t be a problem later.

But then an icy blast narrowly misses him and he can feel Miss Marquis’ ‘I told you so’ behind him.
“What is going on out here?” he demands, making his way down the steps. Bridget looks appropriately cowed, Victor does not.

“This little brat-”

“This old bastard-!”

He doesn’t care. He really does not care.

“Never mind! Kindly try to avoid bringing the house down around us, is all I ask.”

“I cannot work with her.” Victor seethes, and NO, he will not have this level of discord. He forbids it.

Perhaps Bonding Time (as Ivy puts it) is called for. He despises Bonding Time. It gives him a headache and takes him away from his revenge plans. However, if it keeps his house intact, he’ll suffer through it.

“Miss Marquis.”

“Sir.”

“Go and fetch Ivy, and then go get the car. We are going out.”

* * *

As much as it pains him to admit it, they can’t exactly go anywhere decent, and the only place that doesn’t incur new fighting is Dairy Queen. So here they are, in the line, and Oswald is thinking this might be the biggest mistake of his life.

Miss Marquis looks about thirty seconds from leaping out of the car and abandoning them forever, and he can’t exactly blame her. It’s tempting. In the back, Ivy is seated between Bridget and Victor, who are snipping at each other about the temperature of the car. Of course they are. There’s always something.

He blames Ivy, and her insistence that they all get along.

“Boss, I really think I should quit.”

“No.” If he has to suffer, he’s not doing it alone. “You’re fine.”

“But…”

“Stoppit, I’m here, come on!”

There’s the sounds of a scuffle and Oswald quietly reaches for the radio knob. Miss Marquis stares at the large tree in the parking lot as though considering driving into it.

“Boss, maybe you should find a new town to crime lord in. Somewhere nice n’ quiet. Like Chicago.”

There’s a muffled scream in the back seat-Ivy? Maybe?-and Chicago suddenly sounds very nice.

Why isn’t this line going any faster? Who is up there, ordering enough food to feed an army? WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS?
“If I find blood on the seats, whomever is responsible will be cleaning it out with a toothbrush.” he hisses. The scuffle stops for half a second before resuming, a little quieter this time. Oswald buries his face in his hands and wonders why. All he wants in life is order. Truly, that’s all. And what has life given him? Overgrown mutant children.

He’ll never complain about normal children again, even if they do irritate him.

A limb hits his seat and he can’t find it in himself to twist around and see the damage. He merely reaches for the radio knob again and entertains the thought of blasting them all with a machine gun.

Yes. What a lovely picture. He’ll have someone come and paint the occasion, title it ‘Peace at Last’ or something.

It is that, and only that, that keeps him anywhere near sane until they get to the little speaker.

“Welcome to Dairy Queen, what can I get for you?”

Arsenic, he thinks bitterly. Lots and lots of arsenic.

THE END
I don’t know. I woke up one morning and it had written itself in the night. Don’t look at me. If anyone would, though…Oswald…yeah. He would. His luck is both fantastic (he should be dead now) and hilariously bad, so.

“You accidentally became the leader of a cult?”

Okay. So Dove usually doesn’t ask Cobblepot any unnecessary questions. But…but…look, when a girl gets a call from the boss saying ‘come collect me, I accidentally became a cult leader and these people are all insane’, it’s that sorta thing that makes her want to scream into the void.

So really, it’s either scream or ask, and asking will hurt less.

“Have you gone temporarily deaf?” Cobblepot sounds pissed. “Yes. Now come and pick me up, I refuse to coddle these people.”

“But…but…”

How. Why. Seriously? This shit doesn’t happen in…well, yes. Yes, it does, because this is Gotham, where nobody stays dead and people have weird superpowers and whatever.

Whichever ancestor thought, ‘gee, I’ll move to Gotham!’ is an idiot and an asshole and when she dies and gets to meet them, she’s going to hurt them.

“Are you driving yet?”

Shit. No. She’s still standing in the kitchen, wondering if she has time to finish her sandwich. Can she blame traffic?

“Just getting the keys.”

“Hurry up. Being shot was less horrible than this.” He’d know… “Swimming with a shattered knee was less horrible than this. Feel free to run over pedestrians if they don’t cross the road fast enough, is that clear?”

She takes the sandwich with her—Cobblepot’s on a roll now, and she’s sure he’s gesturing and hobbling back and forth and probably miming stabbing somebody to make himself feel better. Or kicking a stabbed body, who knows.

“Starting the car now, boss.”

“Speed limits no longer apply to you. Run over any cop who pulls you over.”

Uh, no. She’ll just not get pulled over.

All the same, it’s best to go along. Murder soothes the savage beast and all.

“Sure, boss. Run over anyone in the way. Where are you?”
“The trainyard.” Uh. Okay. When did a cult…never mind. “Remind me that the next time an old man starts ranting about brimstone at me, stabbing him may not be the best choice.”

What. So…he’s the cult leader because he…killed the other one?

Maybe one day he’ll learn that murder is not the answer, like, ever.

“Okay, boss, I’ll put it in your phone.”

“Don’t be snide. Are you driving?”

“Yeah—hang on-do I look like fucking Wonder Woman in my invisible jet? No? Then turn signal, cow!”

Cobblepot sighs.

* * *

The ‘cult’ is more of a collection of random thugs whose leaders are in prison or Arkham, but at least one of them has carved Bible verses into his chest, so. How the hell these people took Penguin, of all people, for their leader is a mystery.

Then again, he is the sort to stage a takeover of USPS because they lost a package. Maybe she should steer him in that direction—her asshole carrier’s been stealing her Michael’s ads.

“Uh, boss, are you just gonna…leave them? Without a leader?”

“Yes.” He locks the door and reclines the seat. “I need a new bodyguard.”

“Huh?”

“James joined the cult in earnest.”

Sure enough, she sees him wander across the yard. This proves to be bad—he spots the car and shouts, “He’s leaving us!”

“Drive. Drive away.”

She hits the gas and takes a hard left out of the trainyard.

Cult. You gotta be kidding.

THE END
This whole collection, if I haven't mentioned this already, is marked as complete because updates are very sporadic and everything in it is, technically, a stand-alone.

Looking forward to the new season. My little baby, all grown up and spreading mass panic! *sniffs* I'm so proud...

**BANG. BANG. BANG.**

“We don’t open for another hour!” *You stupid cow. “Come back at six!”*

**BANG. BANG. BANG.**

Dove hates stupid people. She tries to like them. She does. But…well…look. When someone says ‘not open’ and the sign with the hours is literally RIGHT THERE…

Yeah, Cobblepot’s probably rubbed off on her a little tiny bit. And that’s just awful. But she’ll take it, if he never ever ever gets a crush ever again. Please. Be a Forever Alone, for the love of all that is holy.

**BANG. BANG. BANG.**

What? What the hell? There’s no screaming, so whoever it is can just go along their merry way, please and thank you.

**BANG. BANG. BANG.**

She takes a deep breath and counts to three and looks up. It is literally a random homeless guy—he doesn’t look okay.

Um.

“What do you think, Eddie?” she asks the frozen man in the middle of the room. (Frozen…gee, boss, never mind the woman scorned, fear the crime lord scorned.) “Should I open the door?”

No stupid riddle. No response at all. It’s actually kinda horrible.

Well, he looks harmless enough. Y’know. For Gotham. Maybe he’s just a crazy guy, the kind you can lead to a corner and call someone about.

**BANG. BANG. BANG.**

“What is that racket?” Shit. “Why haven’t you told him to go away?”

“I did, I don’t think he’s well-”
“Clearly you weren’t forceful enough.” Cobblepot seethes, stalking past with a look that says he’s bitchy and in pain. “I will deal with this, then.”

“Sir…”

Too late. He unlocks the door and yanks it open. The man outside sways on his feet, hand smacking empty air.

“We are not open for business.” Yeah, maybe, but this guy doesn’t…he isn’t…“Do you understand that, sir?”

No reply comes. Cobblepot frowns, eyes narrowing, and his hand darts forward. Dove has a mild heart attack before seeing that no, he doesn’t have a knife, he’s just plucking a scrap of paper from the guy’s pocket. She inches over to peer over his shoulder.

If he’s wound down, is written there in neat letters, just ask him about scarecrows!

That sounds like a terrible idea and they should call the men in white coats immediately.

Cobblepot huffs.

“What do you think, Ed?” he calls mockingly over his shoulder. “Any input?” Pause. “So silent. No need to give me the cold shoulder…oh. Wait.”

Still bitter, apparently. Yeah, please never develop a crush again.

He chuckles, a little warbly from a strangulation attempt (accidental, one of Ivy’s plants got hold of him and yeah, it was weird but Dove’s just trying not to think too hard about it) last week.

“Let’s see.”

“Sir-”

He ignores her. Fine. He’s on his own.

She steps back just as he cocks his head to the side and asks, “Seen any scarecrows lately?”

The result is immediate and horrifying—the man’s mouth tears open and ear-splitting, desperate shrieks erupt from his throat. They’re raw and flecks of blood fleck up to his lips and what the hell is going on-

Wait. Wait one minute. She mentally removes the horribly overgrown beard and replaces the torn, ragged clothing with a suit and-

“Erik?”

“What are you talking about?” Cobblepot hisses, phone already in hand. “Unless you’re going to shut him up-”

“I think that’s Erik, sir, Erik Jameson, remember, we thought he walked out last month?”

Silence. Then, “Get me a pipe.”

Sorry, Erik.

* * *
It is, indeed, Erik, as they find out when they shave the beard away. He’s scarcely recognizable even then—scraggly and pale and riddled with track marks. What the hell…

“Sir?”

Cobblepot makes a noise between a growl and a hiss.

“I suspect someone is trying to rattle me.” he seethes. “I will not be rattled. I haven’t come this far to be effected by childish threats.”

‘Childish threats’, her fine ass. Whatever happened to Erik looks awful and she doesn’t want it to happen to her. Penguin, fine, whatever, he’s an asshole anyway, but the Selfish Gothamite within her says NOPE.

“What now, sir?”

He draws a piece of straw from Erik’s pants pocket and holds it up, lips curling.

“I want to know all about any scarecrows in Gotham.”

THE END
Like most Gothamites, Oswald is a Dramatic Little Shit™.

Oswald wakes up at four PM, stretches, and thinks, *time to sin.*

Well. In a few more minutes. He’s earned the right, in his humble opinion, to wake up slowly. To enjoy life’s little luxuries. To-

“That was my cereal, oh my god-”

“I didn’t see your name on it!”

“I’ve been eating it all week!”

“So?”

He deserves better than this.

He looks balefully at the door, hoping the intensity of his irritation alone will drift downstairs and break up the argument.

It does not.

Perhaps Miss Marquis will break up the argument. It’s in her job description, isn’t it? Surely it falls under the ‘make Oswald Cobblepot’s life easier’ bit.

There’s a shriek and a **CRA-ASH!** and no sound of argument-diffusion. Oswald sighs and slowly, grudgingly, pulls himself out of bed. He should, he supposes, let them kill each other and never have this problem again, but he rather still needs them.

It’s too early for this.

He limps downstairs, pulling his robe on as he does so, and gets half a glimpse into the kitchen before the door slams in his face as somebody is shoved into it. He blinks at the wood, slightly insulted.

*What did I do to deserve such woe?*

He attempts to open the door, succeeds, and finds a mess. There is a shattered bowl on the floor, spilled milk spreading across the tiles and soggy Lucky Charms sitting in a heap. Ivy and Bridgette are attempting to murder each other near the stove.

He needs coffee.

He fixes his eyes on the pot and makes his way to it, realizing halfway there that Miss Marquis is sitting at the table, eyes glued to her tablet. The untrained observer would miss the white-knuckle grip on the thing.
“What is going on down here?”

“You keep telling me to let them sort it out, sir.” Oh. She should know better than to listen to him!
“So they’re sorting it out.”

The stove is turned on and there are twin shrieks as flames burst from a burner, narrowly missing a pair of braids. Miss Marquis matches a candy with a trembling finger.

Coffee. With extra sugar, he deserves that much, at least.

“Hey, Oz!” He hates that nickname, he really does. “Sleep well?”

He narrows his eyes at Ivy, who just grins at him as though she doesn’t realize he’s envisioning her head mounted on the wall.

And really, she probably doesn’t.

“Clean up this mess.” is all he says, before leaving his disaster of a kitchen to retreat to the relative silence of his study.

He deserves better than this.

THE END
Chapter Notes

Penguin’s evolving! Wow! Anyways, y’all probably know that the Arkham games are my love, so yes, I’m…borrowing…a bit from there. (Poor Oswald in the Nightwing DLC for Knight, though…livin’ up to your name a bit, huh, Dick? Ouch.)

Dove is going to be sick.

No, you don’t get it, she’s going to hurl her Panera all over the floor.

It was a quiet day. Quiet night, even-no Batman to be seen, no Joker popping by (that asshole). A bit hot, because it’s Gotham in June and the rain just makes the heat wet, but really. Everything was *fine.*

Was. That’s the key word there.

(Sheesh, she’ll never get that *squelch* out of her ears…)

Breathe. Breathe deeply.

“Ambulance is comin’ boss. Just, uh…don’t…touch it.”

Breathe. Do not puke on the floor.

Cobblepot’s voice is very, very tense when he hisses, “I’m not touching it.”

Olli and Charlie are hauling the man responsible for this out of the room. He’s dead-throat slit with a broken bottle neck.

He’d come in, this nameless idiot, drunk off his ass and ranting about Cobblepot screwing him over in life. Which, yeah, probably. It happens. But, really, if you’re dumb enough to go into business with the man, you should know the risks.

But whatever. Cobblepot had come over-probably intending to poison him or otherwise permanently shut him up-and…well…

There’d been a bottle on a nearby table. It had broken against the edge, two jagged puzzle pieces. The neck end had rolled off somewhere. The other end…

It had been fast, too fast for anyone to do anything. The other end had been rammed neatly around Cobblepot’s left eye, framing it like a grotesque monocle.

It’s still there.

Dove really, really wants to be sick.

Sirens sound in the distance. About time.

“Think that’s them, boss.”
“I gathered.” His voice is tight with pain and what she can see of him-his hand gripping the edge of a table-is tense and bone-white. “Have they been properly informed of the situation?”

“Uh-huh.”

“Good.”

She’s not proud. She’ll admit to anyone who asks that yup, that was a whimper she just made.

The EMTs are clearly seasoned-neither of ‘em so much as bat an eye as they bundle him into the ambulance. She eyes the other half of the bottle, lying innocently on the floor, and shudders.

Later, when the boss calls to make sure everything has been taken care of, he informs her with the cherry firmness of the very drugged that, “I’m going to keep it.”

“Sir?”

“Removing it runs the risk of blindness, so I may as well.”

‘Risk’ as in ‘one in a million’ or ‘fifty percent’? Never mind, she doesn’t want to know.

Jesus. See, it’s this kind of thing that convinces her that she works for a maniac.

“Uh, okay, sir. If you say so.”

“They refuse to release me from this hospital. The nurse is straight from Hell…bring me an overnight bag. I am not staying here without internet.”

Uh. Is that nurse-approved? Gotham nurses are frightening at best, and if Cobblepot’s complaining about this one, they must be some sort of inhuman horror.

Whatever. The most the nurse can do is kick her out.

“Anything specific, sir?”

“A knife.”

No way that’s allowed. But then again, now would be a great time to make a move, if one were so inclined…ugh, fine. On his head be it if he gets busted.

He’s still talking. Oops.

“-pearl-handled one from my desk, I can pass it as a letter opener.”

“Okay, sir. I’ll be there soon.”

“You have permission to speed.”

Fuck no. She’s in no hurry to see the bottle again. She’s going five miles under the whole way.

THE END
"Stop the car."

"Sir?"

"Stop it now!"

Dove hits the breaks, because when Oswald Cobblepot says stop the car, you stop the fucking car. She’s barely pulled over when he’s out, limping towards the sidewalk. What the hell? Is he sick? Did he get food poisoning? (Did he get on-purpose poisoning?)

He bends down and aw, crap, there’s gonna be puking of some kind-no. No, he’s…what the hell is he doing?

She hangs half-out of the car to get a better look. There is a pigeon. Which the boss is now picking up. What the hell, it could be diseased, you don’t just go picking up birds you find on the sidewalk, she knows his mother taught him better than this-

No. No, no, why is he bringing it back to her nice clean car? She can’t even ban it, because he bought this car (‘I am not riding around in that clunker of yours one more day, Miss Marquis’) but come ooooon…

"Uh, boss?"

He ignores her, too busy cooing (cooing, hah, jeeze…) to the pigeon cradled in his arms. One of its wings is at an awkward angle. Okay, so it’s probably not carrying the next strain of plague, but still.

"Shh, shh, you’re going to be just fine…"

Okay, this is creepy. Penguin doesn’t…that’s not a thing he does. He cackles and murders people and buys off the police department.

"Uh, are we going to a vet now?"

The look he throws her could chill Mister Freeze.

"No, Miss Marquis, we are continuing to the club. I will fix this."

"Okay, sir. Do we need to stop anywhere else?"

"No." The pigeon makes a distressed noise and he pets its head with one finger. Amazingly, it doesn’t panic and try to get away. It chills out. Huh. Well, if this crime lord thing doesn’t pan, he can become the Bird Whisperer. “I have what I need-if he hits you, get his address."

"He’s not gonna hit me, boss.” She rolls down the window. “Watch where you’re going, twatwaffle!”

She gets a middle finger and the offending party cuts someone else off. Whatever. Men have no business behind the wheel, think they own the roads…
She manages to get both Penguin and pigeon (now named Delilah, because apparently he’s keeping it) to the club unharmed. Okay, she’ll admit to being a little curious about this. It’s not computing, is all. This is. The Penguin. He shoves umbrellas down people’s throats and takes ‘scorned ex’ to new and terrifying levels. He should not be splinting a bird’s wing and making it a nest of emergency socks. It’s weird.

“There we go, young lady.” The pigeon blinks. This isn’t that creepy clay-guy, right? This is, in fact, her employer? “Bring me a small, split dish, Miss Marquis. And a handful of dried blueberries.”

Hopefully this doesn’t become a Thing. That’s all she asks at this point.

THE END

Chapter End Notes

You will pry this headcanon from my cold, dead fingers. (He is not a Robin whisperer, however-Dick used to flip on his furniture and Jason asked him straight up ‘is that a real bottle?’ At least Tim’s a nice, quiet child…)
Title and inspo from Black Lips’ song of that name.
Sorry, Eddie. I love you, I do, it’s just…I wondered. (Also, Ivy being there for Penguin gives me life and she deserves at least five ‘heinous act of choice’ vouchers for that.)

Oswald pats the ice block encasing his former

*Friendlovepartner*

and smiles. People always underestimate him. Always. And when has that ever gone well for any of them?

That’s right. Never.


“Don’t be ridiculous. I want a reminder never to make this mistake again.” He feels as though he just explained this…oh, well. “So he will be coming home with us. I’ll put him in the freezer until I can decide on a more permanent placement.”

Somewhere nice and visible. Perhaps in the club…well, he is the Penguin, he’s embraced that, it could do with a name change…

“Uh, how are we getting him back, then?”

Oswald’s smile drops faster than a suicide from a rooftop.

Wait. Wait, wait, this is what he has minions for.

He removes his phone from his pocket, hits speed dial one, and resumes wondering about the logistics of a frozen Riddler in his club.

“Sir?”

“Find me a discrete, timely moving company.”

“Uh, okay?”

“Have them come to me. You have the address, correct?”

“Uh-huh.”

“Good.” He hangs up and settles in to wait.

“So, Oz…” WALD. OS-WALD. Two syllables are not so very difficult to manage, yes? “Can I drive on the way back?”

“Absolutely not.” He let her drive one time, because it was an emergency. She hit two fire hydrants,
clipped several curbs, and may or may not have run over an old woman. Oswald was too busy looking for a vomit bag to be sure. “Victor got us here in one piece, Victor can drive us back.”

“Dove lets me drive.”

That explains so much.

“Not anymore.”

“But-!”

He holds up a hand.

“No.”

“Ugh. You’re no fun.”

He’s almost-almost-regretting freezing Edward.

* * *

“Uh, Mister Cobblepot-holy shit, is that a frozen dude?”

If these are Miss Marquis’ version of ‘discrete movers’, they’re going to have to talk. Preferably with a dictionary nearby.

“That is none of your concern. Get the ice in the van.”

The big lug shrugs and gestures his companions over.

“F’you say so. C’mon boys, let’s get this in.”

That’s right.

“Should one of us ride with him?”

“No.”

“But what if they take a sharp turn and he bangs against the wall?” Ivy flaps a hand. “And breaks?”

“Why would one of us riding with him make any sort of difference in that scenario?” She shrugs. “Nobody is riding with him. Go wait in the car.”

She does not go wait in the car, but she stops with this ‘ride in the back of a moving van’ nonsense, so there’s that. He dials Miss Marquis again.

“Make sure there’s room in the walk-in freezer.”

He hangs up again before she can answer and watches the men dolly the ice block (perhaps he can name a dessert after this…he’ll have to think about it) into the van. Once Edward is strapped in, he moves towards the car with a curt, “Follow us.”

Victor is already in the driver’s seat. It’s a damn icebox in here and Oswald wonders if it’s any warmer in the van…probably not.

“Home?”
“Home.” he confirms. Ivy’s hand appears near his shoulder and he grips her wrist. “Do not touch that radio.”

“But-”

“No.”

He waits until there’s the (semi) reassuring *click* of the seatbelt before burying his hands inside his jacket and closing his eyes.

It’s been a long day.

THE END
“Uh, boss, why’s there an eight-year-old in the club.”


“Boss?”

“He was going to burn his enemies alive, I redirected him.”

He’s not looking. It’s safe to stare self-pityingly out the window for a few seconds. Why. Why is this her life. WHO LEFT THE BOSS ALONE WITH IMPRESSIONABLE YOUTH. Where’s that fucker Penn, huh? She said-she SAID, clear as other cities’ DAY-‘the boss ain’t so great with kids, keep a buffer around him’. What part of that translated to ‘let him corrupt a child’?

First opportunity she gets, Penn’s going down.

“Uh. Right. So…you invited him?”

“Field trip.”

If it were anyone else, she’d hear alarm bells. Well, she hears them anyway, but not those ones.

Where’s Bridgette. She’s a saint. A sane…well, somewhat sane…saint in this crazy house. And she’ll do practically anything Dove asks if she gets to flambé something. She’s getting good at that.

“Okay, then.”

She goes back out. The kid’s sitting at the bar, unnervingly still and unblinking. Leave it to Penguin to find the one creepy kid in Gotham.

“Mister Cobblepot’s in his office. Follow me, hon.”

Does this kid have something against blinking? Why is he staring at her with those bulbous eyes, huh?

Maybe he’s just a social disaster.

He hops off the stool and follows her towards the boss’s office. She’s about to open the door when he tugs on her sleeve and holds up his notepad.

Are you Oswald’s friend?

Great. He’s given the kid First Name Privileges. This is only going to go badly.

“I try to make his life easier.” she says carefully, because Cobblepot would get an eight-year-old mole.
The kid tears the paper off and draws a smiley. Dove finds that she never truly appreciated the creepy factor of the humble smiley.

“Go on in. Want me to bring you anything? Hot chocolate, a snack?”

A shake of the head. Dove smiles at him—he’d be a cute kid if her boss weren’t training him to get away with murder—and opens the door.

“Here he is, sir. Do you need anything?”

“No…actually, Mister Penn has some papers that need looking over. He knows you’re authorized for that.”

Great.

“Sure thing, boss. Have fun, Martín!”

The answering grin would be cute in better circumstances.

Oh, well. Now’s her chance to get something good on the bastard responsible for this.

THE END

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